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STUDIES IN QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY VOLUME 10

QUALITATIVE HOUSING ANALYSIS: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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CHAPTER 1

QUALITATIVE HOUSING ANALYSIS: A META-FRAMEWORK FOR SYSTEMATISING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Paul J. Maginn, Susan Thompson and Matthew Tonts

INTRODUCTION

This chapter, together with those that follow, builds upon the ideas presented in the previous volume in this series (Maginn, Thompson, & Tonts, 2008). There we outlined our vision for a 'pragmatic renaissance' in contemporary qualitative research in urban studies. We argued that to survive as an effective and frequently used tool for policy development, a more systematic approach is needed in the way that qualitative-informed applied urban research is conceptualised and undertaken. In opening this volume we build on these initial ideas using housing as a meta-case study to progress the case for a systematic approach to qualitative research methods. We do this to both stimulate broad debate about the ways, in which qualitative research in urban/housing scholarship might be of greater use to policymakers and practitioners, as well as to suggest a way forward in realising the 'pragmatic renaissance'.

At every point in the policy research cycle, co-ordinated and collaborative partnerships are central to generating reliable data or 'evidence' to bring

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about more effective policy and programme development. In this chapter we elaborate upon and refine our meta-framework, the key interrelated ingredients of which included:

- Replication of research across (and within) broadly similar neighbourhoods;
- A core set of common methods to collect particular types of data;
- A core set of common research questions systematically pursued across all neighbourhoods;
- A systematic style of language and notation enabling qualitative research to be more readily understood and accepted by policymakers; and
- Research findings presented in a conceptual (and quite possibly quantitative) format to illustrate relationships and correlations between variables (Maginn et al., 2008, p. 15).

Our meta-framework lays the foundations for the development of what we called 'pragmatic' or 'evolutionary' generalisations that resonate with the concept of 'naturalistic generalizability' (Stake, 1978; Stake & Trumbull, 1982). Moreover, our approach draws on the principles that underpin a range of systematic research approaches including systematic reviews, meta-ethnography and realist synthesis that have been at the centre of much philosophical, methodological and epistemological debate in recent years (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006; Doyle, 2003; Hammersley, 2005; Oliver, Harden, & Rees, 2005; Pawson, 2002; Pawson, Greenhalgh, Harvey, & Walshe, 2004; Sampson, 2007; Sandelowski, Barroso, & Voils, 2007; Thorne, Jensen, Kearney, Noblit, & Sandelowski, 2004). Such discussion has however, been slow to infiltrate the urban/housing studies domain (Atkinson, 2002; Blandy, Lister, Atkinson, & Flint, 2003; O'Dwyer, 2004; Wallace et al., 2006; Quilgars et al., 2008).

Hammersley (1992, 2005), despite his criticisms of empirical generalisability (and theoretical inference) has acknowledged that 'empirical generalisation does provide a sound basis for claims to the general relevance of ethnographic studies in the case of description and explanation' (p. 93). However, for such generalisations to stand up to scrutiny, he considers that this 'requires ethnographers to make rational decisions about the population to which [a] generalisation is to be made, and to collect and present evidence about the likely typicality of the case(s) they study' (p. 93). Furthermore, he calls for greater collaboration between qualitative and quantitative researchers and co-ordination within ethnographic research projects. Hammersley (2005) 'accepts' that 'research has an important role to play in providing information for policymaking and practice' (p. 87) and that it

can assist policymakers in relation to how policies have been implemented and their impacts on targeted groups. In relation to evidence-based policy making or EBPM, which we discuss in detail later in the chapter, he remains somewhat sceptical, as do we, about the oft declared absolutism ascribed to EBPM, particularly evident in political rhetoric. Hammersley notes that all decisions by policymakers ultimately rely on a blend of evidence *and* judgement. Policy determinations, no matter how well informed by evidence, must be tempered by the reality that 'no evidence is infallible'. Contradictory evidence may be presented and its generalisability, in statistical probability terms, is problematic in complex and dynamic social settings such as schools or housing estates. Ultimately, policymakers must draw upon their 'experience and background knowledge' (p. 88) in assessing the evidence and making a final decision. All of this says nothing about the influence of politics, nor the pressure that this brings to bear on so-called 'techno-rational' policymakers and the ways in which the decision-making process might be compromised, together with the credibility of EBPM.

The complexities that underpin the use of EBPM in the policy research process as a way of addressing social problems are recognised and confronted by realist synthesis (Pawson, 2002; Pawson et al., 2004). Realist synthesis is part of the broad spectrum of systematic review approaches to EBPM. It lies at the progressive end of this spectrum in that it seeks to unravel 'what works' *and* 'what doesn't work' in policy interventions. Other forms of systematic review place greater emphasis (and sometimes, exclusive) on championing what works and identifying the causes of success. Realist synthesis takes a more comprehensive and longitudinal view through a process of iteratively 'building up a picture of how various combinations of such contexts and circumstance [i.e. theories that underlie social interventions, individuals, interpersonal relationships, institutions and infrastructures] can amplify or mute the fidelity of the intervention theory' (Pawson et al., 2004, p. iii). This resonates with what we mean by evolutionary generalisations. Indeed, the systematisation of qualitative research we have in mind mimics the logic of realist synthesis.

We believe that in an evidenced-based policy world, such a systematic approach will ensure that qualitative researchers engage strategically in the debates that matter. If we want our work to be one of the foundational building blocks of contemporary policy development then strategic collaboration and a shared way of working offer a productive way forward. Before detailing our systematic approach it is important to sketch out some of the key challenges that must be understood and overcome: the challenge of understanding the nature of the housing problem; the challenge of scale

and extent of the housing problem; and the challenge of EBPM in general and for housing specifically.

THE CHALLENGE OF HOUSING

> A house is a machine for living in. (Le Corbusier)
>
> We shape our dwellings, and afterwards our dwellings shape us. (Winston Churchill)
>
> Any woman who understands the problems of running a home will be nearer to understanding the problems of running a country. (Margaret Thatcher)

The above ideas of what constitutes a house and/or a home point to different but overlapping *interpretations* of the nature, function and purpose of this significant domestic space. They also suggest the existence and potentiality of the 'housing problem'.

Le Corbusier portrays the house/home in a highly functional and utilitarian light; a unit of production that once 'consumed' (i.e. lived in) falls under the dominion of its inhabitants. Does this mean that there is no room for the machine to have any reciprocal dominion over its inhabitant(s)? And what happens to the ageing machine over time? What are the implications for the cost and value of maintaining, repairing and/or replacing existing machines/housing and increasing/decreasing the overall supply and range of new products?

Churchill acknowledges the complex and dynamic character of the housing system by suggesting that a deep symbiotic relationship prevails between humans and their houses/homes. This relationship is profound, so much so that it has woven itself into the fabric of society. A house is much more than just a physical structure situated on a piece of land – it is a home – and as such, constitutes a 'core institution of modern British [Australian and American] society' (Saunders, 1990, p. 263; also see Perkins, Thorns, & Winstanley, 2008). Accordingly, housing and those who inhabit it, is endogenously and exogenously inscribed with all manner of symbolic meanings which project the overall idea(l) that the home is a space of ontological (in)security (Saunders, 1990; Mallett, 2004; Dupuis & Thorns, 1998). Public housing stock, estates and tenants, for example, have come to be stigmatised as the tenure of last resort – dumping grounds for the marginalised or socially excluded who supposedly exhibit high levels of anti-social behaviour (Jacobs & Arthurson, 2003; Palmer, Ziersch, Arthurson, & Baum, 2004; Murie, 1997). Similarly, the symbolic messages evoked by gated communities and inner-city neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification

reinforce old notions of class, community, segregation and territoriality. In a post-9/11 world obsessed with securitisation these emerging patterns of urbanisation take on an increasingly sinister tone (Blakely & Snyder, 1997; Atkinson & Flint, 2004, Atkinson & Bridge, 2005). Interesting philosophical, methodological and policy questions emerge in relation to how to deal with the ever complex housing problem.

The final quote by Margaret Thatcher resonates strongly with Saunders' (1990) simplistic theoretical inference that '[e]ach household is in [a] sense a 'society in miniature' with its own system of authority, its own mode of production and its own traditions and way of life' (p. 266). Both Thatcher and Saunders suggest explicitly and implicitly that the housing problem is fraught with a variety of management, social, cultural, economic and political challenges. Interestingly, in (qualitative) methodological terms Thatcher's quote resembles a conclusion that would not be out of place in an (auto-)ethnographic analysis of her role as Prime Minister and (dutiful) housewife. Moreover, she infers some generalisations, albeit somewhat crude and in the context of political rhetoric. First, a home and the national economy are broadly identical systems, thus echoing Saunders claim, but operating at different scales. Thatcher also evokes a double-edged 'generalised' notion about women and men. On the one hand, she suggests that women are more knowledgeable than men when it comes to running things. And, on the other, hand this knowledge is a product of the fact that a woman's place is the home – oft seen as a subjugating and powerless place (see Saunders & Williams, 1988; Darke, 1994)!

All of these differing interpretations of housing/home illuminate the 'housing problem' as a complex function of both *quantitative* and *qualitative* factors. Accordingly, to better understand and address the housing problem it is clear that policymakers need to employ a mix of both quantitative *and* qualitative research methods.

THE CHALLENGE OF SCALE AND EXTENT

Forster (2004) has noted that 'Australia's cities are, above all, residential environments' (p. 78). This maxim arguably applies to all major metropolitan areas in both developed and developing nations. As urban/housing economists are fond of reminding us 'the housing stock is heterogeneous, with dwellings that differ in size, age, style, interior, features, utilities and location' (O'Sullivan, 2007, p. 283). Such heterogeneity, combined with the multitude of policy domains and structural forces that

impinge upon housing, underscore the complex and dynamic nature of the various problems that bedevil the housing system. Despite this complexity and dynamism, policymakers (and other stakeholders) have sought to (re)solve the 'housing problem' since its emergence as a public health issue in the mid-1800s (Malpass & Murie, 1990). They have approached this in different ways, to varying degrees and through the use of different mechanisms that reflect different ideological positions.

In its simplest terms the 'housing problem', historically and contemporaneously has revolved around three basic interrelated factors – *quantity*, *quality* and *accessibility*. The nature of these has meant that the housing problem has tended to be viewed through a predominantly quantitative lens. In turn this has placed an emphasis on the *scale* and *extent* of: (i) the mismatch between demand and supply of housing (i.e. quantity); (ii) the proportion of the housing stock deemed to be substandard, unfit or inhabitable (i.e. quality) and (iii) the (un)affordability and socio-spatial costs/benefits of housing (i.e. (in)accessibility). These interrelated factors have far reaching positive and negative 'spill-over effects' depending on whether people live in 'good' or 'bad' housing and by extension estates, neighbourhoods or suburbs (Maclennan & More, 1999, p. 17). In short, housing may be viewed as the fulcrum around which a myriad of other policy questions and problems relating to individual and household health (mental and physical), education, employment and social inclusion/exclusion stem.

Given the basic components of the housing problem, housing questions tend to be framed by policymakers, researchers and the general public in terms of *scale* and/or *extent*. In simple terms this translates into the following type of questions. What is projected population/household growth and demand for new housing by Year *X*? How much public/social housing and/or private housing will need to be provided to meet this projected demand? How many homeless people/households are living on/in (i) the streets and/or (ii) temporary/emergency accommodation? What is the demographic profile of the street and mainstream homeless population? How many households are in 'housing stress' (i.e. paying 30 per cent or more of their income on housing costs)? How many defaults/foreclosures have there been due to the subprime mortgage crisis? How many owner-occupiers are in negative equity as a result of increasing interest rates and economic recession? What proportion of the housing stock is deemed to be substandard, unfit or inhabitable? Invariably, these questions lead to two bottom line quantitatively-framed policy queries: First, how much will it cost government/taxpayers to 'fix' the housing affordability, homeless or disrepair crisis? And second, how long will it take to fix the problems?

Let us assume for a moment that an ideal policy world exists, a world where policy commitment, public expenditure and other forms of government regulation (i.e. planning and environmental policy) are unproblematic. Such a world would enable governments, construction time lags aside, to readily and quickly roll out a programme to increase the supply of housing. This undertaking would clearly have the *potential* to make significant gains in resolving the housing problem. Indeed, such a strategy may well result in a reduction in the number/proportion of homeless people or unfit housing stock. Further, there may be an increase in the supply of affordable housing, providing additional entry-level home buyers with an opportunity to get a foot on the housing ladder. Such a supply-driven programme is however, unlikely to have a universal impact across all target groups afflicted by the various housing problems outlined above, even those that are a matter of simply increasing supply. This should not be read as a fatalistic comment on the efficacy of housing policy per se. Rather, it should be interpreted, to steal a phrase from Pawson and Tilley (1997), as a 'realistic evaluation' of the complex nature of the housing problem, the social world and the inherent limitations of any policy. In other words, the housing problem is more than just a numbers game. As Gaber and Gaber (2007, p. 2) have recently noted:

> The large-scale public housing projects built in the 1950s and 1960s are classic examples [of the old adage of pay now or pay later]. Professionals now widely recognise that these projects were a bad idea. However, at the time, quantitative planning research pointed towards high rates of poverty and the high cost of housing. The housing projects were seen as the *solution* (emphasis added): move thousands of low-income residents into huge, high density residential facilities that can accommodate thousands of individuals (but which, as we know now, show little consideration for basic community life needs).

Identifying the scale and extent of housing problems, responding by increasing the supply of and accessibility to housing to meet general needs and demands are important aspects of the housing policy process. But this is only part of the (re)solution. Policymakers have to recognise the *contextual* and *cultural* underpinnings of the housing problem in order to address specific issues at the heart of the housing problem – issues such as homelessness, affordability and the importance of what home *means* to individuals and households – issues that are at the centre of this book. Understanding the underlying context and culture of housing problems is vitally important given their sociocultural significance, cross-cutting policy centrality and quantitative and qualitative character. Ethnographic and related research typologies endeavour to get 'under the skin' of social phenomena. In this book we advocate 'lifting the roof' off housing problems

through the use of qualitative research to expose their interior design and milieu (see Franklin, 1990 and Chapter 12 in this volume).

THE CHALLENGE OF EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY

For many policymakers, academics and students of public policy the rise of EBPM since the late 1990s represents a kind of 'McDonaldization' of the policy research process. EBPM franchisees seem to have set up shop along the corridors of power in Whitehall (London, UK), Capitol Hill (Washington, DC, USA) and most recently Parliament House (Canberra, Australia). Put simply, EBPM essentially advocates the use of standardised and scientised research approaches such as (quasi-)experimentation, random controlled trials (RCTs) and systematic reviews which are (supposedly) capable of generating *hard* evidence that has the power to identify the *causes* and *generalisability* of policy problems and, more importantly, the relative effectiveness of different interventions. EBPM derives its philosophical, epistemological and methodological inspirations from the natural and physical sciences, especially medicine, which are underscored by beliefs and commitments to notions of objectivity and the existence of universal laws (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). EBPM, when used in policy analysis research, lays claim to being fundamentally concerned with identifying 'what works'. As Nutley (2003, p. 3) has noted in relation to experience in the UK:

> When setting out the government's modernising agenda, Tony Blair declared that 'what counts is what works'. This was intended to signal the end of ideologically-driven politics and herald a new age, where policy making would be driven by evidence (particularly research evidence) of what was proven to be effective in addressing social problems and achieving desired outcomes.

When Tony Blair proclaimed his intention to 'depoliticise' the policy-making process and initiate a new agenda in urban and housing policy, as well as other policy arenas, a collective 'hooray' could be heard across the UK housing/urban studies research community for two interrelated reasons. First, the new policy agenda with social exclusion/inclusion at its heart, witnessed the setting up of a raft of area-based pathfinder programmes and initiatives. These ranged from urban regeneration (National Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and New Deal for Communities) to health (Health Action Zones), education (Education Action Zones), employment (Step Up) and crime (Safer Communities Initiative). They reflected, initially at least, an

administration genuinely interested in and committed to tackling social problems after 18 years of Conservative Party led governments. And second, this new policy agenda, which had an evidence-based mantra at its heart indicated that the government would have to increase expenditure in policy research and evaluation of its various programmes (Lawless, 2007; NRU/ODPM, 2005; ODPM, 2002, 2004).

As New Labour settled into office and rolled out its evidence-based policy agenda, debates about what counted as evidence and what methodologies were appropriate for collecting and analysing the 'right' kinds of evidence quickly emerged (Davies, Nutley, & Smith, 2000; Davies, 2004; Kushner, 2005; Sanderson, 2002; Wells, 2007). As Glasby, Walshe and Harvey (2007, p. 325) have noted:

> …how could anyone claim that [public] services should not be based on what we know to work? However, as argued [previously], the call for evidence-based policy and practice is essentially a statement of dilemma rather than a positive blueprint for a way forward… Thus, what constitutes valid evidence? Who decides? Do certain types of evidence seem to be treated as more legitimate than others? What happens when evidence is fragmented or even contradictory? How much evidence does there need to be before we can confidently develop and roll out a particular policy? […] …evidence-based practice [is] too dominated by formal (often medical) research and by traditional research hierarchies, which prioritise quantitative research (particularly systematic reviews and randomised controlled trials).

Similar debate has raged in the USA. The form of evidence-based research espoused by the Bush administration is epitomised in the No Child Left Behind Act 2001, which privileges evidence generated by experimentation and RCTs (Torrance, 2008; Howe, 2004). This has led to critics branding the USA government's approach as 'methodological fundamentalism' given that it denies a proper and full role for qualitative research approaches (Lincoln & Cannella, 2004). Traces of methodological fundamentalism have also been found in the UK. Some British commentators argue that suspicion about the efficacy of qualitative research can be found in a key government report, *Quality in Qualitative Evaluation: A Framework for Assessing Research Evidence* (Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis, & Dillon, 2003). Torrance (2004), for example, argues that this *Framework* has the potential to undermine academic freedom. His concern is shared by Kushner (2005) who notes that this *Framework* 'places on government an unreasonable responsibility to manage and guarantee the independence of an evaluation' (p. 116). While Tony Blair's claim of depoliticising policy research may have been laudable, it was naive of him to think that such an aim could be realised. As any student of public policy knows all policy

making is an inherently political activity (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984; Ham & Hill, 1993) this is particularly true of housing policy that has been used in various ways to elicit political support at the local and national level (Malpass, 2005).

Evidence-based policy has not yet been taken up with the same gusto in Australia, although Marston and Watts (2003) noted several years ago that Australian 'policymakers working in both the community and government sectors are increasingly using the language of evidence-based policy' (p. 148). It now seems likely that this will be ramped up given the recent change of federal government and the fact that the new Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, has declared himself an advocate of EBPM.

> I'm a Labor moderniser. Always have been, always will be and what that's on about is good evidence based policy in terms of producing the best outcomes for this nation, carving out its future in a pretty uncertain century where things are fundamentally changing. (ABC Lateline, 2007)

If EBPM is taken up by the current Australian government and urban/housing policy issues put back on the federal policy agenda, then this is likely to provoke another collective 'hooray' from urban/housing researchers. Acceptance of the 'evidence' in the recent Senate Select Committee on Affordable Housing Report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008), by both the Prime Minister and Minister for Housing, may well herald the commencement of a new EBPM focussed era in Australian housing policy and research. However, the 'hooray' may be seriously tempered if 'evidence' is only perceived to be 'reliable' when derived quantitatively. As O'Dwyer (2004) has noted in a critical review of EBPM and its potential implications for Australian housing policy:

> The diversity of methods used to produce evidence in the social sciences, particularly those used by qualitative researchers, means that some bodies of evidence will be unfamiliar to public policymakers, and many dismissed. Those types of evidence most easily understood or familiar tend to be favoured (which usually means quantitative) (p. 15). […] The insistence on data derived from randomized controlled trials in medicine has had the effect of devaluing qualitative research and evidence. There is a need for qualitative evidence to be summarized and synthesized with the same degree of rigor as randomized controlled trials to counter this perception. Moreover, both quantitative and qualitative research and data are usually required for the highest quality of evidence in public policy. (Davies, 2000, p. 292) (p. 16)

We believe that EBPM is likely to persist globally, and given the Australian Prime Minister's position on EBPM its take-up looks certain for our nation. It is our hope that the politicians and senior policymakers responsible for devising the principles for applied policy research and

evaluation in an EBPM context will recognise and accept the valuable contribution that all forms of research – *both* quantitative and qualitative – bring to our understanding and more efficient and effective resolution of complex housing/urban problems. This volume together with our previous book, represent an attempt to alert policymakers and other researchers (quantitative and qualitative) of this fact.

We are also of a mind that if qualitative research(ers) were to boycott or reject EBPM this would be tantamount to reverse methodological fundamentalism. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005, pp. 6–7) have shown, qualitative research is renowned for its methodological, theoretical and epistemological eclecticism and openness:

> Qualitative research, as a set of interpretive activities, privileges no single methodological practice over another. As a site of discussion, or discourse, qualitative research is difficult to define clearly. It has no theory or paradigm that is distinctly its own. […] multiple theoretical paradigms claim use of qualitative research methods and strategies, from constructivist to cultural studies, feminism, Marxism, and ethnic models of study. Qualitative research is used in many separate disciplines, as we will discuss below. It does not belong to a single discipline. Nor does qualitative research have a distinct set of methods or practices that are entirely its own. Qualitative researchers use semiotics, narrative, content, discourse, archival and phonemic analysis, even statistics, tables, graphs, and numbers.

Accordingly, qualitative research is constantly evolving and diversifying in response to the challenge of understanding equally dynamic social phenomena through different lenses. For some, however, this trait might suggest that qualitative research(ers) is/are fractured. This would be wrong since quantitative research(ers) also use a range of methods to analyse particular phenomena in order to understand their complexity. Whilst qualitative research may not privilege one approach over the other, its historical evolution shows that different methodological and epistemological paradigms have come to periodically dominate the landscape. This is captured in Denzin and Lincoln's (2005) so-called eight moments in qualitative research. The current backlash towards 'scientifically conservative' and 'quality controlled' EBPM in the USA and UK respectively is understandable and a position that we generally support. Hence, there is a need to engage and convince such policymakers of the power of interpretivism in its own right as a source of 'valid' evidence to be considered within EBPM.

At the same time however, we are of the view that there is merit in qualitative urban/housing studies scholars engaging with EBPM in a more systematic manner. We propose a framework, outlined at the beginning of

this chapter that has the potential to develop what we term 'pragmatic/evolutionary generalisations'. This call to adopt a more systematic approach might be viewed by some readers as positivistic, an 'exaggeration' or anathema in the context of qualitative research (Hammersley, 1992). The systematisation we propose is not designed to exclude or eradicate basic/traditional or critical forms of qualitative research. In fact, our approach sees all forms of qualitative research playing a crucial role in enhancing our understanding of social problems, enabling the development of effective policy resolutions. What we are suggesting is that an element of strategic and operational co-ordination and 'standardisation' be introduced, to varying degrees, across and within basic/traditional, critical and applied forms of qualitative research conducted in applied and academic research domains. We now turn to the arguments for this approach, as well as the specifics of our proposal.

A META-FRAMEWORK FOR SYSTEMATIC QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Our meta-framework bears many of the hallmarks of the principles, design and logic of pre-existing (qualitative) systematic research practices. These include: (i) the literature review, (ii) systematic reviews, (iii) meta-ethnography/synthesis and (iv) realist synthesis (Dixon-Wood et al., 2006; Noblit & Hare, 1988). In summary, our framework is a simplified cross-pollination of these various approaches with realist synthesis being the dominant research genre. A key challenge for systematic review practices is synthesising ontologically, epistemologically and methodologically inconsistent evidence from across previously conducted research (Wallace et al., 2006). Hence, we make a call for some practical methodological *harmonisation* and *standardisation* across and within different qualitative methods that would be informed by greater *co-ordination* between policy research stakeholders for future research.

One of the major dilemmas for systematic reviews beyond research conducted under experimental or RCT conditions is that whilst it seeks to synthesise the outcomes of broadly similar past research, each project tends to differ somewhat in terms of the specific research questions guiding observations or semi-structured interviews and/or focus groups. So whilst systematic reviews may be comparing 'apples with apples' the apples often differ somewhat in terms of their colour (red –v– green –v– yellow) and,

more importantly, their varieties (Red Delicious, Gala, Fuji and Braeburn [reds] –v– Granny Smith, Grenadier, Pippin and Newton [greens] –v– Golden Delicious, Golden Russet, Golden Earl and Maidens Blush [yellows]). Understanding such subtle differences is important in terms of establishing the overall 'best' and 'worse' possible use (for example, snacking, cooking or drinking) for each specific variety of apples. This analogy seeks to highlight the underlying complexity to policy problems and interventions. As Pawson et al. (2004, p. iv) note:

> In short, social interventions are complex systems thrust amidst complex systems. Attempts to measure 'whether they work' using the conventional armoury of the systematic reviewer will always end up with the homogenised answer 'to some extent' and 'sometimes', but this is of little use to policymakers or practitioners because it provides no clue as to why the interventions sometimes work and sometimes don't, or in what circumstances or conditions they are more or less likely to work, or what can be done to maximise their chances of success and minimise the risk of failure.

Understanding Complexity

Complexity then is all about understanding the dynamics of context and culture. Realist synthesis offers a way forward. It makes sense of complexity through how it conceives and processes notions of causation, ontology and generalisability – the so-called three logics that underpin EBPM (Pawson, 2002). In relation to causality, realist synthesis adopts a 'generative approach' (p. 342). For Pawson it is not programme interventions per se that bring about success or otherwise, but the underlying reasons/resources they offer to different target groups who are themselves endowed with varying underlying capacities and abilities to take advantage (or otherwise) of any intervention. Hence, what matters is the *context* surrounding the intervention and the *culture* across and within any group subject to an intervention. This leads Pawson to state that the "vital ingredients of programme *ontology* are thus its 'generative mechanisms'" (p. 342). For EBPM, generalisability is of fundamental importance. Traditionally, generalisability in EBPM, which takes its cue from statistical probability, has been interpreted to mean the most successful intervention. Realist synthesis, however, because it is sensitive to complexity, context and culture offers "a tailored, 'transferable theory' of what works and what doesn't work for different groups under different scenarios" (Pawson, 2002, p. 342).

It is important to stress that within realist synthesis, policy or programme interventions are not viewed as something concrete per se. Instead,

interventions are 'theories incarnate', conceived in the minds of policymakers (Pawson, 2002) and underscored by knowledge claims (i.e. hypotheses) that state that certain outcomes will materialise if certain courses of action are followed (Pawson et al., 2004, p. 4). Realist synthesis therefore seeks to test–fine tune–retest–fine tune theories/interventions through an ongoing iterative process of systematically collecting and analysing evidence. Fig. 1, adopted from Pawson et al.'s (2004) realist template for systematic review, seeks to capture the overall dynamic nature of the realist synthesis process. As can be seen, the process involves three broad phases of synthesis. We have labelled these 'macro', 'meso' and 'micro' to reflect the realist synthesis approach to understanding complexity, context and culture. The inclusion of 'iterative cycles' (the circular arrows) and the feedback loop (the thick hashed line) represent the 'generative approach' of realist synthesis in overall terms and within each phase of the synthesis process.

The complexity of the realist synthesis process itself, as depicted in Fig. 1, clearly indicates that in practice the approach is time-consuming and costly which probably explains why it is rarely used (Wallace et al., 2006). The likelihood of this approach being utilised within housing studies in the foreseeable future is doubtful as government policymakers (and housing researchers) appear reluctant – methodologically and financially – to commit to this systematic review (Maclennan & More, 1999; Wallace et al., 2006). Housing research does not command the levels of funding that go to medical research where systematic reviews are common practice. The technical and political hurdles inhibiting realist synthesis taking root in the real world therefore stifles the prospect of enhancing how policymakers make sense of and improve the interventions they use to tackle different problems – problems that are generally framed through a predominantly quantitative lens. Our meta-framework addresses some of these hurdles by calling for a degree of collaboration, harmonisation and standardisation within qualitative research.

FOUNDATIONS FOR A PRAGMATIC/ EVOLUTIONARY SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

As far as EBPM policymakers are concerned, qualitative research is seen to suffer from three key overlapping broad dilemmas: *co-ordination*, *harmonisation* and *standardisation* across and/or within methods. The framework

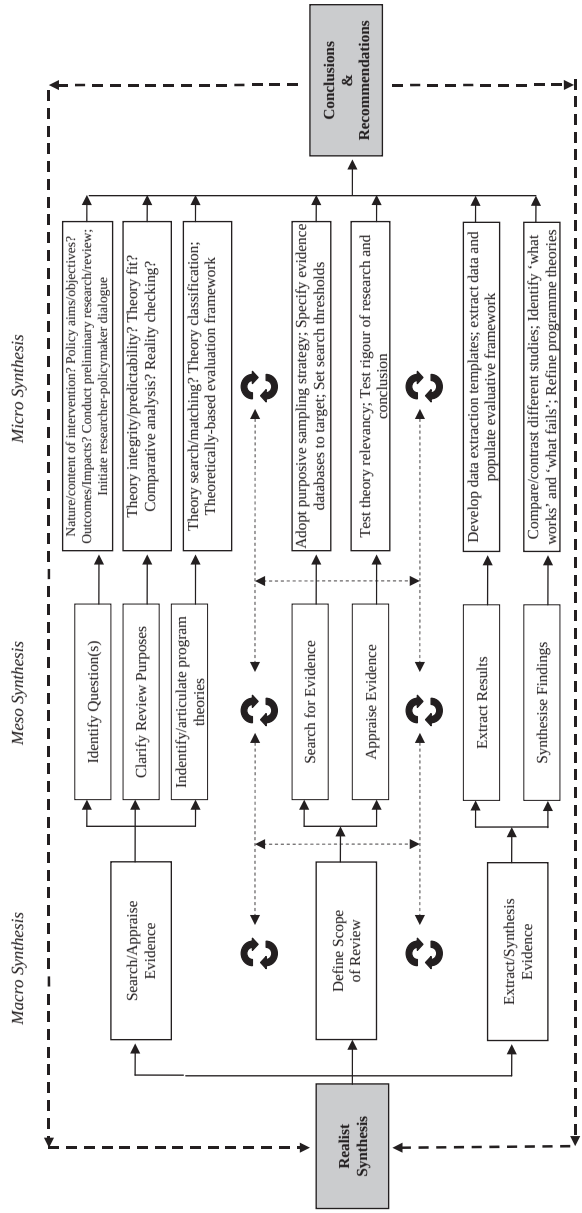

Fig. 1. Schematic Overview of Realist Synthesis Process. (Adapted from Pawson et al., 2004, p. iv).

that we propose speaks to these concerns, providing suggestions to address and to overcome them.

As noted earlier, qualitative research has often been viewed as a fractured paradigm given the multitude of methods it espouses to explore social phenomena. Relatedly, there is a lingering bias amongst (some) policymakers about the rigour, reliability and generalisability of findings from qualitative research when compared to those resulting from quantitative methods. This is reflected, for example, in the introduction of quality (control) frameworks for qualitative research conducted as part of the government funded enquiry (Bryman, Becker, & Sempik, 2007; Kushner, 2005; Spencer et al., 2003; Torrance, 2008). If conducted poorly, *all* research, be it qualitative or quantitative, warrants being labelled as lacking rigour and unreliable. But in and of itself, well executed qualitative research stands up to the most demanding tests of rigour and reliability. And while qualitative work may not be able to produce statistically significant generalisations, it can generate other forms of generalisations such as 'naturalistic generalisations' (Stake & Trumbull, 1982; Ruddin, 2006), analytical generalisations (Yin, 1994; Flyvberg, 2006) and empirical generalisations/theoretical inferences (Hammersley, 1992). Policymakers need to be made much more aware of the potentiality of these types of generalisations, particularly within the context of complex policy problems such as we find in housing and urban renewal.

Other criticisms levelled at qualitative research (particularly by policymakers) include the cost and time it takes to conduct and produce results. For sure, qualitative research may not satisfy policymakers' and politicians' contemporary craving for the 'quick-fix' and 'one-size-fits-all' solutions to social problems. Here we are reminded of Gaber and Gaber's (2007) caution that policymakers can 'pay now or pay later' for decisions made in haste to demonstrate action. Such expediency may be very costly, financially and politically, in the long run given that the complexity of the social world demands a much more considered, systematic and contextual analysis. Similarly, qualitative researchers need to appreciate the contexts, in which policymakers are situated. Thus we have the first step of our framework – a call for greater and more genuine forms of co-ordination and collaboration that will enhance mutual learning between researchers and policymakers. Moves in this direction are already under way within national research programmes administered by bodies such as the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), and the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI). Such momentum is to be welcomed and will hopefully see the evolution of innovative forms

of dialogue and enhancements of sense-making, not just between researchers and policymakers, but also amongst research participants (Torrance, 2008). An emerging example of this in Australia is the recently established National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF) that seeks to be a 'national interdisciplinary effort to help government, industry and community decision-makers manage the risks from the potential impacts of climate change' (Department of Climate Change, n.d.).

The high level of co-ordination and collaboration envisaged within the NCCARF when its various interrelated research nodes (of which there are eight) are set up in 2009 also provides an opportunity for the establishment of a centralised research depository for new (and completed) research. The proposed governance structure and research ethos of the NCCARF has the potential to streamline the research synthesis process at the macro and meso level as outlined above in Fig. 1.

One of the major challenges facing systematic reviews is how to sift through, select and then synthesise the eclectic array of data generated from already completed qualitative research projects. The process of arriving at the 'right' evidence to synthesise usually involves the application of various tests of methodological quality, appropriateness and focus (Oliver et al., 2005; Thorne et al., 2004). We might call such a process 'criteria filtering' or 'synthesis screening'. Arguably, this is necessary in order to avoid evidence overload, as well as ensuring that apples are being directly compared with apples. This leads to the questions of what criteria should be used and who will determine them? Up until now this task has predominantly been assumed by policymakers who, as we have noted, tend to have a 'biased' view of the world due to various contextual factors. Since our meta-framework calls for greater co-ordination and collaboration, the determination of criteria would be achieved through negotiation between all key stakeholders, thereby providing strategic methodological certainty and direction at the three levels of synthesis.

There is a need to introduce a degree of operational methodological certainty for the meso and micro synthesis levels where actual data needs to be collected and processed. We suggest that if synthesis at these levels is to be more streamlined then relatively clean and orderly evidence is required. In order to generate data of this nature, a degree of harmonisation and standardisation across and within the actual process of collecting and presenting evidence is demanded. A number of strategies to realise this are suggested and as can be seen from the terminology we use, they have positivistic overtones. We acknowledge that this does not sit well with realist synthesis (Pawson et al., 2004) but the style and manner of harmonisation

and standardisation that we propose is minimalistic, passive and thus remains sensitised to basic and/or critical forms of qualitative research and its essential interpretivist character. Accordingly, these strategies might be viewed as skin grafts capable of smoothing out some methodological wrinkles when conducting applied qualitative research for the purposes of EBPM.

Replication

The very mention of this term is likely to send a shudder down the spine of many a qualitative researcher given that replication is so immutably a part of (quasi) experimental research. Replication used in this way lays claim to being able to pinpoint the direct causes and effects of problems and interventions. In turn, this provides the impetus for the most effective intervention across the general population, thereby leading to the eradication of the problem. This form of 'strict' replication (Tilley, 1996) and generalisability are not what we have in mind. Instead, the form of replication we propose might more accurately be termed *emulation* whereby the aim is to aspire to conduct each successive wave of research in a broadly identical manner. In the event that there are significant deviations or problems in executing successive studies these should be noted and then critically reflected upon in the next iterative cycle of the research synthesis process so that contingency plans can be devised. The overall aim is to identify the positively and negatively charged patterns in the responses to and impacts of interventions on different neighbourhoods, groups and communities across case study sites. In the longer term, conducting research in this manner should lead to the development of a sedimentary evidence base, or evidence core, to use a physical geography metaphor, from which coarse evolutionary generalisations can be extracted and/or extrapolated.

Duplication

Realist synthesis talks about the need to utilise purposive sampling in order to avoid evidence overload. We echo this sentiment by calling for the inclusion of *purposive questions* during the data collection phases of qualitative research. In other words, qualitative researchers analysing a particular problem and intervention, say homelessness, should pursue

answers to a core set of identical questions. Such questions would frame the type of data sought when undertaking observations. They would be asked directly during interviews, focus groups and even surveys. This approach will facilitate the identification of fine grain evidence within the sedimentised evidence core outlined above. These purposive questions, together with the proportion they constitute of all questions asked, would be set by negotiation between all stakeholders thereby providing a sense of operational certainty. Where and when questions are not pursued, or fail to generate any/adequate data, needs to be recorded and scrutinised during the next iterative cycle within the micro synthesis process.

Quantification

Sandelowski (2001) notes that it is pure fallacy to believe that 'real qualitative researchers do not count' or 'cannot count' (p. 230). Only fundamentalists on both sides of the quantitative-qualitative divide would subscribe to such views. Nevertheless, numbers have tended to be underutilised or inappropriately used in qualitative research (Sandelowski, 2001). When numbers have been used, it has often been done cryptically, without qualification and devoid of any underlying sampling strategy. Hence, it is not uncommon to see and read claims such as the following in qualitative reports: '…'many'… 'a lot'… 'a significant number/proportion'…of interviewees indicated that they felt discriminated against'. Whilst there may well be an underlying truth to such claims, in an evidence-based/informed world such claims need to be backed up with hard(er) evidence if they are to meet the test of 'beyond reasonable doubt' (Hammersley, 1992). As outlined previously (Maginn et al., 2008) we support methodological pluralism and our meta-framework here calls upon qualitative researchers to embrace traditional forms of quantitative data. These can be generated via surveys, econometric models, GIS predictive modelling or 'newer' techniques such as qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) and fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) (Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research, 2008). These latter approaches fall under the rubric of systematic qualitative research, but as with our meta-framework and realist synthesis, the intent is to develop in-depth insights into different cases so as to understand their underlying complexity, whilst also trying to develop some level of generalisation (Rihoux & Lobe, n.d., p. 472).

Conceptualisation

In addition to providing policymakers with evidence expressed in a narrative and/or quantitative format as to the nature, scale/extent, causes and generalisability of a social problem and the factors underpinning the success/failure of a policy intervention, there is merit in presenting programme theories and empirical findings in some kind of conceptual or diagrammatic model as per Fig. 1. Illustrating theory and research findings in this way can help synthesise simply, and bring to life densely theoretical and empirical writing. Any initial conceptual models devised at the outset would be based on a preliminary synthesis of existing data and used as an empirical and theoretical prop to illustrate:

- the landscape of Problem X at a specific point in time (Xt_0) across various locations (XL_1; XL_2, XL_3, $\ldots XL_n$); and
- the predicted impacts on various groups (iG_1; iG_2, iG_3, $\ldots iG_n$) suffering from Problem X as a result of different attributes to Intervention Z (aZ_1; aZ_2, aZ_3, $\ldots aZ_n$).

As an intervention unfolds and the research policy process is enacted, the conceptual model would constantly evolve to reflect progress (or regress) from the baseline position. Qualitatively, quantitatively and conceptually plotting the nature, scale, direction and pace of change over time brought about by particular aspects of an intervention helps visualise and, more importantly, strengthen the theorisation of the evolutionary pathways of subsequent iterations of Intervention Z.

SO WHERE TO FROM HERE?

The four principles of replication, duplication, quantification and conceptualisation form the foundations of our pragmatic/evolutionary systematic approach. Is this a workable way forward for qualitative researchers who want to contribute to policy in an EBPM world? Is this an approach that will enable the strengths of qualitative research – its ability to incorporate complex contextual and cultural social phenomena – to be incorporated into a policy in an EBPM environment? Is this a palatable way forward for qualitative researchers? Will it compromise what we do best or will it showcase our flexibility and ensure that we thrive along with the critically important insights that our research has to offer? The future will no doubt reveal answers to these questions. Our main hope is that what we

have proposed here and what follows in the rest of the book stimulates debate and helps to strengthen qualitative research – basic, critical and applied – and its vital contribution to our general and policy understanding of complex urban and housing issues.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

Having opened the book with these bold suggestions for the future direction of qualitative research in housing studies and urban scholarship more broadly, we then present the work of contemporary researchers who provide strong evidence of the efficacy of qualitative research for policy development. Using a methodology underpinned by its own 'systematic logic', each author shows how this can be employed in particular types of housing research and in turn, how the outcomes of such activity can be applied to policy development. Critical reflections are offered throughout on the challenges this posed for the researchers and how their learning might be applied to other research questions and situations.

Part 1: Home and Homelessness

The first three chapters (Part 1 of the book) address issues of home and homelessness. Chapter 2 *House and Home: Methodology and Methods for Exploring Meaning and Structure* by New Zealand academics Harvey Perkins, David Thorns and Anne Winstanley admirably sets the scene. Seeped in the massive and ever expanding literature on what house and home *mean*, they argue that the physical site of this everyday space continues to be important despite some researchers asserting its diminishing role in a mobile social world. Indeed, Perkins et al. declare that the centrality of home in people's lives may well have grown in recent times, and with declining reserves of oil and the urgent need to live in more sustainable ways, localism may well be on the rise. For them, home is a 'centrally important local site' that defines internal and external relationship building and which is impacted upon by external forces. Accordingly, to comprehend the meaning of home it is necessary to understand *both* 'the subjective experiences of housing and neighbourhood *and* the social, economic and regulatory forces that influence those experiences'. A qualitative methodology is the most enabling as it permits the researcher

'to capture and combine elements of subjective everyday experience and wider structural considerations'.

Drawing from their ongoing study examining the meaning of house and home in Christchurch, New Zealand, Perkins et al. substantiate this claim. They explicate their multiple methods that include in-depth interviews with householders and city planners, video and audio recorded house and garden interpretative tours and analyses of real estate advertising and 'lifestyle' magazine texts. This approach has enabled the researchers to understand how the sense of home, place and identity is developed, as well as affirming the importance of meaning and structure in the interpretations of house and home. The authors detail how they operationalised each method, reflecting on the challenges encountered in encouraging participants to 'tell their own stories' and the difficulties of writing up the narratives. This was especially confronting given the multiple themes uncovered by the researchers that influence the meanings of house and home.

If we acknowledge 'home' as central in individual and collective life, then to be homeless has far reaching ramifications for both those intimately concerned, policymakers and service delivery professionals. Chapters 3 and 4 speak about different aspects of researching homelessness, asserting the utility of qualitative methods in being able to understand the complexities of the condition in ways that are respectful of and sensitive to those being researched.

Drawing on a wealth of their own experience – a collaboration of practice, research and academic interest in homelessness – Robyn Martin and Nola Kunnen unravel many of the challenges in understanding the meaning of homelessness. More importantly, their chapter provides practical suggestions for sensitively researching those who are homeless in an empowering and inclusive way. Drawing from lessons learned in undertaking applied social research projects that directly and indirectly examined pathways out of homelessness the authors suggest three key principles and seven specific strategies for inclusive research practice with diverse stakeholder groups (including research participants, staff who deliver and manage services for homeless people, decision-makers, funding bodies and senior management involved in the research). Theirs is a practical set of principles and strategies that can be applied by others undertaking research on homeless or other vulnerable individuals. For Martin and Kunnen inclusive research practices address issues such as power differentials between researchers and stakeholders; the relationships between the stakeholders; ways in which differences in positioning or agendas can be successfully negotiated within qualitative research projects and the importance of research teams regularly

discussing their emerging understandings of the research topic. These are critical issues for *all* researchers and arguably for all research.

The themes of understanding the complexity of the research process, and the ways in which those being researched are treated and valued in that process are illuminated in a different way in Chapter 4 by Catherine Robinson. Using the term '*felt* homelessness', to incorporate the bodily and emotional experiences of those who are homeless, Robinson argues that qualitative research methods afford the best opportunity to develop a holistic understanding of homelessness. Specifically she points to reflexivity and empathy, 'two of the unique, embodied research tools offered within qualitative research practice', as providing the best way forward to understand the felt-experience of homelessness. In turn this opens up the possibility for a policy response and service focus that is based on *care*. Robinson's methodological approach is also an empowering one for those who are being researched – or as she puts it, 'an intervention into their emotional silencing'. What follows is a personally moving piece that clearly demonstrates the humanity and relational nature of the research process (in Robinson's terms the 'bodily resonance of researcher and researched'), and the challenges that this poses for the scholar and ultimately policymaker and service provider.

Part 2: Researching Complex Housing Needs and Worlds

The next three chapters are grouped under the theme of researching complex housing needs and worlds. These include issues in both developed and developing countries, as well as the housing needs of marginalised groups. In Chapter 5, Graham Martin looks at how qualitative research assists us to better understand the multifaceted nature of gentrification in developed countries. His particular focus is the impact of the regeneration of inner city areas on the original inhabitants from *their* perspectives. This is an issue that is poorly understood when compared to other more positive aspects of gentrification for cities. What do those who remain think of the social, cultural and physical changes to their neighbourhoods and their new neighbours? Drawing from his research in the gentrified area of Notting Hill, west of London, Martin discusses the methodological difficulties in developing a common language around the central concern of the study – that of 'neighbourhood change and the identity of place'. He also considers problems in devising and implementing particular methodological approaches (accessing potential interviewees and the interview process),

and the analysis of collected data and its representation. This chapter highlights the importance of flexibility in the field, particularly in the face of unexpected outcomes that contradict prevailing academic discourse. The ongoing challenge for qualitative researchers in how data is used and represented is Martin's other key concern. The issue here is that of generalisation and how as Martin puts it (quoting Silverman, 1993), 'inferences about wider theoretical and empirical questions might be made from the utterances of individuals'. This chapter provides valuable insights for researchers facing similar methodological unease as well as reinforcing the overarching mantra of this book – the criticality of ongoing and honest reflective research practice.

In Chapter 6 Michal Lyons takes the focus to housing issues in developing countries with her discussion on the use of mixed research methods in policy evaluation. Her two year study on Sri Lanka's post-tsunami housing policy shows how quantitative and qualitative data can be triangulated in different ways. Further, Lyons demonstrates the value of qualitative methods in contributing to understanding different aspects of policy process and impact – no doubt of value to researchers in *both* developing and developed countries. The focus of this chapter is however, firmly on the use of mixed methods and the questions that inevitably arise when qualitative and quantitative approaches are used together. Lyons draws on her work in Sri Lanka, to reflect on the different ways in which mixed methods can be used to evaluate policy. The critical issue is contextual relevance and again the need to be a reflective researcher throughout the process, responsive to changing situations and unexpected outcomes.

Chapter 7 returns to considering housing issues in developed countries. Delia Lomax uncovers complex issues for researchers working with Gypsy/Travellers in the UK and Europe. These issues have parallels for researching the housing needs of other minority groups, particularly those who have a history of being monitored and controlled by state agencies, and are accordingly suspicious of authority and government figures. Lomax's discussion also raises dilemmas for researchers who are funded by government – not only might those subject of the research be unwilling to participate, but the results of such enquiry may be unpalatable for the funding bodies. In considering the key challenges investigating the housing and accommodation needs of Gypsy/Travellers, Lomax is particularly interested in developing inclusive research strategies that will maximise participation. Her vision is a collaborative research partnership, where Gypsy/Travellers work as community researchers and in the development of peer-led research.

Part 3: Community and Housing

The final main section of the book turns the spotlight on community and housing issues. Chapter 8 leads off with its discussion of residents' perceptions of environmental quality in their local neighbourhoods. Mags Adams, Gerry Moore, Tim Cox, Ben Croxford, Mohammed Rafaee and Stephen Sharples describe an innovative approach that they have developed to understand the role of human senses in shaping urban experiences. Incorporating photo-survey, a soundwalk and one-to-one photo-elicitation interviews they have been able to incorporate the visual, olfactory and auditory senses of urban residents in order to better communicate perceptions of local environmental quality. Situating their work in the theoretical context of 'sensory urbanism', Adams et al., detail their qualitative research methodology, showing how it enabled the city centre residents to articulate different issues and problems encountered while inhabiting an inner city area. An evaluation of the approach examines its effectiveness in engaging residents, as well as its usefulness for policymakers responsible for developing inner city areas where multiple activities and uses must coexist day and night.

Chapter 9 also focuses on resident perspectives with Kathy Arthurson's examination of the role of qualitative research in identifying how social mix is perceived. Policies to create and support socially mixed suburbs are pursued by housing providers and policymakers convinced of its benefits – particularly for disadvantaged residents. However, there are gaps in understanding the outcomes of policies to change social mix, suggesting that the potential benefits may be overemphasised in pursuit of an ideal and harmonious community. Arthurson shows how qualitative methods can provide a comprehensive understanding of the outcomes of social mix policies to ensure that they are applied from an informed platform. Adherence to a philosophically worthwhile social goal can sometimes blind us to the reality of the outcomes for individuals and communities. What Kathy Arthurson illuminates is the need for researchers and policymakers to be aware of pursuing their own 'hoped-for' results, which when comprehensively assessed, are simply not there.

In Chapter 10, Talja Blokland, Paul Maginn and Susan Thompson shed light on the largely untapped potential that ethnographic research affords for the development and application of informed housing policy. They are particularly interested in place-related systems of meaning that shape residents' perceptions of housing, their neighbourhoods and their participation *and* non-participation in local decision-making forums. Blokland et al.,

discuss the utility of ethnography for housing studies broadly as a precursor to a detailed foray into two case studies – one from the Netherlands; the other situated in the USA. What they show is how ethnographic research produces different knowledges when compared with quantitatively-informed approaches. Specifically, ethnography has the ability to detect the not-so-loud voices in local neighbourhoods and the factors underpinning 'non-participation' in decision making forums. This opens up a way forward for policymakers genuinely desirous of hearing all stakeholders in complex and contested situations.

The final chapter in this section is also concerned with citizen participation but its focus is on public housing and the use of grounded theory – a particularly rigorous and systematic qualitative methodological application. In concert with all the contributors to this volume, Dawn Jourdan agrees that understanding housing needs and appropriate policy responses is a complex and contextual process. And while mixed qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches offer a useful lens to derive informed knowledge, Jourdan argues that grounded theory, as developed by Glaser and Strauss, affords a philosophically compatible and methodologically rigorous approach for housing studies. She outlines the specifics of grounded theory before examining how it might be used to facilitate the development of new theory in housing research. Jourdan illustrates her point by drawing on the use of grounded theory to study an intergenerational planning process for the redevelopment of public housing. Her chapter concludes with a discussion of how researchers might bring grounded theory into the mainstream of housing research.

Our book concludes with Adrian Franklin's chapter, *Ethnography and Housing Studies Revisited*. Franklin opens his chapter by reflecting on the legacy of the paper he wrote in 1990 that made a strong argument for the use of ethnography in housing studies. In revisiting the work, he finds its direct impact has been minimal despite the enthusiasm at the time for ethnography's ability to address the shortcomings of positivism in housing research. Franklin's historical review shows that the potential of ethnography has not been realised in housing studies. He posits three reasons as to why this is the case – one to do with methodological (mis)understandings in the way that ethnography has developed; another related to the reluctance of funders to support ethnographic research; and the third to do with the absence of ethnography in policy relevant research. And while these reasons might explain why ethnography has not blossomed in the past, Franklin asserts that they are grounds for reasserting the arguments first put in his 1990 paper. This he does in the final chapter of the book and in

looking at more recent housing scholarship, shares his delight in discovering a rich source of ethnography focusing on home. Franklin's reflections on the importance of true ethnography in understanding 'cultural milieu' in housing provision are ultimately an unsatisfying one. He especially laments the ways, in which governments have often focused on quick-fix solutions for housing problems ignoring the recommendations of researchers, designers and planners to ensure the provision of socially and culturally appropriate housing and neighbourhoods. Whether the future will reveal a different trajectory for ethnography remains to be seen – and while researchers may be totally convinced of its efficacy, in an EBPM world the arguments for its use will have to be stronger than ever!

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CHAPTER 2

HOUSE AND HOME: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS FOR EXPLORING MEANING AND STRUCTURE

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INTRODUCTION

The social scientific and humanities literature on house and home continues to grow (Perkins, Thorns, & Winstanley, 2002a; Perkins, Thorns, Winstanley, & Newton, 2002b; King, 2004; Mallett, 2004; Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Gorman-Murray & Dowling, 2007). Researchers have interpreted home in a number of ways. For some, it represents a centre, a place in which possessions and display represent identity. For others it is the existential space of being where the nature and limits of centre and universe, sacred and profane, are created and maintained. Home can also be a material place in which the production and organisation of housing and neighbourhoods necessarily entails certain kinds of social interaction and relations. The recognition here that housing has both a use and exchange value is crucially important. Depending on one's cultural group, home is imbued with greater or lesser degrees of privatism and home-centredness. Some writers see the growth of technologies that permit the development of home-based work

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and individualised leisure practices as factors likely to strengthen home as the centre of future activity. Homes are also important in the creation of privacy, tranquillity, stability, conventional behaviour, meaning and transformation.

We positioned our study of house and home in the context of theoretical debates about the continuing importance of place-based social relationships in an increasingly mobile social world. These debates centre on the assertion that the territorially defined community has not disappeared but now 'plays a minor role in structuring social relationships for the majority of the population' (Castells, 2003, p. 126). Place, in this formulation, is thus of limited significance because patterns of sociality are now 'hugely dependent upon all sorts of networked relationships and … these patterns of networked movement come to constitute the patterning of social life' (Gane, 2004, pp. 109–110). This argument contrasts with the significant literature on place and sense of place that highlights strong and enduring connections between people and places in which they live, even if those places are linked to extensive and fluid social, cultural and economic networks.[1] The suggestion that place matters only a little also contradicts research that indicates local social interaction continues to be important and residential mobility may, in some cases, have actually declined. Fischer's (2001) study in the United States showed, for example, that between 1950 and 1999 residential mobility had decreased. In addition, the growth of the internet and electronic means of communication seem to have added to, rather than replaced, other forms of communication and has thus contributed to the development of both local and more distant networks (Wellman & Giuha, 1999). Similarly, increasing use of active transport modes such as cycling and walking, and growth in the development and use of community gardens are good examples of strengthened local individual activity and social interaction. Commentators on issues relating to energy and transport are pointing at the increasing levels of localism being an inevitable feature of future human environments as the cost of travel increases.

Home can thus be thought of as a centrally important local site in which we interact with and accommodate others, and from which we relate to the world around us. It is also a site which is affected by a host of externally generated influences. Home-related research therefore requires an understanding of the subjective experiences of housing and neighbourhood *and* the social, economic and regulatory forces that influence those experiences. A qualitative methodology is very appropriate for such research because it allows researchers to capture and combine elements of subjective everyday experience and wider structural considerations.

In this chapter, we will briefly outline the nature of our multi-faceted research into the meaning of house and home in Christchurch, New Zealand,[2] and explicate our qualitative methodology. We will discuss our choice of methods, the ways those methods are interlinked and how they emerged from particular ways of characterising our research problem and developing a research strategy. Consistent with a qualitative research approach we will show how research participants were encouraged to tell their own stories and how their narratives highlighted the importance of meaning and structure in interpretations of house and home. We will also describe the challenges of writing about this type of research, and the inevitability of breaking participants, un-segmented and continuous lives into a series of overlapping and interconnected sub-narratives (about family, work, leisure, transport, urban planning, etc.) as they pertain to house and home. Finally, we will use our experience of qualitative research methods in this study to reflect on the applicability of this approach in other housing and related research.

BACKGROUND TO THE CHRISTCHURCH HOUSE AND HOME STUDY

Our research in Christchurch had its origins in a study entitled 'New Zealanders at home: the meanings of house and home'.[3] When we were writing the funding application for the research our initial focus was on home ownership which has long been a central objective for most adult New Zealanders, with over 73 per cent of households in this tenure at the 1991 Census. These home ownership rates, now a little lower at 68 per cent, are extremely high by international standards (Wilkes & Shirley, 1984; Ferguson, 1994; Badcock, 2003). Other forms of housing tenure, particularly renting, have been seen as morally acceptable for members of society who are not yet full-fledged (for example, young adults) but generally, owning one's own house (or at least having secured a mortgage) has been an important source of social respectability in New Zealand for many years. Material gains, enabled by ownership have, however, been variable, and shaped by the time of purchase and sale, regional location of property and the length of time that the house has been owned (Thorns, 1989; Dupuis, 1992; Dupuis & Thorns, 1995a, 1995b, 1996). Other gains from home ownership, this time affective in nature, are also evident. New Zealanders' homes provide a sense of reliability, confidence and trust in the world and are important places for

the formation of identity (Giddens, 1981, 1984; Saunders, 1990; Dupuis & Thorns, 1995b).

Our research ideas were also influenced by the observation that New Zealanders' houses and homes have been an important site for recent changes in production and consumption. This has been highlighted in the nature of home-based work and continuing importance of do-it-yourself home construction and maintenance; the increasing commercialisation and privatisation of leisure (Perkins & Gidlow, 1991; Laidler & Cushman, 1993; Watson, 1993; Lynch & Simpson, 1993; Swaffield, 1993; Gidlow, Perkins, Simpson, & Cushman, 1994); the advent of teleshopping; changes in family structure to include significant numbers of dual-earner/dual-career households (Goodger et al., 1993; Perkins, Gidlow, & Fountain, 1991; Perkins & Gidlow, 1996), blended and single parent families and a re-emergence of a class of domestic workers, employed in home-based childcare, cleaning, gardening and property maintenance tasks (Gregson & Lowe, 1994).

These new household production and consumption patterns have occurred alongside changes in the New Zealand housing market, all of which have been influenced by far-reaching shifts in many other aspects of New Zealand society as a result of economic restructuring since the late 1960s and concomitant radical neo-liberal economic, political and administrative restructuring since the early 1980s. Such changes have had a considerable influence on the ways people construct their senses of self and place (Britton, Le Heron, & Pawson, 1992; Le Heron & Pawson, 1996; Thorns, 1992). Work–place relations have been re-regulated. Wealth and income distributions have been affected by employment and tax changes and the booms and slumps within the housing market. Inheritance and intergenerational transfers have also affected the ability of some individuals to maintain and enhance their social positions (Forrest & Murie, 1995; Thorns, 1994, 1995). Government policy associated with environmental management, including urban planning (the *Resource Management Act 1991*) (Memon & Perkins, 1993, 2000) house construction (the *Building Act 1991*) and local government administration (various amendments and versions of the Local Government Act) has been changed and in some cases liberalised.

In Christchurch, a city of 365,000 residents, and the largest in the South Island of New Zealand, these changes have worked themselves out in particular ways in neighbourhoods and the construction of housing. The city is largely suburban in character with low-density urban development predominating. The majority of the population lives in separate houses rather than multi-occupancy or high-rise dwellings. Christchurch has a

growing population, mostly because of migration from the rest of the South Island and overseas. This has stimulated the housing market over the last decade leading to two building booms, first in the mid-1990s and the one that began in 2000 and is still underway. The result has been the development of urban infill in the city centre and along main transport arteries, suburban growth at the edges of the city and lifestyle farm subdivisions in the peri-urban zone, a set of trends likely to continue at least in the near future.

During the early parts of our research we noted local authority planners advocating, and property developers building, new forms of urban dwelling. This led to additional research in the social and spatial dynamics of new urban residential forms.[4] Again, using a qualitative approach, we studied 'infill housing' and its links to the compact city, greenfield developments built in accordance with the 'smart growth' agenda and the retirement village. Private sector provision of the latter is a significant new feature of New Zealand's urban landscape. In both cases, the key components of change – regulatory environments, neighbourhood form, housing and locality design – were investigated.

THE RESEARCH TEAM AND PRELIMINARY THEORETICAL WORK

The study was conducted by a team of researchers from two universities in the Christchurch area. Initially, a collaboration was established between a sociologist interested in urban and housing research, focusing particularly on processes of social and economic restructuring (Thorns, 1989, 1992); and a social geographer interested in everyday life, sense of place and residents' interpretations of urban change (Perkins, 1986, 1988a, 1988b, 1989). Both had experience of conducting research using a variety of methods, including qualitative modes of enquiry. Our funding situation was such that we were able to bring a number of postgraduate students into the project to work as assistants, and in the latter parts of the research we supported thesis topics related directly to our programme. After a year of activity the two principal investigators were joined by a full-time researcher, a sociologist interested in home as an expression of identity for women and the centrality of story-telling in the expression of such identity (Winstanley, 2001).

We began by reviewing the social scientific literature on home. This was done through systematic searching of a range of online databases including

both disciplinary and multi-disciplinary sources. This material was analysed thematically and published as an online research resource on our programme website.[5] After the first three year phase of the research this bibliography was updated and the essay identifying key themes in the literature was revised (Perkins et al., 2002).

In our literature review, we foregrounded the notions of space and place and in these terms the research literature can be categorised according to the ways in which space and/or place are written about (Fig. 1). These include space as natural and/or built, fixed and/or contestable, private/public, material and/or symbolic, linguistic/metaphorical and as a site for social interaction. An important issue arising here is the distinction between space and place in relation to 'home'. Homes – or houses – are spaces we occupy with their many configurations influencing the way we live. Place is something we actively create through a multiplicity of actions and interactions. We rejected, therefore, the idea that home is simply 'an ideological construct created from people's emotionally charged experiences of where they happen to live' (Gurney, 1990, p. 26). Homes as special kinds of places are thus material *and* social constructions that involve the use of space, but the form and nature of social life within them are not determined entirely by spatial considerations. We can and do create and recreate our homes as spaces and places over time as life courses and circumstances change.

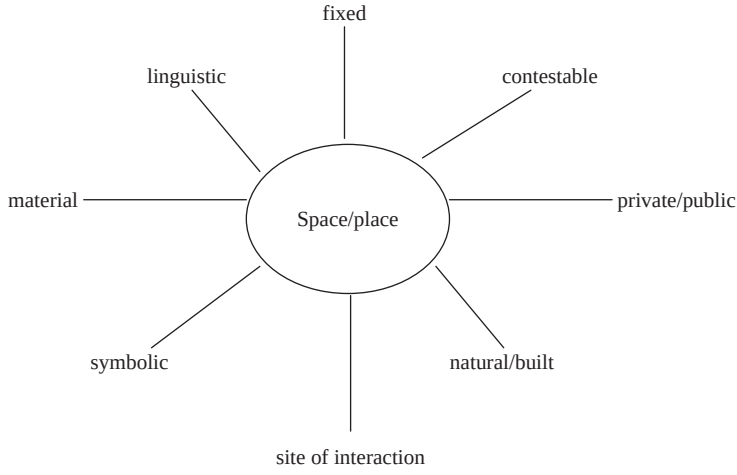

Fig. 1. Key Aspects of the Research Literature.

Set in this theoretical context, studying house and home thus requires some assessment of the continuing importance of place for the generation of meaning and identity for individuals and households. It also requires an understanding of how individuals and households develop their sense of home – seeing this as a vital site within which they craft their sense of identity and place. We therefore conceptualised home as being nested within a set of relationships spanning outwards to the neighbourhood, city and wider national and increasingly global context (Fig. 2). This demanded an initial focus on the relationship between the house – a material structure providing shelter and economic value and source of wealth – and home, a place of meaning and attachment.

This approach, coupled with a qualitative methodology, we believed, would allow us to gain insight into the complexities of unfolding and emerging socio-spatial experiences of our research participants' everyday lives (Eyles, 1985, 1989; Perkins & Thorns, 2001a). From this starting point we then planned to explore the linkages with the wider neighbourhood and city and finally to address the extent to which house and home have been

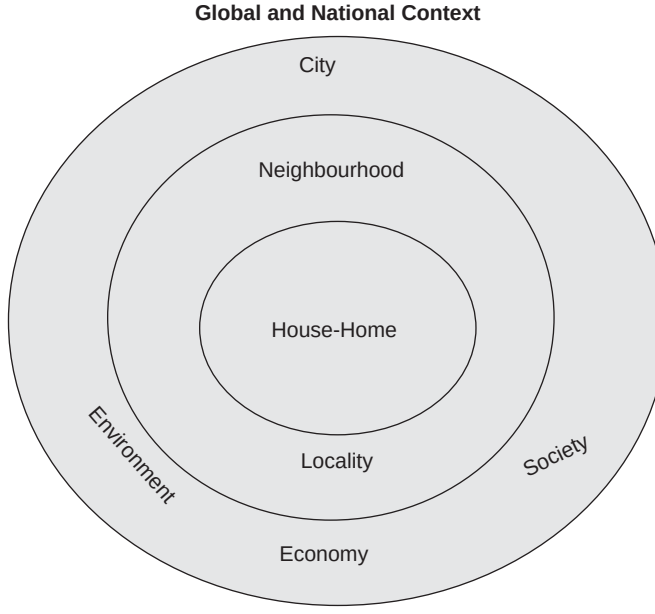

Fig. 2. Linkages between House–Home–Neighbourhood and City.

influenced by global trends, and associated with changing tastes and ideas. We adopted a methodology that allowed these various strands to be integrated into an overall understanding of these processes of change and our research methodology thus represents elements of local and global ethnography (Burawoy, 2000).

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Our desire to interpret the social interaction that took place in and with houses, and the meaning created in such social interaction, led us inevitably to the use of a naturalistic qualitative research strategy such as that adopted by symbolic interactionists (Blumer, 1969; Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006; Becker, 1998) and interpretative social geographers (Eyles & Smith, 1988) interested in the study of everyday life. This allowed us to interpret the ways our participants made their lives in their houses and homes, but in conditions over which they had only partial control.

Sampling

Given this methodological perspective we wanted to hear and record research participants' stories about a variety of types of houses and homes and thereby established a sampling frame of housing tenure representative of the city (Table 1). These included a range of housing types in private ownership and public and private renting. Whatever the tenure, most Christchurch residents live in stand-alone or detached housing but a minority live in other housing forms, (for example, semi-detached and attached town houses, multi-story apartments) whom we also wanted to include in our sampling.

We were also confronted by the need to determine the spatial boundaries for our sampling. In Christchurch, as in most cities, there are a range of 'boundaries' constructed for administrative purposes ranging from census divisions, to electorates for both local and national elections, community board areas, valuation districts and school zoning catchments. There are also a range of subjective 'boundaries' relating to the images of various areas that have been generated over time through the media, folk or everyday life knowledge, and real estate marketing and imaging. Each of these gives a somewhat different shape to 'neighbourhoods' and owes its construction to a different set of criteria – sometimes there will be overlap between these but this may not be the case. Hence, our sampling of residential areas or

Table 1. Matrix of Tenure Types.

Home Ownership	Public Renting	Private Renting
Single family dwellings	Pensioner housing (local council public housing)	Single family dwellings
Town houses (stand alone and semi-detached)	State housing single family dwellings (central government housing)	Town houses (stand alone and semi-detached)
Home units (attached)	Home units (attached) (central government housing)	Home units (attached)
Home units (apartments)	Home units (apartments) (central government housing)	Home units (apartments)

neighbourhoods from the outset required some judgements as to the most significant defining criteria and whether these were going to be based on external 'objective' criteria or much more related to the constructions of meaning made by local inhabitants and marketers of image. We thus attempted to work with both ways of identifying areas of the city. This required a reliance in part on a popularly accepted conceptualisation of the city's housing market, and its sub-markets, shaped by price, age, tenure and image to sort our sample 'neighbourhoods' across the city. Smith and Thorns (1979) had also conducted research on residential mobility in Christchurch between 1978 and 1980 and relied on the 'housing market' categorisation of residential locations across the city, so that we were able to incorporate their work in our sampling frame. However, new housing areas that had been developed since 1980 had to be added. The principal examples here were areas on the edges of the city. Essentially, the study took a transect across Christchurch, running from the north east (sea coast) – traditionally an area of lower priced housing but which in the last decade has seen new development of medium- to upper-priced housing and gentrification of the coastal suburbs, through to the central city – areas now undergoing redevelopment and intensification – to Hyde Park – an upper income suburban development in the north west of the city. We also included a hill suburb, Mt. Pleasant to capture the experience of those living on steep and elevated sites. This transect presented us with a range of cases reflecting the major sub-markets within the overall housing market. Incorporating a combination of housing tenure types and neighbourhoods, we invited households in our sample areas to participate in the study using a letterbox drop. This elicited a sample of 41 households.

Interviews and Observations

Each member of these households was invited to participate in an intensive semi-structured interview and observation process either individually or together. The interview process took place over two sessions. During the first session, which was audio-taped, participants were asked to talk about their housing history and likely futures, and the lives of household members as they interact with each other and their houses, gardens, neighbourhoods and the wider city. When children wanted to be involved we asked them to both talk to us about their home, and if they wished, to draw pictures of their favourite parts of the house, and the activities they did there, to help illustrate their talk. During the second session, which was audio- and video-taped, participants were asked to talk about the form and contents of their houses and gardens; focusing on the interrelationships between themselves and properties they occupy. During this often very animated domestic tour we focused primarily on the physical form of the house, its contents and household members' possessions, but inevitably the intimate connections between physical form and social life were captured. This is nowhere better illustrated than in talk about possessions that had often been acquired over significant periods of time. These were important because they represented connections with others or expressions of individual or collective identity, and the ways in which household members organised space to facilitate expressive, instrumental and social aspects of everyday life.

Taking a Flexible Approach to Interviewing

From a methodological point of view one of the things that we tried to achieve through the process of talking with as many household members as possible, was an understanding of both individual views and those of the household as a whole. We did this in an attempt to counter the deficiency in much of the literature and research in this area that focuses only on single individuals or 'individual households' and thus does not provide information pertaining to all household members. Through this process, in which we also tracked people's residential histories over time, we hoped to develop a more detailed picture of the meaning of changes than has been achieved by more quantitative studies (Winstanley, Thorns, & Perkins, 2003).

This required a flexible approach to interviewing and they were thus very open-ended and conversational, allowing participants to shape the discussion along the broad lines that we initiated. The interviews with adult

household members started from the point when they left their parental home and set off on their housing journey and we followed this through to their present situation. We found that this was a good way of opening up the conversation about the importance of house, home and place at different stages in their lives.

The interviews were all held at the participants' homes. Such sites in Elwood and Martin's (2000) terms embody and constitute multiple scales of spatial relations and meaning that construct the power and positionality of participants in relation to the people, places and interaction discussed in the interview. Interviewers, they argue, can: '… observe interactions with other people that are relevant to understanding a participant's experience in a particular place' (p. 652). We endorse this view. Our research 'sites' gave us 'additional' information not just related to the materiality or feel of house/home, but also to the social interaction and relations that underpinned the changes people had made in their housing location journeys and everyday living. For example, older interviewees' stories had been 'rehearsed' and usually agreed upon by each household member. They conveyed a sense of order and stability. Younger couples' stories were still being 'constructed' as they grappled with mortgages, renovations, arrival of children, and the meaning or purpose of home-related activities was often debated during the course of the interview, displaying a degree of uncertainty and the potential for change or new directions in their future home-making activities.

'At the most basic level, interview locations provide an important opportunity for researchers to make observations that generate richer and more detailed information than can be gleaned from the interview content alone' (Elwood & Martin, 2000, p. 653). Examples of this relationship between the interview process in people's homes and 'rich information' included noting gender differences and power relations that had shaped – and continued to shape – housing choices, décor preferences and the definition or use of space. When interviewing couples, the use of 'we' or 'I' was one such marker. When all or most household members were present, family dynamics were brought to the fore; for example, one family's 'dream home' was about to be sold because of financial concerns coupled with the determination of one teenager to leave home, despite the parents' attempts to provide their near adult children with their 'own space' and hoping to keep the family together. This focus on interview locations has relevance for other areas of qualitative enquiry. Perkins (1986, 1988a, 1988b, 1989), for example, used audio-taping and photography to record research participants' interpretations of residential infill as they confronted it during visits to parts of a rapidly changing urban setting. Strang (2004) argues for

ethnographic place-based interviewing to understand the meanings, uses and values ascribed to water in local rivers. Qualitative research methods are therefore very useful for exploring people's changing relationships with all that environs them, including physical space and landscape.

Dealing with the Interview Data

After each interview sequence a group conference was held with all three of the researchers to review the video material and share our ideas and insights that had been gained from the discussions with the participants. These sessions were audio-taped and then transcribed as part of the ongoing record of the research, which was useful for developing concepts, theoretical ideas and creating indexing categories.

The material from the interviews with the 41 households and post-interview researcher discussions was carefully transcribed, producing a large volume of text that was then entered into the qualitative software programme NVivo (Bryman & Burgess, 1994; Fielding & Lee, 1991).[6] Each transcript was then 'coded' into themes that became 38 'nodes' for analysis (see Table 2).

The data in these nodes were not discrete and there was considerable overlap in the content of nodes. In an analysis and writing process that is still ongoing we examined the data in each node and the interconnections between closely related nodes. Our experience of this process is that the meticulous taping, transcribing and entry of data into such a categorising scheme enables researchers to become very closely connected to their fieldwork and research subjects and allows for the development of multiple lines of enquiry.

As an example of this process and its resultant published paper (Winstanley, Perkins, & Thorns, 2002a, 2002b) we will now briefly turn to our work on housing histories and residential mobility. Here the interview material coded under the generic terms 'housing history' and 'house-search' was further categorised into themes associated with residential mobility, for example, 'location', 'employment', 'family' (immediate and extended) and 'housing attributes'. To some extent these themes mimic the range of variables considered relevant in existing literature describing and/or predicting mobility patterns, but rather than see these themes as discrete (or ranked) variables we focused on how these were connected, interwoven in the form of stories that relayed the complexity of interrelated experiences, motives and contexts that were not divorced either from each other or broader fields of influence.

Table 2. Nodes of Analysis.

1. Accumulation practices
2. Aesthetic values
3. Class-status
4. Decision making processes
5. Decoration
6. Design-structure talk
7. Family-friends
8. Finance
9. Future housing journeys-aspirations
10. Garden-landscape-lot/section
11. Gender
12. Health
13. Heating
14. House search
15. Housing history
16. Intergenerational talk
17. Leisure
18. Life course
19. Maintenance-building
20. Media
21. Memories
22. Migrant
23. Natural environment
24. Negotiation
25. Neighbourhood
26. Objects
27. Pets talk
28. Privacy-privatism
29. Research process
30. Routines
31. Security
32. Sentiment-house or garden
33. Space talk
34. Tenure talk
35. Transport
36. Use of house talk
37. Value talk
38. Work and employment

How to write about mobility decisions and experiences has clearly been a problem in earlier literature. If one separates the variables from the ways in which particular household members process information and interact with each other then we lose an important part of the whole story. If we

concentrate on the whole story then we are in the danger of losing discernible patterns of mobility that could be used to predict (and control) housing and/or neighbourhood development. We argue that we need the story in order to *understand* the nature and complexity of individuals' and families' residential histories, present experiences and future aspirations. We also argue that this method of knowledge generation is relevant for planning and policy formulation and implementation. A methodological focus on enumeration and quantitative analysis without including interpretation of qualitative data incorporating research participants' narratives and quotidian experiences could easily lead to ineffective policy development and/or implementation because they will lack contextual grounding and relevance to those most affected.

Exploration of the data in the NVivo nodes in turn leads to considering the kinds of theory that might be useful in interpreting the data for a range of different audiences. For the above example we drew on the concept of ontological narratives (Gutting, 1996; Knight, 2000; Somers & Gibson, 1994). This theoretical position was informed by two strands of theory development – home as the site of ontological security (Giddens, 1981, 1984; Saunders, 1990; Dupuis & Thorns, 1995b, 1996) and ontological narrativity (Thompson, 1994, 1996). In the discussions of ontological security, home is seen as a source of constancy in the social and material environment. It is the spatial context for the establishment of routine, a site where people may feel most in control of their lives, and a secure base around which people can construct their identities and sense of place. The concept of ontological narrativity focuses on overarching narratives of individual lives that are constructed from, or reflected in, the stories we create and relate to others about activities that make up those narratives. In this way the stories about house and home are connected to individual and family identity as the spaces and places of home are created and recreated.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS AND THE EXAMINATION OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Lifestyle Magazines and Creating Home

Some of the stories our research participants told us related directly to wider social structural influences on their home-making. Data contained in several

of the interview nodes: 'aesthetic values', 'decoration', 'design-structure talk' and 'maintenance-building' were relevant here. These highlighted a very significant connection between various print media and the information our research participants used to inform decision-making about the decoration and renovation of their houses. In many of the 41 houses we studied, participants talked about the influence of such media in the video interviews and showed us examples of it. We thus set about doing further work, to extend our interview data, which resulted in a paper on the ways householders are influenced by popular and building trade print media in the construction, presentation and creation of home (Leonard, Perkins, & Thorns, 2004). Methodologically, this work had several strands.

It first involved a critical review of the consumption, commodification and advertising literature. We then purchased or collected a range of printed material produced during 1998–2000 including: home design, gardening, women's and general lifestyle, magazines, supermarket and pharmacy publications and trade brochures. In our qualitative thematic content analysis of this material we focused on the ways writers and graphic designers create and present indoor and outdoor home environments designed to sell products and services to home-owners. The material illustrates the centrality for New Zealanders of home- and garden-building, decoration and renovation and the very considerable profits that are available from selling related products and services.

The argument we developed from this part of our research was that New Zealanders' sense of home is constructed in a dialectic between household members, who negotiate the meaning, creation and use of houses amongst themselves, and the media, comprising image- and taste-makers, who draw on local and global frameworks to both reflect and shape taste and thus create normative images and ideals about what constitutes 'home'. We also concluded that home-making is an ongoing and contingent activity in which both local and global influences are present and are mediated through the lives and experiences of home-makers. There is a potential to adapt the methodological approach we used to study the connection between lifestyle magazines and creation of home for the examination of a variety of housing related situations that centre on home-making practices and the ways they are influenced by, and interact with, wider, perhaps global, economic and cultural processes. This approach to qualitative research methods enables the close examination of everyday life in the home *and* the ways residents' experiences of home are shaped by distant social connections over which they have only limited control.

Making Urban Meaning through Real Estate Sales Practice and Urban Place Marketing

Our interviewees also talked to us about the significance of the urban localities in which they lived, referring to the location of services, employment and recreation, schools, safety, opportunities for capital gain and in some cases having neighbours who were pleasant, helpful and with whom they had things in common. Once again, a number of the NVivo data nodes highlighted this talk. In our probing questions some of our research participants talked about these issues in the context of their house-search decision-making, telling us that the marketing of urban localities by either real estate developers or real estate sales consultants had influenced them. This suggested a connection between real estate sales work and the meaning of urban localities and stimulated our interest in studying real estate sales practice in Christchurch (see Perkins, Thorns, & Newton, 2008).

Methodologically this work had several strands. Again we were first drawn to the literature on advertising but this time with a focus on real estate marketing and place promotion. Our work was also informed by the literature on intermediation in the work of producer services firms of which real estate agencies comprise a part. This provided us with the theoretical basis for connecting our interviewees' interpretations of house, home and neighbourhood with the activities of real estate sales consultants and ways they characterise urban localities and individual houses to make them marketable, profitable and able to be interpreted by potential purchasers. We approached this aspect of the research through the collection and qualitative content analysis of real estate advertising displayed in the in-house publications and associated newspaper advertising of local real estate agencies. The data were explored to see how areas and houses were presented across the various localities in the city using the sampling transect from which we drew our 41 interviewees. We also conducted an observation of, and interviews with, a real estate sales consultant during the course of a house sale. During this process, we were both able to watch the sales process unfold and also gain considerable insight into real estate practice by having the consultant discuss his approach and the ways documentary material used by him and his colleagues guides the writing of real estate advertising.

Our concluding argument was that real estate sales consultants use the knowledge acquired from codified sources, and from their daily work, to reproduce, or create new meanings, for houses and localities, depending on the opportunities they perceive for profit in the residential market. In Christchurch, the advertisements they create and place in newspapers and

specialist real estate industry publications comprise selective readings of the past, intermingled with the aspects of present and future. In making these advertisements, real estate consultants are considering, creating and presenting buildings and land not simply as concrete units of physical space in specific times, but also as phenomena socially experienced, constructed and reconstructed, over time. Houses, therefore, have both physical and ideological properties. These elements are communicated and sustained through visual imagery and written text that represent local places within suburbs, cities, regions and countries and within real estate networks that transcend local, regional and national boundaries. They also assert local identity and action in the context of global discourses such that contemporary and historic idiosyncrasies of places are reassembled by real estate sales consultants in ways that invigorate their meaning and affirm aspects of culture and environment. Their advertising and related sales activity help to stabilise *and* incrementally shift intra-urban place-meanings (Shields, 1991, p. 7) and therefore are an integral element in the social construction of urban space and the built-environment (Amin, 2004; Massey, 1994a, 1994b, 1995, 2004; Thrift, 1999, 2004).

Our conclusions above also relate to the strand of our research associated with the promotion of new residential subdivisions. Theoretically, we were informed by critical scholarly literature on neo-traditionalism and the literature produced by the advocates of urban planning and design associated with 'new urbanism' and 'smart growth' agendas. Methodologically, this section of the research was based in part on a critical interpretation of the promotional material for these new housing areas. Again we used qualitative thematic content analysis. We also made many visits to the new housing areas as they were built, taking photographs and making comparisons between the promotional material for the subdivisions and landscape changes going on before us. The advertising of these developments drew on similar kinds of discourses that were found in the real estate publications discussed above, but were 'packaged' in terms of the opportunities afforded by new urban design to create a community-based lifestyle, making connections between the kinds of people marketers saw as populating these developments and opportunities provided by neighbourhood design for community development. Contrary to such claims we concluded that, in Christchurch, new urbanism and neo-traditionalism should be seen primarily as a form of rhetoric designed to sell housing profitably rather than a community development project based on new forms of housing. In both US new urbanism and the New Zealand variants we studied, the production of the built environment – residential service and

commercial – is facilitated by central state and local government regulation associated with private property markets and social relations. These mechanisms, along with the cost of creating aesthetically pleasing buildings and surrounding landscapes appear to have promoted residential homogeneity comprising affluent households who live in relative isolation from each other, despite the rhetoric of diversity, inclusion and community (Winstanley et al., 2003).

Methodologically, the lesson from this work is that there is much to be gained by examining and comparing developers' and estate agents' rhetorical language, their associated practices and the outcomes of their activities. Their mediating work is centrally important to the development of residential urban form and ways in which that form is interpreted and used. Adopting a critical qualitative methodology has lead, in our research, to results that call into question the efficacy of particular urban design strategies that promise much that is new and valuable but in reality reinforce established practices. Evaluative social and geographical research of this nature has much to offer urban policy debates.

The Urban Planning Framework

The part of our larger research programme we are yet to discuss deals with the relationships between house and home and the urban planning roles of the central and local state. It became immediately clear from observations and interviews with household members that the form and use of neighbourhoods, including the location and style of individual houses and surrounding land were influenced dramatically by planning regulation. This is a major structural influence on the meaning of house and home in New Zealand. We were thus compelled to incorporate an analysis of the historically important town and country planning framework and its replacement in 1991 by the current resource management framework and mandating statute, the *Resource Management Act 1991*.

Two qualitative research methods informed this part of our work. We first selected nine cities drawn from across the country, which had by 1998 developed their first set of city plans under the new Resource Management Act framework. The cities were from the South to the North – Dunedin, Christchurch, Nelson, Wellington, Porirua, Palmerston North, Auckland, Manukau and Waitakere. These latter three are part of the Auckland Urban Region – New Zealand's largest concentration of population – comprising approximately 1.2 million and one of the most ethnically diverse urban

populations now in the world. From each local authority we obtained copies of the city plans and associated documents. During our interviews it became apparent that it would also be necessary to examine the annual planning documents (strategic plans) that were required as a result of the amendments to the *Local Government Act* in 1989 and 1996. This was something that we had not originally considered but it became clear that a number of local councils had used these latter provisions to enable them to continue social and economic initiatives that were excluded from district plans with their strong emphasis on the biophysical environmental elements of sustainable management mandated by the *Resource Management Act*.

Once the documents were assembled they were subjected to thematic analysis in order to gauge the extent to which the new legislative environment resulted in changed planning practice. We complemented these data by interviewing planning staff in the selected cities and those who had responsibility for social and economic policies and marketing programmes. Budget and time constraints precluded face-to-face interviews in all of the centres above except Christchurch, so we decided to conduct a series of telephone interviews. Our research assistant contacted each interviewee to gain consent and set up an interview time, and using a conference telephone we proceeded to conduct the interview and record it as if we were communicating face-to-face. This proved to be a remarkably successful approach and we would not hesitate to use it again, particularly when the interview revolved around the discussion of professional activity and interpretation of official documents such as city plans. Unlike the house and home interviews we were not going to gain any increased understanding from interviewing these participants in their workplaces. Our focus on public planning documents, and the context in which they were developed and administered, was also easy to discuss using the telephone and our interviewees openly and energetically engaged in the process, in much the same way as they would have in a face-to-face interview. Technically, we were able to get very clear recordings of the interviews. Researchers wishing to speak to interviewees in several but dispersed centres about matters of public record would be well-advised to try this method.

This aspect of our research (Perkins & Thorns, 2001b) led us to a number of conclusions about the new planning regime and its importance in the maintenance and development of urban form. In the context of this chapter, it is sufficient to say that an understanding of historical and current legislatively mandated local approaches to urban planning and design are fundamental for an interpretation of the meaning of house and home because they strongly influence the ways cities are constructed, transport is

managed, public and commercial services are operated and individual houses or sets of dwelling units and the land upon which they sit, are distributed and formed. This has a very significant influence on the everyday lives of urban residents and the meanings they ascribe to house and home.

CONCLUSIONS

Our purpose in this chapter has been to illustrate how qualitative social research methods can be used to study the symbolic and structural aspects of house and home. We have also briefly reflected on the wider applicability of our approach to qualitative research methods and relevance of such work to housing planning and policy. At the core of our research lay a reasonably conventional interview- and observation-based methodology designed to capture the detail of our research participants' everyday lives in and around their homes. Our use of these techniques, based on asking research participants to tell their emplaced life stories, produced a large quantity of rich and illuminating data. We have been able to use the information they gave us to interpret the centrality of home in the creation of senses of identity and place. We also wanted to examine the wider structural forces at work in the lives of our interviewees and used their narratives or stories as a guide to our study. This encouraged us to explore, for example, the roles and influences of lifestyle and related print media, real estate sales practice and urban planning on processes of home-making.

Methodologically, while the core of our work might be called local ethnography, there are also elements in it of what Burawoy (2000) calls global ethnography. The link between the two lies in the ways we have dealt with our research participants' narratives. Where they have told stories about the local we have focused our interpretation there. But they have also laced their narratives with intimations of global, or at least distant, connection; and we have therefore used allied qualitative interpretative methods, including documentary content analysis, interviews and observations with real estate sales consultants, planners and other local government officials, to gather data that go beyond our interview and observational data with household members, to link the global and local, meaning and structure, in our analyses.

Reporting such work is challenging. Inevitably, it seems, we have had to write reports that break participants, un-segmented and continuous lives into a series of overlapping and interconnected sub-narratives as they pertain to house and home. It has been relatively straightforward to write

those reports that speak of particular aspects of everyday life, for example, decisions about moving house, or major structural influences, such as, urban planning or new forms of housing, but trying to capture and write about the flow of daily social interaction and ways it impinges on the wider world, and vice versa, is a much harder task to achieve.

Despite some self-doubt about our achievements in this area, overall we judge our programme a success. We have been hugely stimulated by the interaction of team members having diverse disciplinary backgrounds and interests, and equally diverse experience of methodological, analytical and theoretical approaches. We have also enjoyed, and are most grateful for, the enthusiasm and openness of our participants who not only allowed us into their homes and offices, but also willingly shared their life journeys with us.

NOTES

1. Amin (2004); Berg and Kearns (1996); Buttimer (1980); Casey (1993, 1998); Cloke and Jones (2001); Damer (1974); Duncan (1978); Eyles (1985); Feld and Basso (1996); Geertz (1996); Gregory (1989); Jackson (1984); Lewis (1979); Ley and Samuels (1978); Massey (1994a, 1994b, 1995, 2004); Meinig (1979); Norton (2003); Perkins (1988a, 1988b, 1989); Pred (1983); Relph (1976); Thrift (1999, 2004); Tuan (1974); Williams (2002).
2. Perkins and Thorns (1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2003); Perkins et al. (2002a, 2002b); Winstanley (2001); Winstanley et al. (2002a, 2002b, 2003); Leonard et al. (2004); Perkins et al. (2008).
3. Funded from 1997 for 3 years by the New Zealand Foundation for Research, Science and Technology.
4. Again, funded by the New Zealand Foundation for Research, Science and Technology between 2000 and 2002.
5. http://www.soci.canterbury.ac.nz/research/rphs/h&hhome.htm
6. NVivo is an interpretative software package for use with non-numerical data (visit QSR software at: http://www.qsr.com.au/).

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CHAPTER 3

REINTERPRETING THE RESEARCH PATH: USING QUALITATIVE METHODS IN HOMELESSNESS RESEARCH

Robyn Martin and Nola Kunnen

INTRODUCTION

Homelessness research is identified as one example of sensitive social research that engages 'vulnerable' (Liamputtong, 2007, p. 4) participants as well as an area of difficult research practice. This chapter explores how using qualitative research methodologies have led us to reinterpret aspects of our research practice and to develop an inclusive approach in our work on homelessness. In articulating our approach, we explore influences shaping the context of our research practice and ideas that are effective in researching homelessness. We present these as key principles informing our approach, alongside strategies we have developed for enacting inclusive research practice.

Our discussion draws on our experience over the past five years in designing and implementing research projects that directly and indirectly examined pathways out of homelessness. The research was undertaken for diverse clients including a national homelessness programme, a small community-based social enterprise project, non-government service

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providers and large government departments. This chapter explores qualitative research strategies effective in enacting inclusive research practice in homelessness research. While the work referred to in this chapter focuses upon homelessness, we are confident that an inclusive approach is relevant to research within a range of settings with people experiencing marginalisation or disadvantage.

Our research practice is influenced firstly by directions in Australian homelessness research, and secondly by qualitative research methodologies, both summarised briefly below. The authors share a professional background in social work and human service delivery with combined experience of over 40 years practice, research and academic interest in homelessness. Current Australian trends in applied social policy research commonly incorporate a wide variety of stakeholders. A broad definition of 'stakeholders' is adopted, including research participants (often clients of homelessness services and programmes); staff delivering homelessness services; managers of homelessness programmes; policymakers; programme and funding administrators and senior management of government and non-government organisations involved in the research. Our focus is on 'inclusive research practice' methodologies that invite the active participation and involvement of diverse stakeholders, as explored throughout this chapter.

HOMELESSNESS RESEARCH IN AUSTRALIA

The homelessness research field in Australia is similar to that of many international locations in that it has been characterised by two main themes. These themes relate to enumeration of people experiencing homelessness and definitions of homelessness (see Heintjes, 2005; Mackenzie & Chamberlain, 2003; Memmott, Long, Chambers, & Spring, 2003). It should also be noted that these two endeavours are not without contestation and debate. The Australian homelessness context is grounded in key legislation, entitled the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Act* (SAAP) (1994). This Act provides a framework for definitions of homelessness, as well as an articulation of the parameters of the national SAAP. It is the primary service delivery response to individuals, couples and family groups experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. The most significant feature of SAAP is the provision of crisis and medium-term accommodation, which includes welfare and case management services. More recently the SAAP programme has focussed on early intervention and prevention programmes,

usually delivered to people in an outreach capacity. The SAAP programme operates within a purchaser–provider service delivery model, whereby State or Commonwealth governments purchase specified types of SAAP services from a wide variety of non-government organisations, including women's refuges, youth agencies and large charitable organisations providing a diverse range of accommodation and support services. Funding arrangements are formalised through a service agreement negotiated between government (as the purchaser) and the non-government organisation (as provider). Service agreements specify the types of SAAP services provided to clients by the non-government organisation. The variety of services provided and the large number of service providers currently operating in Western Australia means that even a small research project will involve several stakeholders including government and a variety of different types of service providers.

Australian researchers have recently engaged with other themes within homelessness. A snapshot of these themes shows the following: complex and high-level needs of SAAP clients (Ecumenical Housing Inc. and Thomson Goodall Associates Pty Ltd, 1999); homelessness careers, pathways and typologies (Mackenzie & Chamberlain, 2003); mental health, trauma and iterative homelessness (Robinson, 2003); Indigenous Australians and culturally specific definitions and experiences of homelessness (Memmott et al., 2003); costs associated with homelessness (Flatau et al., 2006; Pinkney & Ewing, 2006); good service delivery practices and self-reliance in SAAP clients (Kunnen & Martin, 2005); and specific programme impacts on homelessness (Brady et al., 2006).[1] A review of Australian homelessness research by Heintjes (2005) suggests two future research themes: effective service delivery responses that emphasise coordination and the experiences of the estimated 86 per cent of people experiencing homelessness who do not present to SAAP for support.

A related research area arises from a national social housing policy trend that more closely targets housing assistance to people in 'greatest need' (Productivity Commission, 2007) which results in a higher proportion of public housing being allocated to people experiencing homelessness. Accompanying this trend is a research and policy focus on preventing homelessness by sustaining tenancies (Beer, Slatter, Baulderstone, & Habibis, 2006; Haggerty, 2006; Stephenson & Hume, 2001; Habibis et al., 2007). A further policy focus is assessing service delivery in terms of client outcomes (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2005) and incremental and pragmatic responses to homelessness (Hollows, 2006). All of these trends influence the context in which our research is undertaken.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AND HOMELESSNESS

The use of qualitative methodologies in homelessness research is growing and has established itself through producing valid and valued contributions to this body of knowledge. Notwithstanding, the debates in the social sciences about the relative value of quantitative and qualitative methods have, and continue to be, played out within Australian homelessness research. These conversations reflect broader ontological and epistemological conceptualisations, evident in research, practice, evaluation and social policy discourses. Qualitative research is often defined in comparison to quantitative or positivist research approaches (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This argument can be suggestive of binaries in methodological approaches, assuming that there is 'one way of knowing and doing'. The arguments about the differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches are reductionist by nature (Gould, 2004). As researchers we usually undertake qualitative research; however we are open to, and will incorporate quantitative collection and analysis in order to extend the depth and applicability of research findings. This positioning recognises the value of both approaches and matches the methods to the topic, rather than promoting binaries.

Despite these tensions and the emergence of qualitative methods in homelessness research, little has been documented on these issues in the local context. In the international context, a broader debate is arising about the political nature of the factors underpinning homelessness research, particularly when it is contracted by stakeholders such as government departments. This contracted research is reflective of political and social policy goals; which may be overt or covert. Third (2000, pp. 458–459) discusses and problematises this in the British context:

> If the lion's share of the research funding is channelled through pre-set research agendas to which academics and other researchers have limited input, then control rests with governmental and other organizations that may have their own agendas influencing decisions about areas for funded research.

These 'pre-set research agendas' are often reflective of implicit, yet unstated assumptions about what constitutes 'truth' and how this 'truth' can be uncovered (meaning the type of research methodologies that are required to unearth the 'truth'). In our experience, this theme is evident in Australia and impacts on relationships between stakeholders to the research in which we have engaged.

Qualitative research is identified as particularly relevant and useful in homelessness research. Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005, p. 7) describe it as 'especially appropriate' for sensitive research involving vulnerable participants, including people who experience homelessness, because its 'flexible, fluid and facilitative' methodologies obtain in-depth information and enable participants' voices to be heard through the research process. Examples include using qualitative methodologies such as biographical methods to provide practical understandings of homelessness (Tomas & Dittmar, 1995), case studies for better understandings of complex needs and support requirements (Ecumenical Housing Inc. and Thomson Goodall Associates Pty Ltd., 1999; Cooper, 2004; Cooper, Verity, & Masters, 2005); or in-depth, collaborative interviewing styles to articulate how people who experience homelessness describe 'getting back on their feet' (Kunnen & Martin, 2005).

An emphasis on enabling participants' voices to be heard through qualitative methodology reflects an implicit theme informing inclusive research practice, as discussed further below.

INCLUSIVE RESEARCH PRACTICE

The term 'inclusive research practice' was adopted as a workshop theme by the inaugural *National Homelessness Research Seminar*, April 2007, in Melbourne, Australia, organised by the Council to Homeless Persons and the Australian Federation of Homelessness Organisations in conjunction with academic and community researchers. The objectives of the Council to Homeless Persons (n.d.), as stated on their Homepage (available at www.chp.org.au/index.shtml) include: 'Providing opportunities for people experiencing homelessness to have a voice and make a contribution towards policy related to homelessness'.

While not all organisations and programmes explicitly state an intention to include the voices of people who experience homelessness in policy and research processes, there is a generalised endorsement of this principle among many Australian homelessness organisations and researchers. As the research informing this chapter has been applied social research, it too has been undertaken for the purpose of informing policy. This informs the stance we adopt as researchers by using the term 'inclusive research practices' to describe the ways in which we seek to build on the collective knowledge of homelessness both in Australia and internationally by incorporating stakeholder input into our research practice. Inclusive

research practices address issues such as power differentials between researchers and stakeholders; the relationships between the stakeholders; ways in which differences in positioning or agendas can be successfully negotiated within qualitative research projects and the importance of research teams regularly discussing their emerging understandings of the research topic.

The term inclusive research practice is not well documented in the research literature, with few references being found in recent searches. Reiterating the potential for qualitative methods to 'give voice' to participants Scraton (2004, pp. 175–189) refers to inclusive research processes that speak 'the truth from below' by identifying and 'making known alternative discourses' for the purposes of understanding and responding to marginalising discourses and actions. This approach 'challenges the portrayal of the marginalised…as helpless or hopeless victims of circumstances' (Scraton, 2004, pp. 175–189). Similarly, the Canadian Council on Social Development (1997) explores 'inclusive social policy development' focused on including marginalised or minority stakeholders often excluded in traditional research practices (in particular those that inform social policy development).

The emphasis on giving voice to marginalised or excluded participants through inclusive research practice is linked to qualitative methodologies (Doyle, 1999; Cooper, 2004; Liamputtong, 2007). These authors cite similar principles, with Doyle considering homeless women, *The Big Issue*[2] and academic research proposing three 'precepts' derived from feminist research:

- 'Formulating non-exploitative and empowering relationships with research participants' (1999, p. 241). This means that issues such as sharing of oneself by the researcher; blurring boundaries between researcher and participant are worked with.
- 'Following up and providing participants with feedback' (1999, p. 242). This suggests that participants are invited to participate in the research project to the degree and level they wish; including the option to modify or add to their original contributions.
- 'Author/researcher reflexivity about their positionality' (1999, p. 242). This precept introduces the importance of researchers and authors enacting reflexivity and critical awareness throughout all stages of their research (ranging from conceptualisation through design to implementation to presenting findings).

Various interpretive and qualitative research methods reflect and include the above precepts derived from feminist research approaches and they are useful beginning points in articulating inclusive research practice. In developing these precepts further in our research, and in articulating these as ideas informing an inclusive approach to homelessness research we have identified several principles and strategies that are central to an inclusive research approach.

KEY PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES

Our three key principles provide an overarching framework within which we shape and conduct inclusive research practice. In addition to qualitative research literature (discussed previously), the principles are informed by broader social-work theory, specifically strengths perspectives, an acknowledgement that 'risk' and/or 'vulnerability' are factors to be considered within homelessness research and our selection of specific qualitative research methods. These principles and strategies are explained further below.

Principle 1: Incorporating Strengths Perspectives in Research Practice

A more recent influence in some homelessness research is grounded in the strengths perspective (Saleeby, 2006). Enacting this perspective in homelessness research, Cooper (2004) described women participants as having 'survival skills in abundance…homeless from time to time they have the capacity to survive on the streets. They know how the welfare and policy systems work and can access appropriate resources' (p. 22). Illustrating how strengths perspectives can inform how we regard people who experience homelessness as participants, Tomas and Dittmar describe their approach as motivated by a concern to 'frame homelessness as an agent, contending with a set of social problems rather than as an individual entrapped in history, or borne along by an unspecified disease process' (1995, p. 497). Within this framing 'People are viewed as active participants in the experience, negotiation and (re)creation of their personal and social histories' (1995, p. 497).

Strengths perspectives offer an 'alternate lexicon' (Saleeby, 2006, p. 10) informed by awareness that 'our professional diction has a profound effect on the way we regard clients, their world, and their troubles'. Strengths

perspectives can best be understood as recognising and emphasising individuals in terms of their potential rather than their limitations or inadequacies. Strengths (Saleeby, 2006, p. 10) are described in terms of capacities, courage, resilience, resources, potential and promise. By adopting a strengths-based perspective towards all stakeholders, and particular people who experience homelessness that participate in our research, we are better positioned to adopt an open, enquiring approach in our conversations with them and to de-centre the expert role that can be ascribed to or adopted by researchers and thereby facilitating more effective conversational exchanges. This in turn highlights the importance of developing open and non-exploitative relationships with participants, whereby researchers are able to be open about their motivations for undertaking the work, and their hopes for outcomes of the project. To do this, researchers need to be critically aware and conscious of their positionality in relation to the topic. For example, a researcher may have experience as a homelessness practitioner and through this be aware of and frustrated by, gaps or inadequacies in policy. This frustration significantly influences the choice of topic, the design and the overall approach taken within the research project.

The relevance of strengths perspectives to applied social research can further be understood through Blundo's (2006, p. 37) observation that:

> There is growing evidence that it is actually the client who is responsible for the changes that take place. It is what the client brings in terms of strengths, resilience and social supports that are responsible for most of what is going to change and how it is going to change.

Given that the emphasis in most current homelessness research focuses on informing policy that can provide effective support and service delivery strategies, the relevance of adopting strengths-based framing within inclusive practice provides opportunities to engage people who experience homelessness's expertise, knowledge and perspectives through the research process.

Principle 2: Acknowledging 'Risk' and 'Vulnerability' within Research Practice

We identified above that inclusive research practice is informed by the principle of 'giving voice' to the experiences of marginalised and excluded people. We note that the notion of 'giving voice' can be problematic,

suggestive of a paternalistic approach to research participants. That is not our intention. We seek to promote and facilitate participants in the telling of their stories and in turn, the hearing by a range of stakeholders of participants' voices and stories. Homelessness research has been described as inevitably falling into the category of sensitive research because it engages with participants who are more likely to be vulnerable or disadvantaged (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, pp. 1–2). Exploring such experiences can involve risk to both participants and researchers. As sensitive research it enters the 'private spheres of peoples lives' (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p. 5) exploring experiences and issues perhaps not previously voiced.

Acknowledging that homelessness research enacted through inclusive practice will engage potentially vulnerable participants requires consideration of ethical issues. Our employing university requires any research involving 'human subjects' to obtain approval of the University Ethics Committee (Office of Research and Development, n.d.). This is in line with a national statement on ethical conduct in research which includes the usual principles of including respect for persons; minimising risk of harm; respect for dignity and well-being; and a requirement that informed consent is obtained (NHMRC, 1999). Any research that directly involves homeless persons requires more extensive ethics approval on the basis that homeless research participants are automatically categorised as 'vulnerable' or 'at risk'. Identification of homeless participants as vulnerable is premised on them being defined as persons with diminished autonomy. As such they are entitled to protection because of the potential to be inadvertently harmed in the process of research unless specific ethical requirements are identified and put in place at the outset.

Employing and developing inclusive research practices requires the consideration of a contrasting view of the ethics of 'good' research practice. The now well-established tradition of giving voice to marginalised people and their experiences through qualitative research methodologies is reflected in a model framework for ethical consumer involvement in research practice (Consumer's Health Forum of Australia 2004, p. 5) with the following principles articulated:

- Collaboration between consumers and researchers that draw on combined knowledge.
- Partnership between consumers and researchers based on mutual trust and shared social responsibility, giving consideration to what can reasonably be expected of each other.
- Shaping research questions and design in ways that recognise the rights of all voices to be heard.

- Accountability to, and dissemination of research to, consumers.
- Advocating for provision of resources to consumers to support effective involvement in research.

A framework for consumer involvement in research recasts consumers (of homelessness services and research) as active collaborators in the process of knowledge production. We are conscious that homelessness research is sensitive inquiry and that the researcher needs to maintain awareness of the potential risks to participants. Simultaneously, it is recognised that people who experience homelessness have the capacity to engage collaboratively in the design, implementation and analysis of research, along with enacting their strengths, capacities and choices throughout the process. Responses to these contradictory ethical requirements are discussed later in the chapter.

Principle 3: Selecting Narrative and Biographical Methods

A further influence informing our understanding of inclusive research practice is the relevance of narrative and biographical qualitative methods (Cooper, 2004; Froggett & Chamberlayne, 2004; Tomas & Dittmar, 1995). For Tomas and Dittmar (1995) an historical and experiential approach to research enables homelessness to be explored as a 'life process' within which people actively re-tell and evaluate their history, with their narratives offering important data. Froggett and Chamberlayne (2004) endorse the relevance of 'biographic narrative' methods in applied social research for its potential to allow embedded organisational and policy discourses to be identified or unsettled. Gathering and deconstructing stakeholder narratives enables the 'actions, lived experiences and meaning-making processes' (Froggett & Chamberlayne, 2004, p. 64) to become known. These authors go on to emphasise gathering and analysing narratives as a means by which more comprehensive knowledge is obtained about stakeholders' experience in particular settings, rather than focussing only on selective project outcomes.

The research projects informing this chapter have been of comparatively short duration and consequently limit the extent to which narrative and biographical methodologies can be fully employed. We have found that using methodologies that invite research participants to draw on their individual experiences enhances the information obtained in our research. Liamputtong (2007) identifies a range of qualitative methodologies influenced by narrative and biographical approaches as effective in research

with vulnerable participants. Strategies we have found effective include: in-depth one-to-one interviews; focus groups; short focussed interviews; participant observation, small group meetings at various stages of the research (from design through interpretation to presentation of initial conclusions); and workshops. We return to this point in the themes discussed in the later section of this chapter.

STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSIVE RESEARCH PRACTICE

In conjunction with the key principles outlined above, in order to enact inclusive research practice, we have found seven strategies to be useful. While not necessarily linear, they do reflect the different stages of research, from establishing contact with research participants, negotiating entry to the research field, building the relationships essential for inclusive practice and maintaining a reflective stance throughout the research process, through to reporting and conclusions of each research project. Alongside these, we include a seventh strategy which relates to the acknowledgement that undertaking research in sensitive research fields such as homelessness, requires strategies that recognise the impacts of that research on researchers as well as other participants.

Strategy 1: Reinterpreting Vulnerability within Inclusive Research Practice

We have previously identified that people who experience homelessness are commonly described as 'vulnerable' participants within the research process but we have also introduced two additional perspectives that challenge conceptualisations of people who experience homelessness or other forms of marginalisation as vulnerable. Firstly, a strengths perspective is a significant influence in framing an inclusive research practice. We find that accepted notions of vulnerability are contradictory to a strengths-based lexicon within research practice. Secondly, in adopting an inclusive approach, we attempt to work within an ethical framework which facilitates the contributions, input and involvement of a range of stakeholders, with particular emphasis on research participants.

At the same time, we recognise the potential vulnerability of research participants arising from their experiences of homelessness and associated life events. The potential for research to create risk for participants is real

and cannot be ignored. Precisely because qualitative methodologies create opportunities to explore the 'private spheres' (Liamputtong, 2007, p. 5) of people's lives we pay careful attention to the risk that narrating past experiences may re-traumatise participants. In the preliminary stages of the research we negotiate access to support or counselling services appropriate for participants who may become distressed during the research process. Information about the availability of support is communicated to participants and all stakeholders at several points in the research process. Researchers must ensure that plain language information about who participants can contact for support and how support can be accessed is readily available. We do this by ensuring that our information and consent forms use plain language, stating clearly that the interview can be stopped, or paused at any time, on a 'no questions asked' or 'no repercussions' basis. In addition, we spend a few minutes at the beginning of each interview discussing the consent forms, explaining what it means to give 'informed consent' and inviting questions from participants. This process is useful not only for obtaining appropriately 'informed' consent but also for building rapport between interviewer and participant. At the conclusion of each interview we again provide information that support is available and explain how that support can be accessed if required.

In reinterpreting the concept of vulnerability, we critically question the automatic assumption that all people who have experienced an issue such as homelessness (and many of the related phenomena such as mental illness, substance misuse or violence) are automatically vulnerable. To do so has the potential to pathologise individuals and not appreciate their capacities and strengths. Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005, p. 2) described 'vulnerability' as a socially constructed concept and as such often problematic. We find it useful to de-construct notions of vulnerability and re-construct participants as people with expertise about homelessness arising from their lived experience.

In our research practice, we create space in interviews and focus groups to learn from participants the phrases and words they use on an everyday basis. Conceptualisations of people's relative power in the research process lead us to invite them to comment on the research design and process. When researching the concept of self-reliance in SAAP, for example, we used a multi-method interview guide, capturing both quantitative and qualitative data. The purpose of the interview guide was to elicit terminology to describe self-reliance, measures of self-reliant behaviour and ways in which service providers could facilitate the development of self-reliance in people experiencing homelessness. This led us to use the terminology 'getting back on my feet' (Kunnen & Martin, 2004), articulating the components that

comprise self-reliance within various subsets of homelessness experiences and creating a framework of good service delivery responses and characteristics that promote self-reliance. This was only possible by asking research participants to tell us about their experience of the interview once it was finished. We invited their comment on the order of questions, the language used in questions and suggestions for changes or additions to the interview guide. Additionally, we invited other stakeholders such as service providers and steering committee members to provide feedback during development of the interview guide and sampling strategies.

Strategy 2: Considerations Prior to Commencing Research

This theme encompasses the early stages of a research project and involves planning, reflecting and investigating the ways in which to enter the research field. Firstly we consider the potential and experienced biographies of the research participants and other key stakeholders. In research that examined the potential for people experiencing homelessness to enact and build self-reliance (Kunnen & Martin, 2005), we spent considerable time considering just who it was we would be undertaking research with. We understood that the research client wanted representation of as many voices and experiences of people experiencing homelessness as possible. This was to include young people, couples with and without children, single parents (females and males), women with or without children who were escaping domestic and family violence, single men, older people, culturally and linguistically diverse people, Indigenous Australians – and the list went on. Our first reflections told us that we could expect to explore self-reliance and homelessness with a wide variety of people, experiences and biographies.

What we have learnt about this important stage is that our assumptions (based on our combined professional practice and academic experience) can be helpful and at times unhelpful. When we start to think we 'know' what the usual biography of say a young person who becomes homeless is, we need to take a step back from ourselves and our assumptions. This is aided and facilitated by our well-developed capacity to enact reflexivity in all areas of our practice. The following quote by Gilbert (2001, p. 11), cited in Rager (2005, p. 428) indicates the centrality of awareness in researchers:

> If the qualitative researcher is to be the research instrument, then he or she must be fully aware of the nature of that instrument.

Our final consideration is to explore the types of relationships that research participants are likely to have within the research process. In one research project where the impact of being a *Big Issue* vendor on people's lives was examined (Martin, Kunnen, & Harris, 2006), it was anticipated that for the research to be meaningful to the vendors, we needed to hear from them about how they positioned themselves with *The Big Issue* and us as researchers. This was a critical stage when entering the field, as it oriented us to the biographies of the vendors; along with their past experiences of research projects (we discuss this in detail in the next strategy).

Strategy 3: Entering the Research Field

A key issue we ask ourselves as we prepare to enter the field is 'who identified the research questions?' In other words, we critically examine which stakeholder group is driving the research agenda. This critical examination can alert researchers to potential pitfalls. For example, we might wonder when we enter the field why the identified participants do not want to participate in interviews or focus groups. Closer examination may tell us that they feel disenfranchised from the topic, and have a sense that 'research is being done to them', rather than with them. In this sense, collaborative and emancipatory approaches are called for (Ceci, Lemacher, & McLeod, 2004; Fontana & Frey, 2005).

We then seek an understanding of the role in which the stakeholders who are driving the research agenda have cast research participants. In our experience, participants are often cast in the role of 'information repositories'. This positioning has the potential to objectify the research participants, seen merely as items to attain information from, for the purposes of answering research questions (Wolf, 1996; Ellis & Berger, 2001; Irwin, 2006). In order to enact collaborative processes in research, there is a need to hypothesise about, and explore the ways in which, different stakeholders are able to enact power within, across and among their relationships.

Before entering the field, considerable attention needs to be paid to how researchers present themselves to all stakeholders. Returning to *The Big Issue* project, we had received information from staff within the project about the potential vulnerability or challenging presentations of some participants. We were asked to be sensitive in our initial and ongoing interactions with vendors, ensuring that we did not pressure them to participate. Coupled with this information was our collective experience in the homelessness field, including working in day centres, housing

associations, women's refuges and post release prison programmes. We came to the conclusion that it was important to be authentic and demonstrate integrity in our first meetings with the vendors. This meant using plain language, avoiding being condescending and being attentive to issues of power in our roles as researchers; which involves enacting individual and team reflexivity.

Despite what staff in *The Big Issue* had told us about potential vulnerabilities, it emerged that many vendors were concerned that they were expected to engage in 'yet another' research project, from which they felt divorced. In essence, they considered themselves 'objects' of research, and not active, engaged participants. We took this challenge up in group and individual meetings with vendors, where we asked them to share their ideas and hopes for the research. We also communicated how earnestly we took their concerns, and came back to them with strategies to comment on what would alleviate their alienation from the research. The primary message to the vendors was that we considered them the experts on the research topic. During a focus group with the vendors, they argued this, saying to two of the research team 'You have no idea what it means to be a vendor, standing on the street, selling *The Big Issue*'. We validated this comment, saying as we had not been vendors we could not fully understand what it meant to 'stand on the street and sell *The Big Issue*'. A silence then descended on the room. A short while later, a vendor said 'Just as you have no idea what it means to be a vendor, we have no idea what it means to do your job'. We had reached a pivotal point in our research relationship – shared understandings about each others' worlds, and a willingness to enter into each others' worlds.

Strategy 4: Mapping Relationships between Stakeholders

Homelessness has been identified as a difficult research field in that it requires negotiating access to people who are transient, often have complex lives (Byrne, 2005), or who are questioning of researchers and their motivation (Doyle, 1999; DeVerteuil, 2004). Accessing the field through homeless organisations can be problematic given the variations in service delivery approaches and at times competitive relationships between agencies (DeVerteuil, 2004; Doyle, 1999). At the same time, DeVerteuil argues that negotiating the 'messy' details of qualitative research 'highlights the broader political and methodological issues that underlie all qualitative research' (2004, p. 378). DeVerteuil (2004, p. 373) proposes that 'systematic research'

is lacking about barriers to using qualitative methodologies in the homelessness field. These observations resonate with our experience.

In responding to these challenges it is important for researchers to focus on relationships with different stakeholders. Our experience suggests that through good relationships many of the difficulties associated with homelessness research can be resolved. Thrift (2003, p. 105) observes 'One of the questions that bears down quite quickly…is your relationship with those you will encounter in the field' and one constant within research 'is the need to produce encounters from which some measure of enlightenment is possible'. Thrift goes on to argue that effective research relationships occur within a 'space of thoughtfulness and imagination' which are also 'constructivist and interpretivist' (2003, pp. 114–115) and that fieldwork includes 'negotiating with people when you don't know all the small and unspoken ethic ground rules that make up everyday life, rules which you have arduously to construct' (2003, p. 105). This highlights the importance of reflexivity, with researchers constantly reconsidering their principles such as a desire to engage in 'thoughtful' relationships, alongside the practicalities of what emerges when in the field and engaged in research activity.

Relationships exist in different combinations within applied social research. As researchers, we enter into relationships with different stakeholders for the duration of the research project; noting that we are usually entering a field where stakeholders have existing relationships with each other. We need to make sense of relationships within and between the stakeholders included in our research in order to get started, to negotiate entry to the field, to develop legitimacy as researchers and maximise the opportunity of obtaining stakeholder 'buy-in'. One description that fits well with our experience of negotiating multiple stakeholder relationships in policy-related social research is from Shinn (2007, p. 228) who likens the process of policy-related research to 'waltzing with a monster'.

In keeping with influences on inclusive research practice, we aim to adopt a partnership approach in our relationships with stakeholders. This is reflective of the work of the Canadian Council on Social Development's (1997) discussion on partnership with marginalised groups, a strategy reiterated by Nutley (2003), Trevillion (2004) and Shinn (2007). The Canadian Council on Social Development (1997) identifies partnerships as instrumental in producing quality research outcomes and noted several issues that needed to be considered when engaging in inclusive research:

- Determining which stakeholder group generates and drives partnerships within the research.

- Examining decision-making processes and structures critically, with attention to issues of power and influence among and between stakeholder groups.
- Reflecting upon the focus, purpose and nature of partnerships.
- Questioning who is 'empowered' or who benefits from the partnerships.
- Evaluating partnerships regularly and responsively.

Trevillion (2004, p. 98) explores the role of partnerships between stakeholders in qualitative research practices and argues for the importance of capturing both the 'micro' and 'macro' pictures involved in complex social phenomenon:

> Any model of policy implementation has to engage with the complexities of a micro-world where little can be taken for granted, and where an ability to handle issues of power and identity may be as significant as an ability to plan or deliver new kinds of services.

Acknowledging the relevance of collaborative working relationships and partnership approaches in policy-related qualitative research is consistent with the Ethical Framework for Consumer Involvement in Research Practice, developed by the Consumer's Health Forum of Australia (2004).

In reinterpreting our research practice, the influences noted above, together with our professional practice experience in the homelessness field, have led us to focus closely on understanding the relationships between stakeholders within a research project, through a process we describe as 'mapping'. The mapping process begins at the point of our initial contact with each stakeholder group and usually takes the form of a short, informal conversation or meeting in which we clarify respective understandings of the research topic, aims and purpose; then exploring proposed methodologies and research strategies. We also explore desired and feasible means of engaging different stakeholders in the research process.

One of the common themes we find often arises at this point is the need to describe and explain qualitative research methods and what will constitute rigour and validity within each particular research project. Stakeholders commonly have expectations that research comprises quantitative approaches, externally administered questionnaires and detached and 'objective' researchers. The process of mapping creates opportunities to explain qualitative methodologies to stakeholders and explore specific strategies that might be feasible and effective in a particular project.

We draw together information from our various meetings and conversations with stakeholders and process this information in order to map and analyse relationships within and between stakeholders in order to

understand these relationships and their relevance to our research project. Understanding relationships assists us in identifying whether and if so, when and how, we should draw stakeholders together and for what purpose. We develop an understanding of points of contestation and tensions which may impact on the feasibility, process and outcomes of the research process.

Experience leads us to adopt a disciplined critical approach when analysing the mapping of stakeholder relationships. As a research team we meet regularly using a process of critical peer questioning to explore individual and collective understandings emerging from the research. Further, strategies that will maximise the feasibility of engaging disparate stakeholders when research is inevitably undertaken within short timeframes and limited budgets are critically assessed. It is important to frame initial interpretations and understandings of stakeholder relationships as incremental and tentative; to be further reviewed and refined through ongoing exploration of the emerging picture of relationships. These strategies minimise the potential for researchers to jump to conclusions on the basis of initial briefings and first encounters with stakeholders. Researchers are required to report back regularly to team meetings during which time review and reflection on working relationships with different stakeholders takes place. In this way, reflexive critical practice is enacted to create a space of thoughtfulness and imagination within the research process. The following example illustrates the mapping process and its influence on one project.

In *The Big Issue* project we began mapping relationships when first contracted to complete the research. This mapping continued throughout the project, providing important insights and hunches into dynamics between and among the stakeholders. Through observation at regular project meetings, we became aware that a number of small projects were being undertaken simultaneously, but there did not appear to be clearly articulated protocols informing contact between external researchers and vendors. This led us to extend our methodology, and include the governing Board within our interviews. This highlighted that governance was a key issue and something that we discussed significantly in our findings. Specifically, this related to *The Big Issue* in Western Australia being a young organisation that had spent its initial years focussing on establishing the operations. Our research highlighted the need for the organisation to move its focus beyond operational issues into those related to governance and partnerships between vendors, staff and board. Regular reflections on power, relationships and emergent issues occurred through research team meetings. During this project the research team, comprising the

authors and a research assistant, met weekly for approximately one hour, ensuring similar understandings and views on next steps in the project were developed.

Strategy 5: Navigating Differences

Our research often requires engagement with multiple stakeholders and experience cautions us against assuming that stakeholders will have shared interests and priorities. The mapping and review process outlined in Strategy 4 commonly identifies tensions and differences that must be navigated carefully throughout the research process. The mapping process discussed above enables identification of the disparate positions that can exist among stakeholders. These may be reflected in different expectations about the agendas prompting the research, how research findings will be used, or what stakeholders consider to be the most important issues that the research should explore or report. Service providers working with people who experience homelessness may adopt a protective stance towards their clients, particularly where either service provider or clients have been involved in negative or problematic research.

By mapping stakeholder differences it is possible to identify which methodologies will be appropriate for which stakeholders. For example, we have used focus groups widely in our research, but rarely do we combine different types of stakeholders in the same focus group. When exploring self-reliance, service providers comprised organisations delivering a variety of different types of homelessness and support services. We held different focus groups for different types of service providers adopting this strategy to ensure that each focus group would provide an opportunity to explore the issues relevant to that service delivery area. A constraint of this approach is that different stakeholders have limited exposure to the ideas, practices and views of others.

When engaging with different sub-groups of stakeholders within the same organisations, we draw on a range of methodologies, from one-to-one interviews, formal meetings or presentations, informal gatherings, participant observation or telephone interviews. Drawing on the information obtained from our 'mapping' process, we carefully consider if it is appropriate to draw together stakeholders where tensions or conflicts of interest occur. We do however disseminate information between stakeholder groups as a means of ensuring that all stakeholders receive comprehensive

and accurate information that is emerging from the study and the process that is being enacted.

In one project the stakeholders identified to us at the outset comprised:

- Two government departments involved in a homelessness prevention programme.
- A range of community organisations contracted to deliver support services to clients in that programme.
- Several different sections within the department that funded and administered the programme.

We quickly became aware that significant tensions existed between the stakeholder groups and perceptions on the effectiveness of the programme strategies being researched varied widely. This presented us with the challenge of attempting to engage people in the study and also find ways of presenting contested and contradictory accounts of the same programme while maintaining effective working relationships with different stakeholders. In developing our methodology, we avoided focus groups, opting instead to undertake individual interviews. The implications of this were that the scope of the study had to be renegotiated to enable the researchers to meet individually with key stakeholders. This example and discussion highlights the adaptability and responsiveness of qualitative research methods.

In the process of negotiating stakeholder differences, researchers should be alert to valuable information and knowledge that can emerge when points of tension and contradiction are unpacked. We compare, contrast and acknowledge the different sets of understanding that emerge within a project and locate identifiable tensions in the context in which they arise seeing them as relevant factors that influence process and findings. These tensions and different ways of understanding are highly relevant when it comes to preparing and presenting findings.

Strategy 6: Unanticipated Findings and Outcomes

As researchers we apply rigour and discipline to our research, ensuring that we stay focussed on the research questions and the overall topic. We find that while seeking to restrict our activities within these fields, unanticipated issues and outcomes can arise. A clear example of this relates to *The Big Issue* where the focus of the project was on exploring the impact of being a *Big Issue* vendor on people's lives, across a range of psychosocial areas. This

topic was addressed in depth throughout the project. However, other issues related to organisational governance and development were, as already noted, also identified. These factors were linked to and influenced by the experience of being a *Big Issue* vendor. In other words, it was inappropriate to omit reporting on governance, operational matters and developmental issues and findings in the final research report. We sometimes refer to these unanticipated outcomes, as 'getting more than you bargained for'.

Whenever such findings arise, it is essential to ground them in practice, and contextualise the themes with reference to historical influences and emergent themes. For example, an evaluation conducted by one of the authors identified that the feminist movement and related theoretical frameworks had heavily influenced the programme area under review. These influences led the programme to adopt certain practices, principles and approaches. Therefore, in presenting critical findings within the evaluation, it was important to contextualise these, noting the influence of feminism on the broader service delivery sector and the specific programme. While the researcher identifies as a feminist, she also critically presented the ways in which particular accounts of feminism were limiting the programme's responses.

In another joint research project, the organisation made it clear that they did not want to have the unanticipated findings and outcomes included in the final report. This related to specific organisational dynamics, patterns and behaviours, which the organisation did not want to acknowledge publicly. As researchers this created ethical dilemmas and points of tension for us. We attempted on a number of occasions to negotiate the issues, seeking some middle ground where all stakeholders could be satisfied with the research report, and we as researchers could present it with integrity and professionalism. Despite our attempts at negotiation, most people in the organisation were unwilling to accept that the unanticipated findings were relevant to the overall research project. This led us to a critical juncture as researchers – satisfy the client's expectations and agendas or represent the whole range of findings that were developed through independent and rigorous research processes. After discernment we chose the latter option, deciding to stand by the rigour and integrity of our research. This meant incorporating all findings in the final report, including those that highlighted problematic organisational processes and dynamics. In taking this decision, we acknowledged two likely consequences. Firstly it was likely that sections of the organisation would contest or challenge parts of our methodology and reject the validity of some of our findings and secondly, it was therefore unlikely that we would secure another research contract with this organisation.

Our experience has taught us that it is important that all research findings and particularly those that are unanticipated are presented to stakeholders in a variety of formats. This requires providing regular project updates to stakeholders, discussing emerging thematic findings and building our professional relationship with them as we analyse the research and develop our findings. Maintaining an open and professional relationship with all stakeholders enables us to identify presentation formats for final reports that are appropriate to different stakeholders. In the case of *The Big Issue* project, we had regular informal meetings with the vendors, keeping them informed of our actions and emerging understandings. We found that this happened over morning tea, or standing around outside while the participant had a cigarette or collected their *Big Issue* magazines, ready for selling on their pitch that day. From this process, vendors advised us that they wanted to hear about our findings at one of their regular meetings and would like a full copy of the written report to be available to them through the project office. Within this same project, the Board of Management preferred to receive the full report and then have us present and discuss findings with them. A key message here is the importance of asking the specific stakeholder group how they will best hear the findings and progress reports. Some prefer formal presentations, others a question and answer format or an informal conversation.

The final issue to be raised in relation to presenting findings is that confidentiality is an integral part of this process. Confidentiality requirements as specified by ethical guidelines and our grounding as social work practitioners inform our work throughout all research projects. However, it may be that findings paint some stakeholders in a negative light. Third (2000, p. 460) refers to this, highlighting the ethical dilemmas that can arise in these circumstances. From our perspective, it is essential to pay strict attention to ensure that findings are non-identifiable of individuals or groups. Additionally, when findings paint a stakeholder group in a negative light, we believe in consulting them, presenting the findings and seeking their input on how best to represent the findings to maximise the research results, yet ensure transparency.

Strategy 7: Acknowledging the Impact of Engagement on Researchers

We feel deeply privileged to meet, work with and be affected by the range of stakeholders that we encounter in our research activities. In line with our personal and professional values, we start with the belief that those people

experiencing the issue that are the subject of the research are the experts. We embrace the idea of engaging deeply with research participants, attempting to step into their world and set of experiences for a short time, and in a limited or partial capacity. Our commitment is to walk alongside research participants as they share their experiences in homelessness and other significant life issues. This idea of meaningful and purposeful engagement is reflective of feminist and interpretive research approaches (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Johnson, 2001; Wolf, 1996). The Dulwich Centre (2004) argues that these approaches '[p]rivilege the meanings and interpretations of the people who are being studied (p. 30).

This engaged stance indicates that researchers are open to be emotionally affected by the stories and experiences they hear about in the research process. It does not imply that researchers have loose boundaries and are unable to contain their emotions. It means that the privilege of hearing another's story is acknowledged and seen as sacred. As Ellis and Berger (2001, p. 858) have noted:

> By seeing myself as a subject as well as a researcher, I am able to move from the distanced observer to the feeling participant and learn things I could not learn before, both about them and me.

Being affected by another's story in the research process is not without issues or problems. For us as social work professionals, we have been well-grounded in the need to ensure we debrief and are supported when we immerse ourselves in the pain, trauma, joy, achievements and suffering of others. We find it curious that this has received limited attention in research circles. This of course fits with positivist approaches to research, in that the researcher is seen as occupying a neutral, objective stance; therefore there is no chance that the material they hear in interviews or surveys will impact upon them. As Rager (2005, p. 424) argues:

> [T]alking about the personal impact of conduct in research is a task with which many academics (including feminists) are uncomfortable and therefore avoid.

Within interpretive and qualitative research circles, some emerging literature can be traced regarding this issue. Rager (2005) and Ellingson (1998) have both spoken about their inter-subjective engagement with research sites and participants. Both of these authors had personal experience of the research context (in both cases experiences of cancer). What emerged was a description by the authors on the ways in which the research participants' stories intertwined with their own (as researchers and

cancer survivors), and spoke to them of their individual healing and recovery journeys.

While as researchers we have limited and partial experiences of homelessness, our shared humanity is what binds us to the people we engage with in this type of research. Ellingson's (1998, p. 510) quote speaks to us eloquently of our journeys with people affected by homelessness:

> I write myself as I write others, I heal myself as I try to help others through their stories.

These discussions highlight the importance of researchers undertaking exhaustive preparation before entering the field and engaging in reflexive discernment about their histories, experiences and potential triggers. It also calls for support structures to be an integral part of the research process. For example, who can researchers debrief with after hours, when they have finished an interview past normal office hours? Rager (2005) importantly points out that related staff in research projects must be considered in terms of their support needs; which includes people completing transcripts or other research tasks. We add that it is important to take a celebratory approach to the effects that research can have on us. By this we mean that people's capacity to survive incredible adversity and continue on with their healing journeys, including re-telling their story to a researcher must be celebrated. As researchers the issue that continues to affect us most is people's capacity for resilience, growth and future vision. During the Self-Reliance project, we constantly reflected on how inspired we were by the participants we interviewed (which included SAAP clients as well as service providers). This inspiration came from people's capacity for hope; despite trauma.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter is a reflection of practice wisdom and thinking to date about themes and strategies for inclusive research practices. They are provided with the aim of promoting further discussion both in the homelessness and broader interpretive research fields. The themes, strategies and principles outlined in this chapter continue to guide our research practice and inform an ongoing process of reflection and reshaping of qualitative research methods.

This chapter incorporates familiar principles in qualitative methodologies for enacting strategies that enable the voices and experiences of marginalised and vulnerable participants to be heard. These principles are extended

further by rethinking the concept of 'vulnerability' in homelessness research by drawing on strengths perspectives. While it is essential to acknowledge the potential vulnerability of people who experience homelessness, we argue it is equally important that researchers focus on their capacity, resilience and expertise about homelessness while maintaining awareness that homelessness is a sensitive research field. Acknowledging and responding to the potential vulnerability of participants in homelessness research requires rigorously ensuring that fully informed consent is clearly discussed and carefully negotiated with research participants. Researchers can simultaneously recognise participants' expertise by obtaining their input at different points in the research process as they move through the various research stages.

In reconceptualising vulnerability we emphasise that researchers should also be identified as a potentially vulnerable participant in the research process. In our experience, effective research practice needs to consider the requirements of support and debriefing both for researchers and research participants. Adopting strengths based, inclusive research practices provides researchers with the opportunity to, and responsibility for, enacting leadership by presenting information in ways that communicate and validate the resilience, strengths and expertise of people who have experienced homelessness. Qualitative methodologies are effective in enabling research participants to retell their lived experiences and contribute to the construction and interpretation of new knowledge about homelessness and responses to it. In our experience, inclusive research practice requires researchers to exercise leadership at every stage in the research process. The following quote captures and summarises our experience:

> How carefully the research question is pondered and framed, how respectfully the inquiry is carried out, how persuasively the arguments are developed in the written account, and how widely the results are disseminated become much more important issues than any criteria-based process of accounting that occurs after the research is completed. (Angen, 2000, p. 387)

We conclude that qualitative processes and strategies are useful in overcoming specific challenges arising from applied social research undertaken in collaboration with diverse stakeholders. We summarise these as follows:

- Researchers facilitating an inclusive research process have a responsibility to present findings arising from the research even if this means presenting findings that some stakeholders will experience as difficult to hear.

- In presenting difficult to hear findings, there are 'ethics' to be considered by clearly locating difficult to hear findings in the context of the research. We find that using qualitative methods that capture participants' words, experiences and ways of explaining their lived experience can usefully inform anecdotes, vignettes and short case studies drawn from the research. These assist in the reporting and re-telling of difficult to hear findings. We also emphasise presenting finding arising from the research honestly and frankly in a style that avoids allocating criticism or blame.
- Researchers are required to navigate complex relationships between stakeholders. Rigorous research practice requires that a critically reflexive stance be maintained throughout all stages of the research. Regular team meetings and critical peer analysis are strategies that promote reflective research team practices.
- We actively promote dissemination of the conclusions and research findings to all stakeholders at all stages of the research process.
- Qualitative methodologies offer a multitude of effective research strategies that effectively enhance knowledge about the experiences of being and moving from homelessness. While we have only begun to explore the range of methodologies available, those we have found effective so far include: formal and informal meetings and conversations; one-to-one in-depth interviews; short surveys; participant observation; workshops; and formal presentations.

While not an exclusive list of qualitative methodologies for homelessness research we find these to have been effective in overcoming identified barriers to research in the homelessness field. In concluding, we want to thank the many research participants and stakeholders who have been influential in our thoughts and practices.

NOTES

1. To view the projects refer to the Department of Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs website, available at www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/house-newsaap_research.htm.

2. *The Big Issue* magazine operates as a street-press, social enterprise project in various countries including England and Australia. While arrangements vary from country to country common features are that people who have experienced homelessness are provided with opportunities to earn an income by selling magazines (Swithinbank, 1997) with the aim of eliminating social exclusion and building community (Howley, 2003).

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CHAPTER 4

'FELT HOMELESSNESS': THE CONTRIBUTION OF QUALITATIVE APPROACHES TO HOMELESSNESS RESEARCH

Catherine Robinson

INTRODUCTION

In the context of what may be understood as an 'emotional retreat' in homelessness research and service provision (Chamberlayne, 2004, p. 347), this chapter canvasses the valuable role of qualitative research in continuing to diversify understandings and evidences of homelessness made available across the field. I work to make sense of the ways, in which the emotional and physical messiness of '*in situ*' research (Malins, Fitzgerald, & Threadgold, 2006, p. 514) can give rise to new understandings of homelessness that both intervene in and compliment existing research and policy knowledges. While my key focus here will be on the difficult task of actually articulating *how* it is that particular forms of qualitative research knowledge may provide epistemological leverage to the field of homelessness, it should also be clear that the impetus for this chapter, and indeed for my broader research engagement in homelessness (see for example, Robinson 2002b, 2003, 2005) stems from my concern with the ways in which felt-experience is particularly backgrounded in this field. As I have discussed

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elsewhere, the ramifications of making relatively silent corporeal and emotional dimensions of homelessness have troublingly included the entrenchment of conceptualisations of, and responses to, homelessness that cannot account for the multidimensional ways in which trajectories of homelessness can unfold and become reinforced. In particular, my focus has been on the ways in which the lack of attention paid within social research to the bodily impacts of cumulative trauma and grief in the lives of homeless people, has in turn been mirrored in the limited framing of social policy and welfare service delivery.

As a pathway to developing a more dynamic and holistic view of homelessness, my interest in qualitative methodology has arisen from the opportunities for corporeal and emotional understanding that I see this research approach enabling. After briefly considering why corporeal and emotional experience might be excluded from both research and policy engagements with homelessness, I explore how just two of the unique, embodied research tools offered within qualitative research practice – reflexivity and empathy – can give rise to insights into the felt-experience of homelessness and in turn suggest alternative responses to it. Specifically, my focus is on the bodily resonance of the researcher and researched in the field as a core mechanism through which new and needed affective knowledges of homelessness can more readily be made evident. I am interested in the potential value of such knowledges for researchers, policymakers and service providers, and I see affective engagement with those homeless in the context of research as already an intervention into their emotional silencing. I also point to the ways in which 'felt evidence' throws into relief the need for a strengthened policy and service focused on *care*, particularly for those experiencing repeated cycles of homelessness.

OPERATIONAL OR EXPERIENTIAL? THE LIMITS OF DEFINING FOR MEASUREMENT

The importance of the continued practice and expansion of qualitative research in the homelessness field is underlined by the observation that so far qualitative researchers have failed to disrupt the uncritical blurring of research and policy agendas that remain largely empiricist (Pleace & Quilgars, 2003, p. 187). As Jacobs, Kemeny and Manzi (1999, p. 11) bluntly summarise, 'homelessness is usually treated as an objective and objectifiable phenomenon, within the positivist tradition of social enquiry'. Indeed, a

hallmark of homelessness research and policy has been the tendency to use definitions of homelessness developed for measuring homelessness to conceptualise the experience of homelessness itself. The qualitative dimensions of what it is to be homeless are neither well-researched nor well-considered as part of a holistic response to homelessness. Despite the mass of research which consistently shows that housing stress is an indicator of compounded crises as well as of housing unaffordability, lack of appropriate housing has been broadly conceptualised as *the* key dimension of homelessness. Thus 'debate about the range of housing need which should be defined as homelessness' (Fitzpatrick, 2000, p. 40) has taken the place of more general debate about *what homelessness is*.

Social science research has established that for the majority, homelessness is a short-lived and even a once-off event (Avramov, 1999, p. 13; Tosi, 1999, p. 13). In Australia, for example, it is argued that most will be homeless for 'a few nights or weeks' before moving back into stable accommodation (Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness, 2003, p. 14). As such, policy responses have traditionally focused on housing and have required accurate estimates of housing need and understandings of housing pathways (Clapham, 2002; Fitzpatrick, 2000) in order 'to allocate resources on a rational basis' (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 2002, p. 3). Innovative approaches to counting those homeless have been developed to include not just those sleeping rough but more broadly those whose living arrangements do not meet minimum housing standards (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 1992). In Australia, according to leading homelessness researchers Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1998, p. 21), the 'primary homeless' are those people without conventional accommodation, such as rough sleepers or squatters; the 'secondary homeless' are those who move from one form of temporary accommodation to another, such as those moving between friends and crisis accommodation; the 'tertiary homeless' are those who live in boarding houses long-term; and the 'marginally housed' are those whose accommodation is 'only slightly below the community norm'.

Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1992) have worked to deliver and defend a standardised, housing-focused definition of homelessness that has ascended into broad usage within academic and policy research, public policy and national data collection on homelessness in Australia. They position their definition in relation to others deemed to be both 'conservative', such as those proposed in the 1980s by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development and the American researcher Peter Rossi which narrowly focused on literal street homelessness, and 'radical', such as that

provided by the Australian National Youth Coalition for Housing which focused in part on young people's subjective identification of their housing situation as homelessness. 'In contrast', Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1992, pp. 293–294) write, 'we have argued that theorising a socially constructed account of homelessness can provide an analytical framework that is neither arbitrary nor reducible to individual subjectivity. Since the cultural definition is grounded in evidence about the housing practices in a community, it can also be translated into operational concepts'.

Chamberlain and MacKenzie's definition has been much welcomed in Australia with little debate (although see Bessant, 2001; Crane & Brannock, 1996; Fopp, 1993; Robinson, 2002b) because of its key role in broadening the focus by policymakers and the general public on 'street homelessness'. Further, their definition has been valued because of the analytical and service delivery frameworks that the articulation of primary, secondary and tertiary degrees of homelessness seem to suggest. MacKenzie and Chamberlain (2003) show that people can experience homelessness differently and that a range of responses are needed depending on where a person might be in their 'homeless career' which ultimately leads them towards primary homelessness. Their definition framed the first *Counting the Homeless* project that formed a part of the 1996 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data collection, ensuring the inclusion of people in different contexts of homelessness from rough sleeping to crisis accommodation to doubling up with family or friends (Chamberlain, 1999). The Census gave rise to the powerful figure of 105,300 homeless people in Australia (Chamberlain, 1999, p. 2) that has been vital in attracting both media and policy attention to homelessness and related issues. Perhaps most significantly, the Report on Aspects of Youth Homelessness (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Community Affairs, 1995, p. 26) claimed 'an emerging community consensus' for a version of Chamberlain and MacKenzie's definition, and called for the definition to be used in framing 'recommendations relating to public policy initiatives'. As Chamberlain (1999, p. 1) argues strongly, 'there can be no meaningful public debate about the best policy responses to assist homeless people, unless there is reliable information on the number of homeless people in the community. This requires an ''operational definition'' of homelessness which can be easily measured, and credible data on the population identified by the definition'.

Chamberlain and MacKenzie's work remains somewhat troubling though not because of its important strategic policy aims, but because of its advocacy at times for the epistemological containment of research on

homelessness. Fears about the potential 'relativism' of research on homelessness (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 1998, p. 28) and the desire to generalise a specifically targeted policy-relevant definition to all aspects of an extremely complex social phenomenon, convey the passionate convictions of these researchers. In addition, such work may be seen to dangerously promote the seclusion of 'social policy' issues like homelessness from interdisciplinary theoretical, methodological and epistemological critique and debate. In particular, interpretive and discursive evidences remain disenfranchised through recourse to the pending threat of government inaction. As Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1998, p. 28) argue, '…the disabling problem of intellectual relativism ought to be allowed to die quietly', because 'after all, if homelessness is impossible to define, why should governments act to alleviate this nebulous condition?'

Under such 'contemporary conditions of representation' (Butler, 2004, p. 150) in which homelessness has been defined in operational rather than experiential terms, getting the emotional and corporeal dimensions of homelessness onto research and policy agendas is difficult. Who counts as homeless is established not only at the cost of exploring the multidimensional nature of homelessness but at the cost of restricting the range of evidences prioritised in research deemed policy-relevant. Arguing that individuals may subjectively evaluate their housing situations in ways that contradict established definitions begins to allow for 'some consideration of the affective aspects of a "home" ' (Fopp, 1993, p. 47) and potentially provokes productive anxiety about 'the security of objectivity' (Bessant, 2001, p. 37) but still fails to challenge the problematic conceptualisation of homelessness as in essence a housing issue. That homelessness is a 'nebulous condition' as Chamberlain and MacKenzie suggest seems surely the very rationale for a more radically open definition rather than one which seeks to contain homelessness within particular measurable parameters which are, in turn, perhaps more reflective of the needs of researchers and policymakers, than of homeless people.

In a context in which a research and policy focus on housing need has delivered mixed results for those homeless, understanding emotional and bodily experience is also critical to the effective representation and resolution of homelessness and housing crises. Homelessness as a diversely experienced housing issue requires a response, but its emotional and corporeal dimensions likewise need articulation and redressing. Research more broadly considerate of the full implications of *home*lessness, though largely absent in Australia (although see Hallebone, 1997; Nunan & Johns, 1996; Robinson, 2001; 2002b, 2005), has begun to reflect the felt-experiences

of desolation, trauma and desperation entrenched by living without, and in constant search for home (May, 2000; Tomas & Dittmar, 1995; Klodawsky, Aubry, & Farrell, 2006). Such research usefully stresses the appropriate delivery of *broader* support services – beyond housing and employment services, for example – which are needed to more successfully and holistically address emotional and bodily experiences of homelessness. Also raised are pressing questions about how best to ensure that the affective and existential dimensions of homelessness are firstly acknowledged, and secondly translated into policy directives:

> Concerns for a sense of place…are, at least implicitly, being introduced into the debate over definition of home and homelessness. The net result is that providing shelter for the poor is a necessary but not sufficient solution to the existential condition of homelessness. (Kearns and Smith, 1994, p. 420)

> …home has often been objectified and classified into discrete variables such as housing quality, levels of attachment, satisfaction etc. More focus is needed on the spiritual, cultural and symbolic essence of home which writers in phenomenology and sociology have highlighted. (Moore, 2000, p. 213)

> The acknowledgement of the lack of 'home' as characteristic of the homeless experience holds great promise in allowing policy and service responses to meet a deep emotional need rather than simply an accommodational or material need. (Nunan & Johns, 1996, p. 3)

The apparent necessity of collapsing understandings of homelessness into material and objectively measurable dimensions developed in order to define and categorise homeless people for purposes of equitable governance is called into question by these researchers, who also pose a challenge for creative policy development. While a number of commentators including Watson (2000), Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2002) and Williams and Cheal (2002) argue that measurement is essential to policy practice, I wonder if the issues of grief and trauma particularly prominent in trajectories of persistent or long-term homelessness are ignored precisely because of this, because they elude easy ownership, operationalisation and intervention. If so, the struggle to make admissible the emotional and corporeal suffering that can be so centrally experienced by those persistently homeless not only raises productive questions about which policy portfolios should lead responses to homelessness (Robinson, 2003, p. 35) but more broadly disrupts 'the dominant hold exercised by objectivist beliefs upon both science and common sense' (Pels, 2000, p. 5).

FELT EVIDENCE: EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL RUPTURINGS

My specific argument here is that qualitative research approaches emerge as critical in responding to the slow recognition within much research and policy work of the trauma of homelessness. In particular, the repeated, cumulative experience of trauma thinly registers. The felt dimension of homelessness, is subject to the further 'violence of derealisation' (Butler, 2004, p. 33) in much accounting for homelessness and yet offers a crucial lead into new ways of thinking and responding to it. As Crane and Brannock (1996, p. 7) argued over a decade ago:

> …it is critical to accommodate and respond to… felt homelessness… which is characterised by feelings of insecurity, a lack of safety or of not belonging, and is central to a person-centred definition of homelessness…

As I have foreshadowed, however, an interpretive analytical approach which attempts to open existential and emotional dimensions of homelessness to exploration risks being declared unusable in the policy environment. This risk seems to stem not only from the status of the subjective evidence itself that such an approach might produce and rely upon, but from the epistemological implications of openly interpretive research for social policy more generally. Such research reflexively demonstrates, for example, that knowledge and definition are always arbitrary, subjective and therefore political rather than stable, objective and therefore scientific. As Watson (2000, p. 160) worries, in the context of homelessness:

> How indeed could subjective experiences get interpellated into policy discourse and with what effects? Regulations, standards and definitions of necessity have to be equitable, consistent and objective.

Rather than fearing the 'epistemological rupture' (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 251) that openly interpretive evidence might trigger in the field of homelessness and therefore closing the doors to its potential contribution in advance, it is surely more productive to imagine that different forms of knowledge might be valued precisely for the different insights they provide. While I agree with Williams (2003, p. 1.1) that 'there is much more to the social world than agents' understanding of it', local knowledge is only contextualised rather than devalued by this observation. It is critical, as Rivlin (1990, p. 53) argues, to develop 'grounded directions for public policy' and to develop 'policies that emerge from an understanding of the individual needs and

personal strengths' of homeless people and from 'the trauma of a homeless existence'. In this context, an interpretive research strategy that can open researcher and policymaker to subjective individual accounts of needs, strengths and traumas in fact becomes a critical component of appropriate research practice and policy development.

In my own research practice I have found interpretive, qualitative research strategies such as ethnography and biography, and the central methods – participant observation and in-depth interviewing – these methodologies encompass, to enable my development of new conceptions of homelessness that stress the role of trauma in the repeated loss of housing and in the inability to access safe housing. My research has emphasised the experiences of sexual and physical abuse in particular that result in the immediate loss of housing and perhaps more importantly result in long-term traumatisation which likewise has long-term impacts on the capacity to establish and maintain housing and housing relationships (see for example, Robinson, 2003). Feelings of grief and the 'psychological devastation' (Tomas & Dittmar, 1995, p. 510), and alienation of being without the corporeally, geographically and socially orienting place of home have been central to my conceptualisation of homelessness as a felt-experience of displacement (see for example, Robinson, 2005).

My focus here is not on the actual findings of my research, however, but on the processes through which I have engaged in research and the forms of bodily exposure and bodily analysis which underwrite the broader claims I have made about the felt-experience of homelessness (see also Robinson, 2002a, 2004). In particular, as I now move on to argue, within the context of my practice of ethnographic and biographic research the processes of reflexive and empathetic learning have been pivotal in opening me to the corporeal and emotional experiences of those homeless, and indeed of those working with homeless people in the service provision sector. I explore these unique forms of bodily comprehension and their epistemological value. In short, I argue that the researcher's own bodily sensitivity can be central to qualitative forms of knowledge-making, and in concluding the chapter I also begin to outline the applied significance of the kinds of insight that bodily knowledge can open up in the field of homelessness.

Reflexivity

An accommodation worker at a youth refuge noted at the conclusion of my PhD fieldwork, 'you've become part of the furniture here, you can't leave'.

My return to this refuge as a relief youth accommodation worker for a further two years was the first clear signal of my enduring corporeal enmeshment in the field of homelessness. Though I am now significantly drawn back into the different bodily space of academia, I feel the bodily 'echo' (Leder, 1990, p. 162) of the often extremely physically and emotionally demanding fieldwork experiences that also characterised my subsequent research on homelessness. The bodily incorporation of or becoming part of the furniture of homelessness, part of the displaced places of refuges, drop-in centres, meal vans and backstreets, has been an extreme experience which has required of me a changed corporeality and a changed corporeal capacity. I have come to occupy myself in new ways.

It was through a continually reflexive process of corporeally 'registering and negotiating difference' (Nast, 1998, p. 107) – my own and others' – that I learned over time how to shape myself in the multiple ways required to sustain a research presence in the homelessness sector. I had to learn how to read other bodies and places, I had to learn how to read how other bodies read mine and I had worked at reinscribing the ways in which I presented myself in response to the demands, expectations and immediate compulsions of the spatial and interactional structure of the field. As a basis for beginning ethnographic fieldwork in refuges and drop-in centres, I had to learn how to literally, corporeally occupy what was unfamiliar territory. I had to learn how to position myself so I looked comfortable, confident and approachable when I was often under extreme stress or still learning what kind of habituated way of being was required of me by the physical and emotional geographies of the homelessness sector. As Coffey (1999, p. 73) suggests, '[a]t a very simple level, the ethnographer has to sit, stand or lie or be *somewhere*… A space has to be made, or found, for the body-thereness of the ethnographer'.

The process of reflexively and corporeally responding to, and 'giving over' (Nast, 1998, p. 95) to the various and often contradictory structures of the field was a continuous and crucial form of experiential fieldwork. Fieldwork was body work, and body work was a process of 'knowledge building through embodiment' (Parr, 2001, p. 162), or more precisely re-embodiment (Okely, 2007, p. 65). Through cultural and spatial exposure, through corporeal inscription, through 'body talk' (Parr, 2001, p. 161) I was 'recast' (Coffey, 1999, p. 25); I was repositioned by the field, adjusted in behaviour and bodily comportment. As Nast (1998, pp. 107–108) likewise discusses, through registering and '[r]esponding to how others called upon me and how others defined the terms of engagement', I developed the 'embodiment skill' (Nast, 1998, p. 95) necessary to enable continued communicative interaction

in the field. At the same time, I learned '*materially*' (Nast, 1998, p. 94) or practically (Jackson, 1983, p. 340) through my body, of some of the physical, emotional and sensorial demands of the field of homelessness.

Reflexive skills of self- and body-management, of body 'making' (Parr, 2001, p. 161), were central, for example, in establishing my professional capacity with support and accommodation agency managers and staff who were the key gate keepers of the field, in presenting a non-threatening, welcoming researcher-self to the homeless people and in ensuring my own street-savvy safety by understanding the range of spatial contexts I moved through, each of which required different forms of bodily alertness. I undertook such reflexive reinscriptions of my bodily-self not on the basis of a reflection on how I understood my 'location of self' (Hertz, 1997, p. viii) in the field, however, but again as Nast (1998, p. 95) suggests, on the basis of an often involuntary, conscious and unconscious reflexivity, a reflexivity that had me scrambling to understand and negotiate the ways in which the field placed me in ways unexpected and even undesired. Rather than a controlled, self-directed reflexivity, following Nast (1998, p. 94), I was firmly engaged in a 'creatively de-centering' *other-directed reflexivity*. As Nast (1998, p. 94) argues:

> …reflexivity is less about self-introspection, self reflection, ''self-conscious practices…in thinking and writing'' or self-emanating contemplation of how one ''positions and includes oneself in relation to a subject of study'' (Marcus 1992, p. 489)…than about learning to recognise others' construction of us through their initiatives, spaces, bodies, judgement, prescriptions, proscriptions and so on…

Participant observation in the homelessness sector was central to my experience of reflexive, other-directed learning. As Jackson (1983, p. 340) also suggests, 'to participate bodily in everyday practical tasks was a creative technique which often helped me grasp the sense of an activity by using my body as others did'. I learnt from my interaction with both agency staff and homeless people, developing the kind of tough body expected in this field, a tough body that communicated respect, stability, consistency and a strong, professional awareness of appropriate bodily, emotional and geographical boundaries. My academic interests and competency needed down playing. I had to show I could 'handle myself' that I wouldn't 'lose my head' or 'break down'. I had to be able to 'hold my own', 'stand up for myself' and not get 'rattled'. I had to show that I had 'good boundaries', that I was safe, sensible and firm but that I wasn't 'stuck up', that I could have fun, joke around, 'cop it on the chin' and 'give as good as I got'. In particular, I had to show that I could earn the trust of homeless clients – often the hardest and most

astute judges of character – thus seemingly demonstrating that my engagement was genuine and thoughtful.

My development of this corporeal style of generous robustness, of likeable toughness, taught me a lot about the fragility of agency workers and their homeless clients. Through working hard to cope with every day interaction in refuges and drop-in centres, I learnt of the extreme physical and emotional stress that both agency staff and homeless people were under and of the difficulties of negotiating the body-self in often intimidating and always public environments. Toughness was needed by all to get by. It was needed to manage the constant physical, emotional and sensorial bombardment of the chaos of living homeless. It was needed to shield against the exhaustion of public living, of hanging around, often cold and uncomfortable with time passing slowly. It was needed in particular to bear the weight of constant exposure to other people's sadness, anger, illness and shame. Toughness brought respect and guarded against fear.

The acquisition of a tough body was also a process of registering and negotiating the ways in which both agency staff and homeless people positioned me and each other as physically and emotionally 'in danger', and a process of learning about homelessness as a spatial context of threat which could be corporeally managed by being streetwise to a certain extent. I was warned by agency staff about 'burn out', and the need to regularly debrief with someone about the often traumatic interactions and interview content I was exposed to. I was taught by both staff and homeless people to 'watch my back', and to be sensible about my safety within refuges and drop-in centres such as by trying to steer clear of people if they became aggressive and by making sure I avoided being alone with clients in private or secluded places, such as bedrooms or parts of the buildings out of earshot, eyesight or surveillance camera range. I was instructed to understand that my body was at constant risk from needle-stick injury in particular and I became competent at routinely taking this into account when choosing where to sit and when handling clothing, bags and handbags that did not belong to me.

Perhaps most revealingly, it was also reinforced to me through my interactions with homeless people that I too as an unknown stranger was positioned as a potential physical and emotional threat. I learned of homeless people's repeated experiences of sexual, physical and emotional trauma, through being understood by staff and homeless people as a potential violator myself and through having to negotiate this potentiality by developing new embodiment of skills. I had to learn to present myself as someone safe, accepting and non-judgemental, as someone in whom agency staff had confidence, and as someone sensitively attuned to the generalised

context of trauma underpinning homelessness and to the very specific ways in which this context played out in the everyday interactions of those living homeless. My negotiations with research participants of public interview locations was as much for interviewees' wellbeing as my own, as was the post-interview support provided by agency staff.

Although the 'tough persona' was crucial for being *there* in the marginal spaces of refuges and drop-in centres, in my extended or intensive interactions with homeless people, such as during interviews I also had to work to re-create a different professional competency and persona connected to the conduct of my research. I needed to learn the interactions of toughness to survive and 'fit in' and I needed to materially demonstrate that I was 'sound', but I also needed to craft ways of being *with* homeless people that were relevant to my non-agency-related role in the field. Being *with* required a different form of interactive relationship and intimacy in order to conduct qualitative in-depth and biographic interviews focusing on subjective, felt and lived experiences.

Homeless people were overly used to the interview as a brief summary undertaken by staff of the key issues they currently faced on their initial presentation to services for accommodation or assistance. An 'intake interview' consisted of a blunt, matter-of-fact discussion about a client's referral to an agency (that usually led to a 'background check' with a previous agency contact), state and foster care history, physical and mental health, drug and alcohol usage (what and how much daily?), self-harm and legal issues. Homeless people were also used to various forms of 'therapeutic interviews' undertaken by agency staff and other professionals involved in the welfare sector such as psychologists, educators, drug and alcohol rehabilitation counsellors, support group leaders, legal aid lawyers, mental health and health practitioners.

In my research then, I had to clearly establish the interview as neither necessarily therapeutic nor inquisitional but as aimed at the *recognition* of participants' experiences (Bondi, 2003, p. 68). In the opening moments of an interview, I found it was my framing of interaction to which participants had to initially respond. I moved respondents into a terrain of talk directed by the particular project focus and into a form of interaction directed by the formal protocols of ethical interviewing and sound recording, and yet also suggested to participants that they too could control the interview. I tried to reinforce that I wanted to learn from participants about their experiences of living homeless, and yet this attempt to share control of the interview nonetheless assumed that life-narratives *could* and *would* be made accessible to me by participants.

Frustratingly, I was clumsy and respondents were inevitably on the back foot at the start of an interview and I had to work hard to draw them forward again using every reflexive bodily skill available to me. The intensity of this kind of interaction was extreme; I recall my researching body at times straining to sense in detail the particular ways respondents needed me to be *with* them in order to feel safe, heard and valued in the research setting. I had to work to make myself alert not simply to what was being said, but to the differing spatial and corporeal positioning and interactive needs of each participant. Is it best to sit outside? Does the interviewee want someone else present? Should we make a coffee together first? How do I give comfort here? Should I interject with another question or just let things roll?

Despite my awkward and necessarily uncertain representation of what participation in a research interview might entail, and despite the reinforcement of the specific subject positions of 'researcher' and 'researched' during the formalities of negotiated consent in particular, through reflexive body work it was also possible to create a context of connection, calm and emotional safety. Further, as I now move on to discuss, the corporeal connection often (though not always) 'worked up' through interview interaction came not just through other-directed reflexive body work but through the radical 'scope for confusion between self and other' (Bondi, 2003, p. 64) offered by the unique and intense exchange of interviews. Through reflexively giving myself over to the inscriptions of others, I in turn also kept open the possibility of an empathetic incorporation of the subjective experiences recounted by research participants during interviews. In other words, and as Nast (1998, p. 96) states, the 'formational experiences' of reflexive fieldwork 'led me both to greater subjective de-centering and fragmentation and to an enlarged experiential field of difference'.

Empathy

While the often enormous biographic and experiential differences between me and research participants with experiences of homelessness, or homelessness and mental illness might be expected to mitigate against our resonant interaction, with Bondi (2003, p. 64) I want to think more about *empathy* as a key qualitative method for building understanding across both similarity and difference. Bondi very usefully explores the *psychic* work involved in empathetic interviewing, mobilising concepts such as identification, introjection and projection to demystify the process of 'intersubjective

exchange' (Bondi, 2003, p. 70) and explain psychoanalytically how it is that understanding between interviewer and interviewee can be developed. I extend her exploration of empathy, however, wanting to make sense of my more generalised experience of empathetic *bodily* resonance – 'a feeling-thinking engagement' (Wikan, 1992, p. 476) at once the result of the psychic and *physical* work – as central in empathetic interviewing exchange. I take up Leder's (1990) work on compassion to help me place the body more firmly within empathy as a tool for corporeal and emotional experience.

In her work on 'empathy and identification' in the research interview, Bondi (2003) suggests that more general psychological processes of subject formation are also central for the intersubjective exchanges central in empathetic knowing or understanding. Understanding is possible, Bondi suggests, because of the subject's psychic capacities to imaginatively participate in other people's experiences. In this sense, Bondi's notion of the interview as providing 'psychic space' and 'scope for the confusion of self and other' (Bondi, 2003, p. 64) points to the possible disruption of the awkward differentiation of interviewer and participant that I briefly discussed above. That *both* parties might become 'participants' in the interview is precisely the basis of the formation of empathetic understanding to which Bondi (2003, p. 72) points.

In the often intimate and intense exchange of interviewing, Bondi (2003, p. 70) further suggests, 'something of the inner reality of one person is not only communicated to another person, but is actively incorporated into the inner reality of that other person'. For Bondi then, this empathetic communication is a result of psychic processes of identification: through introjection, the subject unconsciously draws on elements of the ways of being of others and their experiences in their own identity formation, and through projection the subject unconsciously projects or expels often unwanted elements of their own psychic identifications onto others. In the context of interviewing, such 'intersubjective transactions' (Bondi, 2003, p. 70) are central in the process of understanding others. This is because they represent a capacity to imaginatively and creatively *share* in others' experiences and feelings, whether through the researcher's unconscious 'absorption' of or learning about others through an introjective inscription of their manner and experience, or through the researcher's gathering of his or her own experiential resources in a projective inscription of experiences of others.

As indicated above, I also want to think of the corporeal permeability of the subject rather than just the psychic permeability that gives rise to the possibility of empathetic 'confusion' on which Bondi (2003, p. 69) focuses.

I want to hold on to my sense of not just a cognitive identification with how others felt, but a sweaty, nauseating, head-aching, tear-spilling, heart-scrambling, full-bodied incorporation. Incorporation is the word I want to stress here more than Bondi does in order to more clearly consider empathy as a process of *corporeal* identification with and inhabitation by the experiences of others. I want to suggest that again through the sentient capacities of the body, I engaged in an empathetic reinscription of my own corporeal experience and schema by extending into the experiences of research participants. Making myself 'fully available to the interviewee' (Bondi, 2003, p. 73) entailed not only a 'recasting of the self' (Coffey, 1999, p. 25) as non-threatening, supportive, sensitive and attentive in the eyes of each individual research participant, but also meant incorporating, including into my fleshy being, others' felt-experiences of stress, grief, disorientation and trauma.

In short, following Bondi what I want to say is that I learnt about the sentient dimensions of homelessness in part through confusing others' emotional and physical trauma for my own. I experienced this confusion not just psychically, however, but corporeally. Though I could never anticipate whether or not an interview would give rise to such embodied empathetic confusion (see Bondi, 2003, p. 66 on this point also) or when I might come into such confusion – at times it was retrospective – or in what way my feeling of confusion developed – conscious or unconscious (see Bondi, 2003, p. 68) – through my own changing emotional and physical state in specific interviews and more generally over the course of my research, I came to think of 'understanding' as a profoundly corporeal achievement. I came to recognise in my own body the ways in which I seemed to 'take on' the slowness of sorrow, the curtness of anger, the carelessness of frustration, the sleeplessness of pain, the heartbeat of fear, the breathlessness of panic and the disorientation of madness. I *felt* the shuddering grief in the back of my own throat; I *felt* the bodily echo of stepfathers' hands between my own legs; I *felt* the blunt push of the needle in my own fingers, in my own neck, in the flat of my own forearm.

Such corporeal resonances or 'corporeal countertransference' (Csordas, 1993, p. 145) took place both at the time of interviews and also over the course of my various research projects. My bodily incorporation of the experiences of others was both immediate and cumulative. In 'experiencing-with' (Leder, 1990, p. 161) homeless others through interviewing, reading transcripts, writing and even dreaming, I formed 'one body' (Leder, 1990, p. 161) with them. I felt my way into the experiences of others that were 'beyond the words' (Wikan, 1992) by 'going beyond' 'the said'

(Wikan, 1992, p. 467) specific to spoken and written interviews into an enlarged communicative realm of 'body talk' (Parr, 2001, p. 161) and 'body-language' (Parr, 1998, p. 30). As Leder (1990, p. 162) suggests, '[c]ompassion has made one body of us' and here Leder speaks of the 'confusion' Bondi points to, but specifically articulates this as a corporeal confusion through which 'I embody within myself the suffering and needs of others' (Leder, 1990, p. 163). This is the corporeal resonance that Wikan (1992, p. 463) likewise points to: 'I must create resonance in myself with the people and problems I seek to understand'.

CONCLUSIONS: THE VALUE OF BODILY KNOWLEDGES

I do not mean to suggest here that attempts to know 'othernesses' relying on embodied interaction with others are unproblematic or always possible and successful. Nor do I intend to imply that knowledge of the felt-experience of others can only come through forms of intersubjective, corporeal comprehension. Parr (2001, p. 165) points out that 'it is unrealistic to suggest that all social research can be founded on intersubjectivity' and as Wasserfall's (1997) work shows there are considerable obstacles to reflexively forming a sense of intersubjective connectedness in research. 'How do I represent a group of people with whom I had strong conflict, whom I disliked and from whom I felt alienated?' asks Wasserfall (1997, p. 154).

So while reflexive and empathetic research practices offer no guarantees of successful fieldwork or even of resonant understanding, my point here has been to explore what I think of the possibilities of these important tools of qualitative research can be. Though the intensity of ethnographic and biographic research can pose emotional and physical dangers to both researcher and researched, these methodologies may also be understood to frame vital space for researchers to undertake bodily knowledge building in the field. Such knowledges of the corporeal and emotional experiences of others offer a powerful addition to existing research in multiple arenas impacted slowly by new sociologies and geographies of bodies and emotions, or dominated by approaches to knowledge production which only weakly engage felt-experience.

Further, as I have discussed elsewhere (Robinson, 2004), such approaches to research may be understood to offer a creative and even enjoyable interaction space in which research participants may experience an

empowering sense of freedom to reconstruct and make sense of their own lived and felt-experiences. The bodily connectedness of fieldwork can offer participants a collaborative emotional connection with the researcher as well as the intellectual and sensorial satisfaction of a holistic and self-directed mode of communication. In the often socially fragmented context of homelessness where little time or space is available for emotional sense-making, research practice which can offer such immediate body to body emotional recognition to homeless participants is vital. Such recognition is at least a tangible preface to any broader forms of recognition generated through research publications or policy and support programme developments.

Ideally of course, the 'bodily engagings' (Laurier & Parr, 2000, p. 100) of qualitative research practice in the field of homelessness should result in newly configured empirical evidence important to the broad imagining of homelessness, and the holistic and cautious ways in which any policy response to it must be negotiated. Establishing that homeless people are grief-stricken, for example, is itself as important a research, policy and public issue as their structurally disadvantaged access to independent accommodation, employment and income. Indeed recognition of the *corporeal and emotional* 'landscape of precariousness' (Forrest, 1999, p. 17) that homeless people must also negotiate and survive is central in a context in which programmatic responses to compounded exclusion – through the provision of housing and employment programmes, for example – may leave trauma as both cause and impact of homelessness untouched.

A more in-depth understanding of the trauma of homelessness might, for example, force a needed reappraisal of the emotional retreat in service provision where the capacity to undertake crucial relationship-building activities and other emotional work with homeless people threatens to be subsumed because of a lack of services and adequate staffing (see also Johnsen, Cloke, & May, 2005, p. 799). In such a context, not only do the 'reserves of emotional understanding' of skilled service staff 'largely remain untapped' but opportunities for support, for building sustaining relationships and for healing may be denied to those with 'an urgent need for emotional engagement' (Chamberlayne, 2004, pp. 346–347). As Coleman (2000, p. 18) points out, traumatised clients whose needs may not be met quickly are not 'attractive' in an 'out-put' focused service delivery framework.

It is deeply disturbing that significant barriers are faced in the provision of the kind of care often needed for healing (Klodawsky et al., 2006, p. 430) when those presenting to, or in need of services are likely to have experienced trajectories of trauma and 'histories of emotional abuse and neglect'

(Chamberlayne, 2004, p. 341). In a more widely resonant critique, Klodawsky et al. (2006, p. 420) condemn the focus of the Canadian federal government on employability initiatives and note the problematic growing dependence of services on the funding that such initiatives entail. As Klodawsky et al. (2006, p. 420) contend, 'care is generally not part of current senior government agendas geared to marginalised youth and that as a result, there is a gap in funding that supports efforts of community organisations who work with homelessness youth'. The failure to care, as Chamberlayne (2004, p. 338) argues, only serves to perpetuate the revolving use of services – at great cost, it should also be added, not only to those homeless.

In sum, when the significance to survival of even thinly provided care is clear, public policy that remains focused on 'self-sufficiency' (Klodawsky et al., 2006, p. 420) risks re-abandoning rather than empowering homeless people. Recognition of the felt causes and impacts of homelessness might help address the 'disconnect' between 'the bodies imagined in senior governmental discourses and policy construction' and those presenting in need to drop-in and accommodation services (Klodawsky et al., 2006, p. 433). Redescription of the homeless, traumatised body in particular might instigate the reconfiguration of more appropriate funding for places of care in which the capacity for relationship-building is acknowledged as a key process and outcome of service provision. It may be then, as I have used this chapter to argue, that more than ever qualitative research practitioners must agitate to mark more clearly their place in the field of homelessness research. Now, more than ever, qualitative research practitioners must insist on the significance of qualitative, felt evidence to definitions of, and responses to homelessness and in doing so create greater recognition for the emotional and corporeal experiences and insights of those who are homeless and those who work with them.

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CHAPTER 5

RESIDENTS, INTERVIEWEES, CLASS REPRESENTATIVES? REFLECTIONS ON THE USE OF QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS IN KNOWING THE WORLDS OF GENTRIFICATION

Graham P. Martin

INTRODUCTION

For policymakers and academics alike, gentrification – the renovation of socially and economically marginal inner-city areas by higher status social groups – has become an issue of rising importance in the changing social structures of developed-world cities (Smith, 1979; Rose, 1984; Hamnett, 1991). In the regeneration of deprived inner-urban areas, it is seen as a double-edged sword, its potential to reinvigorate local property markets and provide much-needed investments of social capital matched by its tendency towards displacement of 'less desirable' extant populations and social division between middle-class newcomers and incumbent working-class residents (Smith, 1992; Blokland, 2002; Butler, 2003).

The economic and social conditions that give rise to gentrification are well-studied, both in terms of the structural prerequisites – housing-market conditions, the uneven development of the city presenting gaps between the

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actual and potential value of neighbourhoods (Smith, 1982) – and the agency of gentrifiers whose social, cultural and economic needs and preferences lead them to relocate or invest in those neighbourhoods (Ley, 1996). What have been less thoroughly researched are the views of the existing populations of gentrifying neighbourhoods: the usually less well-off, working-class groups, often from minority-ethnic and marginalized backgrounds, whose neighbourhoods are subject to the transformations wrought by gentrification. Despite something of a romanticization, in popular and to some extent academic circles, of the 'disappearing' cultural landscapes of these groups in the face of gentrification and globalization, little empirical research has been carried out attempting to access the views and experiences of such groups (Slater, Curran, & Lees, 2004). Key questions that emerge from such transformations include: How far do established residents value the landscapes being transformed by gentrification and globalization? What do they make of the new settlers moving in their neighbourhoods? What do they think of the symbolic and material changes that accompany the processes of gentrification? It was these questions among others that informed a research project examining gentrification in Notting Hill, an area of west London that has been more subject to the palpitations of gentrification and globalization (see Fig. 1).

The project, conducted during June–September 2001, sought to contribute to filling a research gap that reflected a wider, insidious (though inadvertent) preoccupation with the language and landscapes of the powerful, identified by Rose (1994, pp. 47–48):

> Despite the insistence that the representation of urban places is a contested process, and the adoption of the methodological metaphor of landscape as text precisely in order to emphasise that the meanings of landscapes are always open to negotiation, […] very little detailed research on the interpretation of place-images by different audiences has been undertaken. […] The particular use made by many geographers of the term 'ideology' focuses their attention on the status quo. This has the insidious effect of translating most geographers' interest in *power* into an interest in the *powerful*.

In seeking to access, analyze and articulate the views of the more marginal incumbent residents of Notting Hill, it was inevitable that various methodological issues would arise, as the 'foreshadowed problem' was translated into a viable set of research questions and fieldwork plan (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). There was the general question, faced by all research and qualitative attitudinal research in particular, of how to find a common language between the researcher and respondent, to ensure that each understood what the other was talking about (Oakley, 1982). Given the rather nebulous nature of the subject under discussion – neighbourhood change and

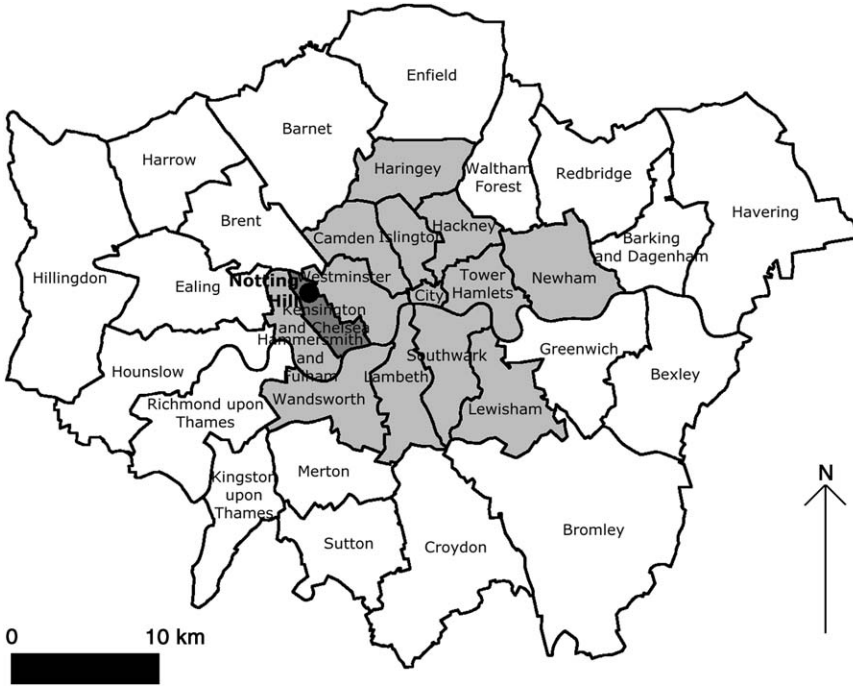

Fig. 1. Notting Hill within Greater London. Reproduced from Ordnance Survey map data by permission of the Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright 2001.

the identity of place – the importance of such concerns became increasingly apparent during the course of the research. Then there was the issue of the specific methods used in the research: the means of accessing potential interviewees and interview process itself (Feldman, Bell, & Berger, 2003). The study's approach involved 'cold-calling' at houses in different parts of Notting Hill and neighbouring North Kensington, and requesting short, semi-structured interviews with the occupants. This strategy was adopted with a view of obtaining a convenient but varied sample of interviewees, and had both advantages and disadvantages in terms of validity and reliability of the data. There was the issue – again common to most qualitative research – of generalization, and how, through the analysis process, inferences about wider theoretical and empirical questions might be made from the utterances of individuals (Silverman, 1993). This question relates not only to the analysis itself, but also how analysis is represented, and inferences illustrated, in

written outputs from the research: the selective usage of parts of the data to evidence methodological robustness and analytical integrity.

To start with, these methodological concerns demanded little active consideration. As the fieldwork unfolded, however, it became increasingly apparent that the kinds of perspectives interviewees were expressing were at odds both with what had been anticipated and prevailing academic knowledge of the field (the former being premised on the latter). To explain this apparent disjuncture, it was necessary to reflect critically upon the efficacy of the approach used in the research. The process of critical reflection continued as the work was submitted to a scholarly journal for publication and subjected to academic peer review.

This chapter discusses these reflections, focusing in particular on the three areas mentioned above (finding a common language; the data collection process; the conduct and presentation of analysis). The chapter offers critical reflection on the research methods, fieldwork, analysis and the validity and reliability of the findings, by revisiting the 'paper trail' or 'audit trail' produced in the course of analysis, the research-diary kept while in the field, and written outputs. As such, it has been written from the perspective of an early-career researcher for, but by no means limited to, other early-career researchers considering embarking on a qualitative research path.

The chapter is structured as follows: first, a summary of the research is presented. Secondly, consideration is given to the way in which the research was planned: the process by which a workable research question and manageable plan of fieldwork was developed and taken in the field. Thirdly, the translation of these carefully laid plans into empirical practice is outlined alongside various contingencies that required reconsideration of both approach to and ideas about the field. Finally, consideration is given to the analytical process, from the field to the desk, and the question of how far this faithfully followed 'canonical' qualitative methodological guidance in the way it was conducted and subsequently presented. First of all, however, a brief summary of the aims, methods and conclusions of the research is presented to provide some context for the discussions which will follow later.

NEIGHBOURHOOD CHANGE, PLACE AND IDENTITY IN NOTTING HILL

To reiterate, the study (Martin, 2001, 2005) took its cue from the relative dearth of empirical research on the incumbent, socio-economically poorer

groups in gentrifying areas who potentially have the most to lose, symbolically and materially, as a result of neighbourhood transformation. With a few exceptions (see for example, Burgess & Wood, 1988; Mills, 1993; May, 1996; Eade, 1997), studies of gentrification have tended to neglect their views, preferring instead to focus on the spatial identities constructed by dominant groups – the views of individual gentrifiers and, particularly, place-images created in the marketing of areas by companies investing in them – and on academic interpretations of the changing characteristics of places (Smith, 1992; Reid & Smith, 1993; Eade & Mele, 1997; Rofe, 2003; Rofe & Oakley, 2006). Such an overwhelming emphasis on the 'hegemonic power' of the symbolic and material effects of processes like gentrification can tend towards an impression that their effect is total, irresistible and uncontestable (Gibson-Graham, 1996). Seeking out alternative conceptions of place that might co-exist with dominant place-images without succumbing to them has the potential to illuminate the limits of this supposed hegemony via showing how subordinate groups maintain an attachment to place that does not yield to the colonizers' symbolic and material power (cf. Massey, 1995; Albrow, Eade, Dürrschmidt, & Washbourne, 1997).

The primary purpose of the research, though, was for a dissertation for a Masters Degree,[1] and as such its scope was restricted by the constraints of time, finances and prior experience. In seeking to fulfil the ambition of accessing the 'non-hegemonic' identities ascribed to Notting Hill, I was conscious of the risk of constructing a simple binary, with a unitary subordinate 'other' of the dominant place identity of globalization and gentrification (cf. Massey, 1991). Therefore, within these limited means, the research sought to consider a variety of groups' feelings, comparing and contrasting their symbolic landscapes.

The method adopted in pursuit of this involved semi-structured interviews, to discuss the local area, what it meant to respondents, and how it was changing. Respondents were accessed by 'cold-calling' at the doors of houses in three 'sub-neighbourhoods' within Notting Hill and North Kensington, all of which were comparatively socio-economically deprived in relation to the richer parts of the area, but which were otherwise divergent. Two of these areas were predominantly council or housing association-rented (one, 'Golborne', in the north of the district, in a somewhat worse state of repair than the other, 'Ladbroke'); the third ('Tavistock') was largely owner-occupied and somewhat more middle-class in character (see Fig. 2). Along with respondents' descriptions of their occupations, housing tenure was also used as a key proxy for respondents' socio-economic status. This in turn

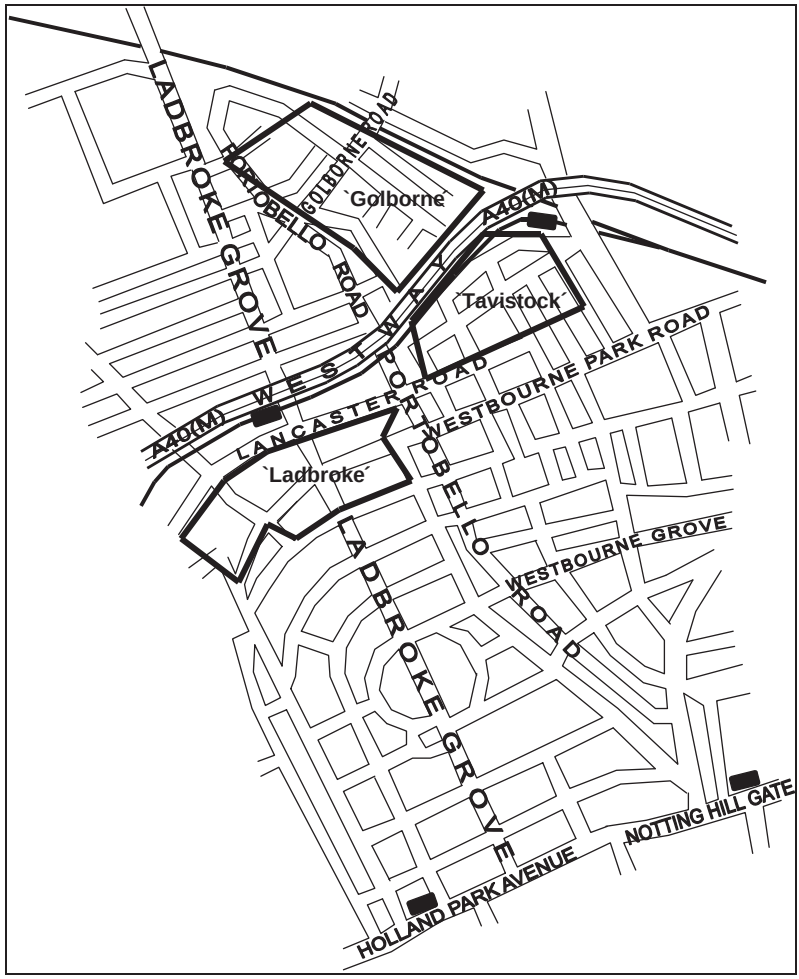

Fig. 2. Street Map of Notting Hill and North Kensington, Showing the Three Principal Areas in which door-to-door Research was Undertaken.

formed a means of framing data analysis, along with ethnicity and other variables, including some whose importance only emerged through the research, such as sub-neighbourhood of residence.

Data collection proved to be hard work, involving around 100 'cold calls' (excluding those where no one answered the door) for a total of 28 responses

Table 1. Respondents and Refusals by Gender, Ethnicity and Area.

	Respondents	Refusals[a]	Response Rate (%)
Total	28	71	28.3
Gender			
Female	14	49	22.2
Male	14	22	38.9
Ethnicity/nationality			
White (British or Irish)	16	40	28.6
Afro-Caribbean	1	16	5.9
South Asian	1	3	25.0
East Asian	1	1	50.0
French	1	0	100.0
Moroccan	1	7	12.5
Portuguese	1	0	100.0
Spanish	3	0	100.0
Other minority ethnic[b]	3	0	100.0
Not known	0	4	
Area			
Ladbroke	8	17	32.0
Golborne	12	38	24.0
Tavistock	7	11	38.9
Other Notting Hill areas	1	5	16.7

[a]Note that where I was refused an interview, assessments of ethnic background had to be made on the basis of phenotypical and other visual/oral cues, and hence may not be accurate.
[b]Detail removed to protect anonymity.

(see Table 1). The testimony of the respondents interviewed did indeed throw up a variety of alternative images of the area of Notting Hill, apparently related to class, ethnicity and, notably, sub-neighbourhood. The contours of these different place identities, however, differed somewhat from expectations. In sum (for greater detail, see Martin, 2005), and in contrast to the importance of the disappearance of working-class landscapes to working-class communities claimed in the academic literature, such concerns were of relatively little significance to the residents of the poorer areas, Ladbroke and Golborne. Rather, it was the somewhat better-off inhabitants of the Tavistock neighbourhood who ascribed most value to the traditionally working-class identity of the area, and spoke most frequently of their regret of the changes that were occurring to its character.

When talking about their neighbourhood, the more working-class respondents tended to allude less to its symbolic aspects (i.e. character,

meanings, history and so on) and more to material concerns (i.e. convenience, function and so on). There was, however, a noticeable difference between the perspectives offered by the residents of the two areas of predominantly social housing, Ladbroke and Golborne. Residents of the former area, an enclosed and well-maintained estate close to the centre of Notting Hill, spoke little about the area's transformations – despite the fact that just outside their estate, houses were being bought and sold for sums well in excess of £1m – and tended to talk more in terms of neighbourhood continuity than change. Those living in Golborne, a less well-kept estate in the poorer northern part of the area, perceived many changes to their neighbourhood – but not primarily of the kind anticipated. Instead, their particular concerns were expressed in terms of racial and ethnic, rather than socio-economic, changes to the area, centering around the recent arrival of a large Moroccan community on their estate. Such racialized sentiments, though, were not, at their core, about race or culture or symbolic appropriation per se: rather, they too were linked to material concerns about limited space, the distribution of state resources and criminality (principally vandalism and drug abuse).

Secondarily to the concerns around the Moroccan 'influx', residents of Golborne did express some fears about gentrification. Similarly, however, such concerns did not tend to allude to lost landscapes of working-class identity – indeed, some working-class respondents even welcomed gentrifiers as a 'better class of people' – but were articulated instead in terms of housing pressures (for example, privatization of social housing), loss of useful local facilities and so on. In short, the conclusion was that:

> attachment to the symbolic meanings of place is a preoccupation mainly for those in relatively middle-class positions. This was expressed most clearly in relation to opinions about gentrification, where a middle-class regret of traditional landscapes lost contrasted with a comparative lack of concern from working-class respondents, but it was also apparent from the kinds of issues and changes which did concern respondents of working-class backgrounds. Distinctly material, and often very localized, worries were closest to their hearts, so that for the residents of Golborne in particular, the relatively distant matters of media misrepresentation and gentrification were insignificant compared to issues like crime, drugs, overcrowding, local authority neglect and most importantly of all, the perceived threat of a growing Moroccan community. Somewhat paradoxically, therefore, we find a difference in attitudes related to class where the most prominent class-based issue – gentrification – is of only marginal concern to the working-class group threatened by it. Where gentrification is of concern, however, it is in terms of its direct material impact: herein the paradox is resolved, for it is the material concerns which matter most to this group. (Martin, 2005, p. 85)

The way in which I described the analysis and findings in this paper and original dissertation presented a temporal storyline, a rationalization of the explanatory process. In this narrative, initial surprise at the apparent difference of views between respondents in the middle-class and working-class sub-neighbourhoods steered the research towards paying closer attention to contrasts between the responses in the two working-class neighbourhoods, which in turn provided illumination as to the nature of the perspectives on place being expressed by respondents, permitting conclusions about the material preoccupations of working-class versus more symbolic concerns of middle-class respondents.

Ultimately, in both the dissertation and paper what was presented was an ordered, narrated and generally 'cleaned up' account of methods, fieldwork and analysis that constructed my thoughts and ideas as a singular, progressive, linear *process*. This, then, was a rationalization for presentational purposes. The following sections, however, return to the muddier waters of the research process in Notting Hill. With the aid of the written 'audit trail' of interview transcripts, analysis frameworks, notes, drafts and research-diary entries, the remainder of this chapter considers some of the more challenging issues faced in trying to make sense of the data, and create an analysis that was original, meaningful and defensible. We start, then, by looking at the preparations for the fieldwork, before moving on in the sections that follow to the 'doing' and the writing up of the process.

CONSTRUCTING THE FIELD: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THE RESEARCHED POPULATIONS

Restricted budgets, the limitations of past experience and trepidations about the validity of the research being proposed are arguably ever-present worries for all researchers, and they were perhaps especially acute at the start of this research, from the perspective of a postgraduate student looking to fulfil the requirements of a Masters dissertation. Clearly, this could only be a relatively limited piece of research that certainly called for something deeper; but equally, given the relative absence of similar studies among subordinate groups in gentrifying areas, it could at least represent a useful starting point. The hope was that the method, in adopting a semi-structured interview schedule, would provide opportunities for a degree of digression

and more in-depth discussion while also allowing meaningful comparison between the different groups responding.

At the outset of the research process I had only a loose grasp of exactly what different 'groups' might exist out there in the 'real world' of Notting Hill. In planning the research, there was an evident need to obtain responses from a diversity of 'sub-neighbourhoods' in the area, in order to glean views from individuals with different characteristics in terms of class, ethnicity, age, sex and so on, and in order to include parts of the area differentially affected by gentrification. It was only as a result of the practical challenges faced in the course of doing the fieldwork, though (as described below), that the sub-neighbourhoods known as Ladbroke, Golborne and Tavistock came to host the research and became the focus of much of the analysis (see Maginn, 2007, on the travails of identifying and securing case studies). The issues of where and how to do the research were primarily driven by an abstract concern that the data include sufficient variety to enable the articulation of various images of Notting Hill – or, in more instrumental terms, the need for contrasting data that might provide fuel for analysis, discussion and novel findings.

To reiterate, the study involved turning up unannounced on the doorsteps of potential respondents and using an interview schedule as a prompt to talk to them about their views on the local area. At the core of this approach was the objective of accessing the 'unmediated' views of 'typical' residents of Notting Hill from these various backgrounds. Rather than securing access to respondents by, for example, talking to gatekeepers and subsequent snowball sampling, or through focus groups, the plan was that interviewees should be less prepared, less primed, ahead of these conversations, so that the views imparted might be somehow more immediate and less pre-considered. Parallel to this was a concern to gather the more disinterested views of residents who were less likely to be activists than those accessed via gatekeepers in institutional roles, or who might respond to calls for a focus group (Silverman, 2005).

But practical, as well as intellectual, concerns were implicated in this approach. Diving 'head first' into fieldwork involving unsolicited interviews avoided the need for careful groundwork and planning that accessing-specific gatekeepers or carrying out focus groups would have necessitated. It also seemed a safer option to start gathering empirical data at the earliest opportunity possible rather than risk unexpected obstacles that even the best-laid plans might encounter. The interview schedule devised (Table 2), too, was informed by a desire to avoid unnecessarily structuring the responses of interviewees. For example, it avoided references to various loaded terms and

Table 2. Interview Schedule Used in the Study.

The local area: Definition and general attitude
What do you think of your neighbourhood and this part of London?
What places do you go to on a regular basis (say, every week)?
Is this area important to you? What other areas in London/Britain/world are important to you?
If you go away, what places will make you feel at home when you arrive back?
What makes you proud/ashamed/happy/unhappy about the place where you live?
Key places and events
Where are your favourite places around here? How are they important to you?
Are there any particular people, places, present/past events, things that make you happy or unhappy about the area?
What kinds of things annoy you about the area?
Change in Notting Hill
How do you feel the place has changed from what it used to be?
What ways do you think the area has changed for better over the last few years?
What ways do you think it has changed for the worse?
Do you feel that the people in the area have changed? How have newcomers to the area have changed it?
What belongs in Notting Hill?
How do outsiders think of the area you live in? Are their views accurate?
What do you think of the way the area is shown in the media?
What sort of people do you think are typical of the area now? How about 10/20 etc. years ago?
Do you feel that there are any particular boundaries between places in your neighbourhood or in the area more widely?
Do you feel at home in this area?

notions, such as 'gentrification', 'community' and 'loss', referring instead to the less value-laden term of neighbourhood 'change'. There were, of course, limits to the extent to which it was possible to avoid overly structuring the interviews through the interview schedule, and clearly it was necessary to give respondents some clues about what it was that they were expected to talk about. For example, questions were included about 'newcomers' without defining who they might be, and if respondents did not mention the Notting Hill Carnival of their own volition, it was raised later in the interview. As far as possible, though, the intention was to allow the conversations as they developed to influence the content of the interview, within the general bounds of discussing the area, its characteristics and the extent to which these were changing, for better or worse. These, then, were to be naturalistic or conversational interviews (Kvale, 1996).

The aspiration, then – laudable, perhaps, but possibly naïve too, as discussed below – was to access the unpreconceived views of a diverse set of respondents on the basis of their residence in the area, rather than any overt interest or stake in the issues being discussed. From the fieldwork diary maintained during the course of the research, though, it is noticeable that this hope was alloyed by a concern that the data produced by such a group might fail to provide anything worthy of novel analysis: that disinterested respondents might produce uninteresting responses. Consequently, alongside the early stages of the 'main' fieldwork, a number of interviews with actors with institutionalized roles in local organizations were also conducted as a back-up in case talking to respondents sampled on the basis of residence alone failed to produce 'worthwhile' data. As fieldwork progressed, concerns about collecting worthwhile data gave way to a rising sense of relief at the apparent utility of the responses obtained in the 'main' fieldwork, which pointed to a discernible contrast between the concerns of respondents in different areas and of different socio-economic backgrounds. Eventually, in the third week of the fieldwork, with a building dataset, a diary entry mentions in relation to one of the day's interviewees that there was 'nothing too exceptional about her answers (no bad thing in itself)': early concerns about lack of 'useful' responses are replaced by a desire for a manageable set of data, with sufficient, but not excessive, variety to enable a neat and bounded analysis.

It is worth acknowledging, then, that from inception to completion the empirical and theoretical themes that guided the fieldwork were accompanied by more practical or instrumental concerns. These did not necessarily militate against the 'purer' aims of the research interests, but they did shape what could or should be done and what was more or less valued in the course of the research. Early on, the interviews conducted with institutional actors alongside the main research offered a back-up plan if the focus of the main research on 'disinterested' residents failed to produce data and analysis of sufficient quality. Later on, with a growing confidence that this requirement was being fulfilled as an analytical lens began to emerge, this gave way to a desire for data saturation that rested more on the manageability of the data than on the methodological robustness that it might provide. Clearly, these concerns were framed by the specific purpose of the research as part of a Masters Degree. Other forms of academic research are also guided by a similar instrumentality which may not be malign, but certainly deserves more explicit acknowledgement.

DOING THE FIELDWORK: ADDRESSING PRACTICAL CHALLENGES AND GROUNDING THEORY

Upon entering the field, it quickly became apparent that plans for accessing a diverse sample of respondents from contrasting sub-neighbourhoods of Notting Hill would have to be tempered by certain practical concerns. On the face of it, these were mere technicalities, but their consequences for the nature of the data collected may have been important. Most significantly, the majority of private-sector rented accommodation in the area was made up of sub-divided Victorian villas, with access to these being controlled by intercoms. This presented extra difficulties: it would be hard enough to get people to agree to be interviewed when talking to them face-to-face on their doorsteps; intercoms seemed an extra, undesirable complication. This complication meant that the three areas in which data were collected composed primarily of social housing (Ladbroke and Golborne) and modest owner-occupied housing (Tavistock), rather than comprising of much private-rented accommodation. The importance of this factor was evident in the data and analysis, accounting in part for the relatively marginal material significance of gentrification to occupants of social housing, whose tenure was protected. If the study had included a privately rented sub-neighbourhood of Notting Hill, it is likely that this analysis would have been strengthened and enriched (or possibly challenged) by the comparison of cases.

Furthermore, the higher concentration of people of African and Caribbean heritage in private-sector rented accommodation than in social housing meant that these ethnic groups were underrepresented in the research. Moreover, due to the language barrier, few of the respondents interviewed for the research were from the recently established and growing Moroccan community. Opportunities to carry out fieldwork were also limited by the weather (even during the London summer!) and safety concerns: some interviewees advised that it would be best to avoid conducting interviews in Golborne after dark. Fieldwork therefore took place during the day, and (probably consequently) more women than men were approached for interview – though a higher refusal rate among women meant that the gender split of the sample was roughly equal. These practical issues, then, did not necessarily impact upon the reliability of the research, but they will certainly have had consequences for the findings. The under-representation of certain groups meant that their voices were not heard in the research: this does not undermine its validity, but does

have important implications for generalizability that must be acknowledged as limitations.

As the fieldwork progressed, the importance of the setting of interviews became increasingly apparent. As might be expected, where interviews were conducted in respondents' homes rather than on the doorstep, they were somewhat more detailed and relaxed, and could be tape-recorded rather than requiring pencil, paper and clipboard. However, the importance of the wider environment was also notable. Respondents were able to give more substance to the conversations, by physically pointing out examples of what they were talking about, gesturing in the direction of important or changing landscapes and so on. 'Being there' allowed interviewees and interviewer to concretize discussions, and this was important in trying to address themes that would otherwise have been fairly abstract and nebulous. It facilitated shared understandings of exactly what was being discussed: for example, differences in perceptions between interviewer and interviewees as to what constituted 'the local area' or 'change'.

In this research, the importance of this gradual shared understanding was especially important, as it helped to illuminate the presence of a 'phenomenological gap' between respondents' meanings and my own (Martin, 2005). The frames of reference in the responses tendered by working-class interviewees in particular, for example, were at odds with the frame constructed by the interview schedule and questions. This is exemplified in the following excerpt from an interview with 'Fiona', a respondent of south-east Asian background who had lived for 19 years in a council-rented flat at Ladbroke, in the centre of Notting Hill:

> Graham: Would you say the area is changing?
>
> Fiona: Oh yes, tremendously, it changed a lot.
>
> Graham: How would you say then?
>
> Fiona: There are street lights, there are more street lights now, and let me think, most especially Saturdays now and Fridays there's a lot of tourists walking around. Fifteen years ago it's very dark in this area.
> […]
>
> Graham: Are there any ways it's changed for the worse?
>
> Fiona: Well I couldn't think of anything. … Oh yeah, they stop children from playing around the estate – although they put no bicycle, no playing balls [signs], still they do it and they make a lot of noise. That's one thing that gets worse since I get here. Children playing around, knocking doors.

The questions, aimed at getting a feel for the impact of gentrification on Fiona's life and perception of the area, raised for her much more immediately local concerns, with a brief allusion to an increase in the numbers of tourists in the area's streets. The openness with which questions were framed (on this occasion successfully, though this was not always the case), combined with the setting of the interview, made apparent this gap between our perspectives. Had the setting been different, or the interview constructed more specifically in terms of change in Notting Hill or gentrification or the loss of vernacular landscapes to globalizing pressures, this gap might not have come to the fore.

From fieldwork diary entries, it is apparent that it was differences in content between the 'main' interviews with respondents in their own homes, and the few 'back-up' interviews with informants in institutional roles in local organizations that led to a first putative analysis of the contrasting level of concern about gentrification and its impact on symbolic landscapes. Subsequently, as the main fieldwork moved on to relatively middle-class Tavistock, the apparent class dimension of this contrast emerged. What had been an unsurprising difference, between respondents targeted for their institutionalized roles and those sampled on the basis of their residence, became a more interesting, to some extent paradoxical contrast between middle-class concern and working-class indifference towards their landscapes of the area. What was also discernible from the fieldwork diary was an ongoing concern about the extent to which this apparent difference was real – objective and pre-existent of the interview process – and how far it was constructed through the interview conversations. Was it a result of, say, a subconscious difference between the way that I (the middle-class interviewer informed by academic concerns about gentrification) spoke to middle-class and working-class informants? Or, conversely, did it arise from a failure to adjust interview style appropriately, so that a common language or 'structure of feeling' with middle-class respondents meant that they were able to 'tune in' to the topics being broached more quickly than working-class respondents in the context of these fairly short interviews?

From the transcripts of the interviews that were tape-recorded (with working-class and middle-class respondents) there is little evidence of the first flaw: by and large questions directed at informants retained their 'neutral' tenor, avoiding specifics and loaded terms unless respondents introduced themselves. The second possibility is somewhat more compelling. At around half-way through the four weeks of fieldwork, a diary entry relays how this concern led to a small addition to the armoury of

questions for subsequent interviews with working- and middle-class respondents:

> [I am considering] adding a new question which I have recently thought up, along the lines of 'Are there any places in the areas that you'd be upset if they changed?', which perhaps might provide a new prompt for respondents to articulate their feelings. On the other hand, it would alter to some extent the consistency I believe I've achieved so far.

Having tried this question out on two respondents of relatively working-class status, a later diary entry records that the adjusted method seemed to be confirming what had been apparent from prior interviews:

> Even with a much more directed question, to the two working-class respondents so far landscape remains a feature of social life which is not of great importance (at least within the context of the 15–30 min interviews).

The fact, then, that a slightly more directive approach to the issues was apparently producing the same kind of data provided some comfort. The pattern continued with further working- and middle-class respondents in the second half of the fieldwork.

Fundamentally, though, perhaps this realist–constructionist division (Miller & Glassner, 2004) between the pre-existing dispositions held by respondents outside the interview situation and the potentially 'artefactual' views that were produced through the dialogue was a false or inadequate one. As evident above in relation to the importance of the setting of the interview, the production of data arising from any methodology that involves the intervention of the researcher may be affected by all sorts of contingencies. The task, then, is the one of judging the nature and extent of these effects and what they mean for the interpretation of and inferences to be drawn from the data, rather than attempting to iron them out. In other words, such contingencies might be seen less as interference with the true nature of the data (confounding factors, in the language of quantitative methodology), and more as an integral part of the data, which present both limitations and potentials in analysis. As such, they demand explicit acknowledgement and discussion rather than futile effort to remove them, to enable both the author and reader of research to make informed judgements of the resulting value and limitations produced. In the case of this research, then, relative brevity of interview, openness of question, consistency between different groups, setting of discussions and so on all contributed to a contingent piece of research, the strengths and weaknesses of which lie inseparably in the advantages and disadvantages of these attributes (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004; Miller & Glassner, 2004).

RATIONALIZING THE RATIONALIZATIONS: ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

As already will be evident, various analytical frames through which to understand the data presented themselves in the course of the fieldwork. Thus a separation between analysis conducted 'on the hoof' and more formal, rigorous, desk-based analysis would be unsustainable. What can be discerned to some extent, however, from the research-diary, paper trail of analysis and write-ups of the process, is the transition in the ways I made sense of the data and how I justified the analyses drawn to myself and others.

Particularly evident from the fieldwork diary is the variety of modes of analysis drawn upon when making sense of data while still in the field, for example, in relation to the emerging differences in the material and symbolic importance attached to place by individuals of different socio-economic backgrounds and from different sub-neighbourhoods. As well as relying, in a conventionally qualitative manner, on the cumulative narratives and explanations offered by the respondents themselves in their utterances during interviews, research-diary entries also betray the way in which other epistemological approaches were also crucial in making sense of the data through analysis. These sense-making strategies included: an awareness of an apparent (quantitative) correlation between class and expressed opinion (and sub-neighbourhood and expressed opinion); notes in the fieldwork diary of respondents' behaviour before, during and after interviews (for example, the degree to which they were hesitant in answering, or expressed surprise that the subject matter of the interviews should be of interest to a researcher), which provided an almost ethnographic supplement to the text of the interviews; and the importance of theory, academic literature and 'common sense' assumptions in informing what were considered plausible explanatory mechanisms in the analysis process. One diary entry during the second week of data collection, for example, contrasts the testimony of two middle-class interviewees, both full of regret at the loss of Notting Hill's working-class heritage, with a more working-class respondent interviewed the same day who, 'sure enough, saw much less change in the neighbourhood'. The diary entry continues with a quantitative lexicon: 'what started as a hunch is emerging, I am convinced, as a genuine *trend*' (emphasis added). A week later, another entry starts to put some explanatory flesh on the bones of such trends, noting that:

> …respondents in council or housing association accommodation are relatively 'insulated' from deterritorialization by gentrification. […] Gentrification was an issue,

> but indirectly: […] privatization of council housing was leading to shortages for those who could not afford market rates.

What seems to be discernible from the diary in particular is the interaction between these different frames of analysis, each informing the other. This tends to get lost in the written outputs from the research that invoke only the more 'purely qualitative' arguments in evidencing a largely similar analysis (as well as creating an ordered narrative that helps the reader to follow the development of the analysis in a reasonably comprehensible, though largely artificial, way). A concern for methodological propriety leads to a 'writing out' of a good deal of thought processes that had assisted in constructing the arguments eventually presented. Space, of course, is an issue here: an 8,000-word paper and even a 20,000-word dissertation require selectivity on the part of the writer to ensure that she/he presents her/his argument in the most convincing but concise manner. But there is also the concern to demonstrate that one is 'doing things properly', and while this did not (I think) affect the analysis presented in the written outputs of the research, it did mean that the 'black box' of methods remained obstinately closed, with the majority of the host of analytical approaches deployed (rightly or wrongly) still hidden from view. It may be that my approach was unusually eclectic and unorthodox. Perhaps, though, the confines of space and doctrine produce a similar veil, over the diversity of epistemological and analytical frames of understanding, in the way others present their work, too. Rather than 'black-boxing' the particularities and peculiarities of methodological approach and presenting a doctrinaire and self-contained methods section, perhaps we need to incorporate a more open and critically reflective account of how methodological contingencies have facilitated and constrained the findings in the way we present our work to peers.

The written outputs from this research (Martin, 2001, 2005) also included three quite detailed descriptions of the responses given by certain interviewees (two middle-class, one working-class), linking biographical information with the views they expressed on the area and its changes. These were chosen (as the written outputs emphasized) because they were illustrative of wider facets of the whole dataset, rather than because their particularity conveniently backed-up the argument being made. And this was indeed the case: following the fieldwork, and notwithstanding the preliminary analyses formulated while in the field, there followed a protracted and rigorous desk-based qualitative analysis of data, making particular use of thematic matrices (Huberman & Miles, 1998) to create new insights into the data and refine and provide evidence for those that had

emerged in situ in the field. The analyses, then, were backed-up by proper, canonical qualitative methodology, earnestly pursued, involving reading and rereading interviews and field notes, arranging the data in matrices by issue and respondent, and iteratively developing emergent themes. But they were also the product of the more eclectic means by which the data had become comprehensible to me, described above, and within these means, perhaps 10 or 15 (out of 28) interviews had been particularly instrumental in arriving at the interpretations that the formal analysis produced. Three of these interviewees subsequently became the exemplary cases used in the written outputs from the research, since they seemed to exemplify above all the key findings to be conveyed.

The utility, then, of these kinds of responses – and especially the three interviewees who became exemplary cases – to informing the analysis process, and then evidencing it in written outputs, seemed to derive from the way in which they crystallized certain issues that were emerging, but not quite fully clear, from the wider dataset. One of the last few entries in the fieldwork diary refers to one such respondent, 'Peter', a middle-class 'outlier' living in the declining social housing of Golborne (see Martin, 2005 for more details):

> [Interviewing Peter] was really helpful: he brought into focus quite a few of the tensions surrounding class and sensitivity to neighbourhood change I've been thinking about (see also [another respondent], who was similarly illuminative). Middle-class, privately educated but also locally born and bred, his was a classically hybrid (read ambivalent) take on the neighbourhood and the way it's changing. Though he regretted the loss of friendliness in the neighbourhood and the detrimental effect on working-class life, he was glad at the improvements to the area (removal of drugs, prostitution etc.) that accompany gentrification (he introduced the term) and did not really regret its changing character. […] Very interesting, and also somewhat confirming what I have felt about the relationship between class and neighbourhood sensitivity.

In this case, then, understanding was enhanced by how the views of an atypical respondent (a middle-class man living in a predominantly working-class sub-neighbourhood) contrasted with the views of both working-class respondents in working-class sub-neighbourhoods and middle-class respondents in middle-class sub-neighbourhoods. This helped to distil the emerging ideas about the role of socio-economic status and sub-neighbourhood of residence in attitude towards the loss of symbolic landscapes and concerns about material changes, bringing in sharper relief the implications of the wider dataset. There were other individual interviews that assisted in this process too, and while it is important that analysis is driven by the entire dataset, in its diversity and ambiguity, rather than by particularly

'appetizing' responses, it is perhaps useful to acknowledge this important interaction between *breadth* of data and *depth* of certain illuminating cases. Only, perhaps, if there is a conflict between what is suggested by the 'perspiration' of rigorous qualitative analysis and 'inspiration' drawn from particular illustrative cases does this interaction become methodologically problematic (cf. Bryman, 1988, pp. 77–79).

CONCLUSIONS

By reflecting on the process of planning and conducting fieldwork and analyzing its products, the aim of this chapter has been to consider in some detail the process by which research is translated into findings. The written outputs from this study included some descriptions of and reflections on methods, including the flaws and limitations of the study. This was more in order to comply with the expectations of qualitative reportage than in order to explore in any detail the question of how the contingencies of the research process were implicated in the findings presented, and as such, the sections on 'methods' were kept largely separate from sections dealing with 'results', 'analysis' and 'discussion'. Compliance with such expectations is of course a necessity, but there is also, perhaps, a need for a more active consideration of how methodological contingencies contribute to findings, in a way that may contribute to validity as well as bounding it. This chapter has paid a little more attention to this question, although of course here too this has necessarily been contained, rationalized and ordered. But what it has hopefully conveyed is how the various contingencies of the study might be seen as essential components of the research, rather than as 'contamination' of a methodological 'purity' that should either have been expunged, or failing this, requires an apologetic explanation. Rather, these contingencies were central to both the value and limits of the research, and the particular validity that might be claimed for it. If we are to take seriously constructionist arguments about the non-unitary nature of social reality without nihilistically disclaiming the validity of all truth-claims (Miller & Glassner, 2004), then the task becomes one of understanding how the research process has contributed to the data. In this, the utility and limitations of the process are inextricably linked to each other. As Holstein and Gubrium (2004, p. 142) argue in relation to the role of the interviewer's conduct in co-constructing interview data:

> We suggest that researchers embrace the view of the interview as unavoidably active and begin to acknowledge, and capitalize upon, interviewers' and respondents' constitutive

> contributions to the production of interview data. This means consciously and conscientiously attending to both the interview process and the products that interviews generate in ways that are more sensitive to the social construction of knowledge.

In other words, there is a need for qualitative researchers to look more closely at the ways in which the 'how' of the interview contribute to the 'what' of the data. Beyond the conduct of the interviewer her/himself, other contingent factors might be added to this 'how', such as those considered above: for example, interview setting. Another undoubtedly important contributing factor to the construction of research data is the demand for 'originality'. A key criterion in judging the quality of academic work, and therefore in guarding access to the qualifications, publications and esteem that govern career progress, is the originality of findings. As noted above, this was an important concern throughout the Notting Hill study. There were, for example, persistent worries in the early stages of the research that the data might prove banal. Such foreshadowed problems are likely to loom large for other early-career qualitative researchers determined to ensure that their research is credible, rigorous and original. Therefore, this drive for originality undoubtedly drives the course of much academic research – again, not in an inherently positive or negative way, but certainly in a constitutive way, and one which is under-acknowledged.[2]

Such a disposition towards fieldwork and analysis practice runs against those who argue for interviewer neutrality (for example, Babbie, 1992) or even make a distinction between (legitimately) directing interviews and (illegitimately) allowing one's personality to influence the course of interviews (Whyte, 1982). Rather than setting up an (unachievable) ideal of neutrality or objectivity, the need is for frankness and openness in discussing how approach has influenced conclusion. This is not to argue that adopting a deliberately leading stance, with a view to drawing respondents to a particular forgone conclusion, is as defensible as any other interview style. Rather, a frank and open discussion of the consequences of such an approach would quickly reveal the very limited validity of its results (quite apart from the ethical issues it would raise). However, it does suggest that any straightforward criteria for judging the quality of qualitative research are likely to be a flawed tool for critical appraisal. While they may have some utility as a heuristic guide that might help readers to articulate their judgement of quality of qualitative research (Dixon-Woods et al., 2007), if used as a firm set of standards, they can become an inappropriate substitute for trust in reportage rather than a useful tool for assessing validity and transferability. Some such guidelines outline the kinds of researcher behaviour that need to be demonstrated in written outputs: the Critical

Appraisal Skills Programme's tool for evaluating qualitative evidence,[3] for example, asks its users to consider the author's use of deviant cases, her/his discussion of data saturation and the sufficiency of illustrative excerpts from the data in supporting the analysis. If such criteria are applied too rigidly, they risk becoming a tick-box list of claims for an author to make in the methods section. If so, it is difficult to see what such tools offer beyond a formalization of trust in the researcher's professional integrity, since it would not be difficult to fabricate such claims if a researcher so wished. At worst, the simplistic adoption of formal assessment criteria risks the replacement of diversity and creativity in research methods by uniform compliance to the 'proper' ways of doing and reporting qualitative research. The value of transparency in qualitative research is in informing the critical judgement of author and reader as to the utility and limits of the findings. It is not in mechanistically auditing a study's compliance to a number of simplistic proxies for a poorly conceived methodological propriety.

There are similar potential difficulties with concerns among policymakers about how to ensure that the lessons of policy-relevant research are taken up and put into practice. A laudable aspiration towards 'evidence-based policy' means that the potential insights of qualitative research have been taken with increased seriousness, resulting in a concentrated interest in government circles in this vexed question of how quality might be evaluated (see for example, Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis, & Dillon, 2003), and also in the possibility of pooling the messages of qualitative research to inform policy interventions and ascertain 'best practice'. Part of this trend has been the importing of a method – the systematic review – traditionally associated with the pooling of statistical data to arrive at the best available answer to a question, based on the cumulative evidence provided by all studies of sufficient relevance and quality. There is of course debate about the kinds of criteria that might be used in assessing relevance and quality of qualitative studies in systematic reviews (for example, Dixon-Woods et al., 2006). There is also a more general question about the appropriateness of such a method, with its emphasis on synthesis to inform a definitive conclusion on best practice, to qualitative research. If we accept contingency as a core part of the validity of qualitative research, then that validity must be understood as partial not universal, and part of a social reality that defies unification and singularity. Bringing a rich and diverse research field together in one manageable place may well be a useful task for the systematic review, if it can avoid losing the contingencies that make that research valuable. Its effectiveness in drawing implications for urban policy, however, is more dubious, if this means distilling diverse qualitative findings into a unitary

message for best practice. Rather, interpretation remains a task for the judgement of the reader, who is best placed to compare the context of the research (relayed frankly and effectively by the author) with the context of the policy, and interpret the lessons of research accordingly.

What is the attitude of marginalized groups to gentrification, globalization and the loss of vernacular working-class landscapes? The research described here provided one partial and particular answer to this question, but what it also suggests is that any attempt to give a definitive answer will be lacking. For policymakers and practitioners tasked with compiling and effecting urban strategies, singular messages about 'best practice' based on the accumulation of research evidence might be a welcome product of systematic reviews of qualitative research based on widely agreed criteria of quality. But any such reliance on the synthesis of qualitative evidence must be assuaged by a consciousness of the importance of particularity, and a critical subjective judgement on the part of the reader, informed by transparent, reflective reportage of methods and context by researchers.

NOTES

1. This project formed part of an M.Sc. thesis completed at the University of Bristol.
2. It is worth noting in passing that this is a recurrent bane for quantitative biomedical researchers, who when attempting to integrate and analyze the results of clinical trials face the added complication of 'publication bias': the tendency for studies that fail to show efficacy of intervention (i.e. a novel finding) not to be published (see for example, Scargle, 1990).
3. See http://www.phru.nhs.uk/learning/casp_qualitative_tool.pdf (accessed 3 May 2007).

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CHAPTER 6

BUILDING BACK BETTER IN SRI LANKA: A MIXED METHOD APPROACH TO COMPARATIVE POLICY EVALUATION

Michal Lyons

INTRODUCTION

The term, 'mixed methods' is, of course, very broad. In general, though, it is used to describe an approach which combines more than one type of data or more than one type of analysis and, more often than not, refers to research which draws on both qualitative and quantitative data and analyses. This chapter analyses the methods adopted in a two-year study of Sri Lanka's post-tsunami housing policy, showing how quantitative and qualitative data can be triangulated in a variety of ways, and demonstrating the value of qualitative methods in contributing to understanding of different aspects of policy process and impact.

The use of mixed methods in policy evaluation is now well established. It has been widely accepted as necessary in urban regeneration and other socially intensive urban policy work to both measure change quantitatively and explore its explanation qualitatively (for a fuller discussion see Briggs & Jacobs, 2002). The criteria for evaluating research that is either quantitative or qualitative are well developed, particularly with regard to the

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former (see Bryman, Becker, & Sempik, 2007). In addition to applying the accepted criteria to qualitative or quantitative data respectively, and to providing a rationale for approaching the research with mixed methods, three criteria stand out. First, mixed methods research should be relevant to the research question. Second, the procedures employed in doing mixed methods research should be transparent. Thirdly, the quantitative and qualitative findings need to be integrated, rather than treated as distinct.

Some problems require a clearly sequenced use of quantitative and qualitative data sources, with quantitative data used to formulate the questions which qualitative data will be used to explore (for example, Tashakkori & Teddie, 2003). This framework has been found useful in a number of fields, such as in educational research (for a fuller discussion see Miller & Fredericks, 2006). In other cases, however, the qualitative and quantitative data can rationally be independent of each other, with the qualitative data answering parallel, rather than nested questions.

In the study discussed in this chapter, the relationship between the two types of data was tailored specifically to each project objective. In the next section, a brief introduction to the research context is provided and the study objectives introduced. This is followed by a brief explanation of the research strategy. The three subsequent sections explain the problematics, methods and findings relating to meeting each objective. A final summary section draws attention to some of the strengths and limitations of the methods used, in the context of this study.

INTRODUCTION TO THE RECOVERY POLICIES

The Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004 was a natural disaster on unprecedented scale in terms of loss of life, loss of livelihoods and losses of infrastructure and housing. In Sri Lanka alone, over 36,000 people lost their lives and close to 100,000 homes were damaged or destroyed. Although the macroeconomic impact of the tsunami on affected countries was limited, in affected areas there was considerable social and economic upheaval, with the poor being most acutely affected. Unprecedented sums of aid money were pledged and largely delivered, and multilateral, non-governmental and commercial organisations, as well as thousands of individuals, were drawn to participate in a recovery effort.

The events that followed offer clear insights into the tension between centralising and decentralising reconstruction approaches, manifested particularly in the housing field. Rapid restoration of services and social

and political infrastructure was critically important. This created pressure for a trade-off between consultation and involvement of local communities, and rapid redevelopment; and between action by central or international agencies and the involvement of small, local agencies and local governments (ADB, 2005).

Developmental and counter-developmental tensions were manifested in institutional arrangements in all six affected countries, but this study focuses on Sri Lanka, where donations raised by the aid community and governments were estimated to be sufficient to meet the country's reconstruction needs.

In early 2005, under great pressure for rapid asset recovery, the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) launched a Task Force for Rebuilding the Nation (TAFREN) as the apex agency for reconstruction, replaced a year later by the Reconstruction and Development Authority (RADA). TAFREN's two housing programmes, the Owner Driven Program (ODP) and the Donor Assisted Program (DAP), were launched informally in March, 2005, with the supporting policy document appearing in June (TAFREN, 2005).

Key to the programmes was the enforcement of a coastal exclusion (buffer) zone,[1] that the government, in consultation with relevant multi-lateral agencies and with the major emergent donors, decided to bring forward as the major plank of the permanent reconstruction programme, excluding housing, schools and services from the area (though some business development was allowed). The housing programme devised to meet the needs of over 50,000 households displaced from the buffer zone was the DAP. Beneficiaries of this were to be relocated and were entitled to receive a house in lieu of their previous residence. On the other hand, people who had lived outside the buffer zone (or owned buildable land there) were drawn into the ODP, allowing them to repair or rebuild in situ and entitling them to phased cash compensation.

The initial assessment of beneficiaries and their allocation to a specific programme was thoroughly decentralised, involving consultation with individual beneficiaries, local communities, local authorities and NGOs (Fig. 1). However, the two schemes placed all actors in very different relationships to the development process and each other (Fig. 2). This, in turn, resulted in rather different experiences and outcomes in the two programmes.

Two hypotheses were investigated through this research: First, that decentralised housing programmes produce better developmental results. Second, that the post-disaster policy making process mitigates in favour of

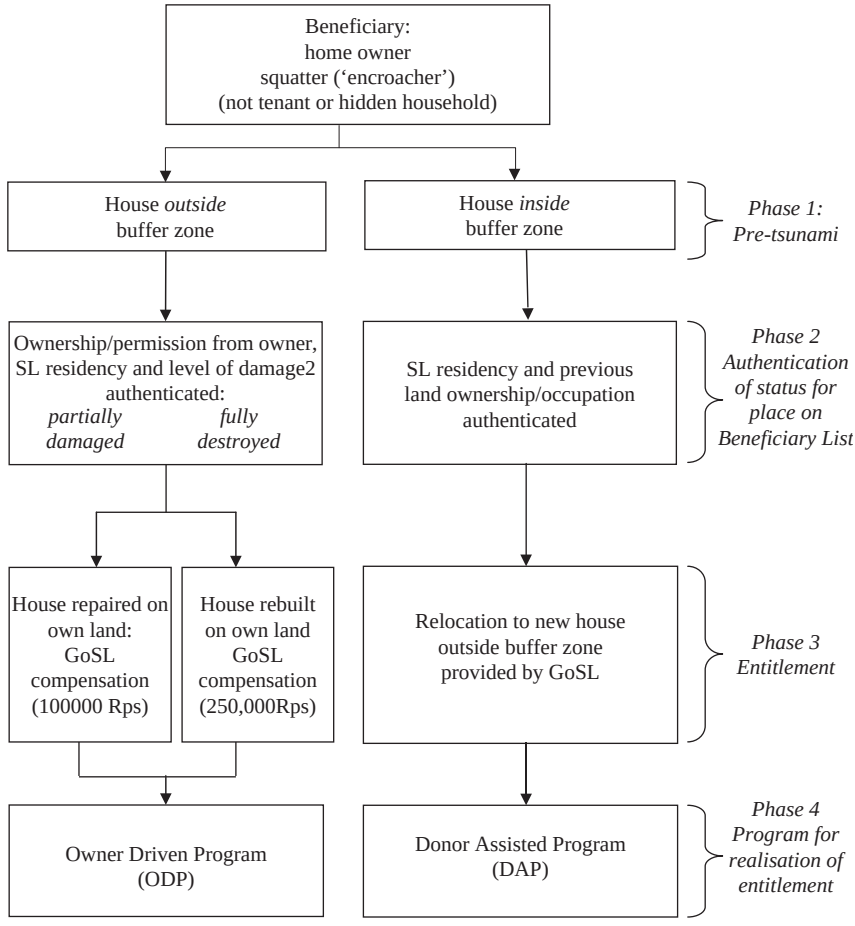

Fig. 1. Housing Program Entitlements. *Notes:* (1) Set initially at 100–200 m inland from the mean high-tide mark, revised down in May 2006 to 100–55 m. (2) DAT (Damage Assessment Team) comprises village official; THRU or National Housing Development Authority technical staff; donor representative and Village Rehabilitation Committee representative. (3) For both programmes, formal certification is based on authentication of status by signature of two local authority officials (village and division levels). In DAP, status is initially published on a Preliminary List, with provision for appeals to Village Rehabilitation Committee, Divisional Grievance Redressal Committee and District Grievance Redressal Committee. Finalised entitlements are published in Beneficiary Register and confirmed by issue of registration number and certificate. *Source:* After TAFREN (2005).

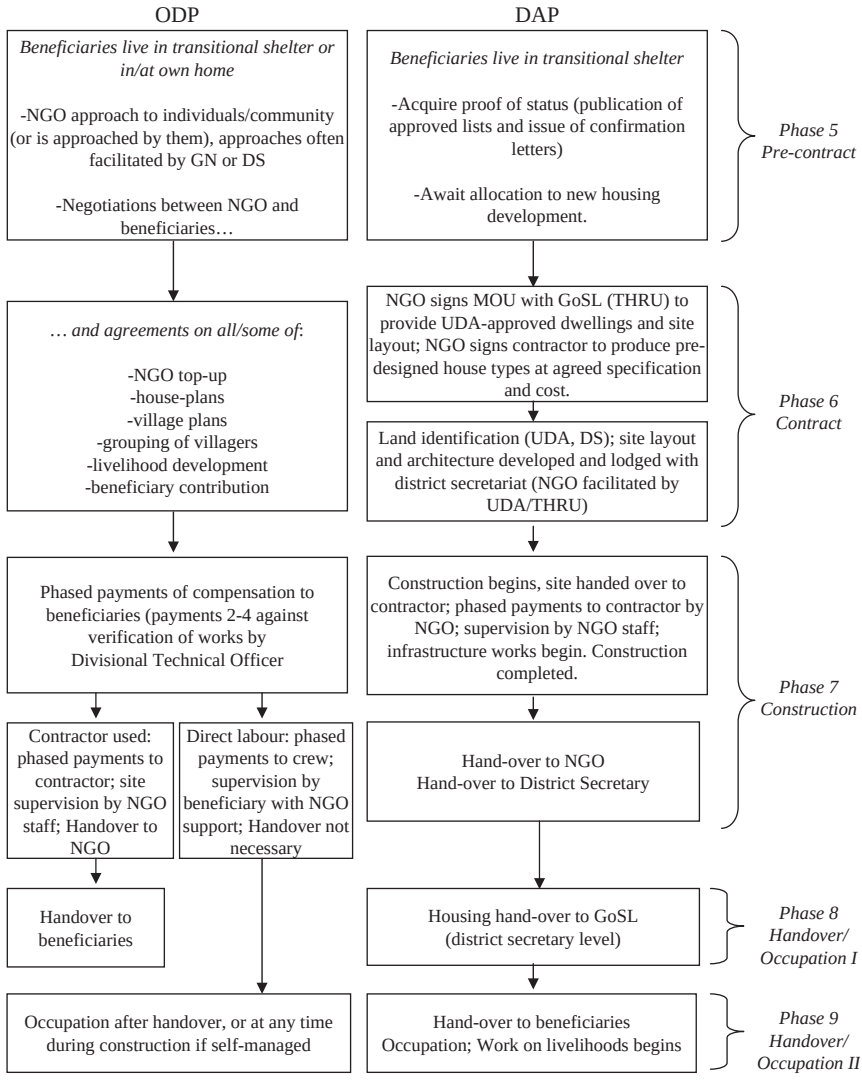

Fig. 2. From Entitlement to Realisation.

centralised programmes, and in favour of counter-developmental decisions. In order to better understand the processes by which housing reconstruction may become developmental, three key objectives were set:

- To analyse the institutional, political, organisational and economic influences on policy formulation and implementation;
- To assess each policy's achievements in terms of its stated aims; and
- To assess its contribution to the sustainable livelihoods of beneficiaries.

RESEARCH STRATEGY

The research designed to meet these objectives was longitudinal, providing an opportunity to follow the policies from inception to after their formal completion. The researcher made repeated and extended visits to Sri Lanka, getting to know key actors in government and non-government organisations at all levels, and collecting data for analysis, as follows:

- *Objective 1*: Analysis of the policy process was undertaken using qualitative data. A wide range of actors were interviewed over an extended period. These participants were actors from every level and arena of the policy process. The researcher also observed meetings where policy implementation was coordinated by key actors. Finally, consultations between key actors, acting mainly as project funders and smaller implementing organisations were observed. Thus, qualitative data were obtained about policy objectives, policy process and the policy and politics of interpretation and implementation.
- *Objective 2*: Both programmes set out to achieve quantifiable results: for the DAP this was the construction of 80,000 dwellings within a six month period (later extended to one and then two years). The ODP's quantitative objectives were the development or repair of 20,000 dwellings with immediate start, but no set time limit. An assessment of policy achievements therefore required the collection of quantitative data on house starts and completions. Data on house building in the two programmes were drawn from the recently published report on reconstruction in Sri Lanka prepared by GoSL with the help of the donor community (particularly UNHCR and then UN-Habitat, which undertook a coordinating role in the reconstruction) (RADA, 2007). Information was also gathered from the Development Assistance Database Sri Lanka (DAD) (RADA, 2006), which was updated by

development partners throughout the reconstruction process. The qualitative research associated with *Objective 1* above, however, raised concerns about different construction quality and occupancy rates in the two programmes. Occupancy rates were interrogated quantitatively drawing on the same secondary sources (RADA, 2006, 2007) while issues of construction quality were explored through analysis of reports to the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission.

- *Objective 3*: In addition to its quantitative objectives, the ODP explicitly set itself the task of rebuilding livelihoods and communities. The contribution of each housing programme to the sustainable livelihoods of beneficiaries was defined in terms of the opportunities they afforded for community development, access to livelihoods, access to services and infrastructure and personal empowerment. Analysis of primarily qualitative data provided the bulk of material for this section. The data were drawn largely from reports made to the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission.

In combination, these analyses demonstrate conclusively that the DAP had underperformed, while the ODP had over-performed against their stated objectives. Moreover, the ODP had heavily outperformed the DAP. The sections that follow contextualise each objective, explain the methods adopted in meeting it, identify the main findings which they were able to support and discuss strengths and limitations with a particular focus on the research process and methods.

OBJECTIVE 1: ANALYSE FACTORS INFLUENCING POLICY FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The institutions established and policies formulated were the result of negotiations among political, economic and third-sector actors with, often, conflicting interests. To frame the policy process analysis, a conceptual framework was developed of the stakeholders in the development and implementation of the two programmes, which aimed to capture the tensions within the main sectors and their interactions with each other.

Political Actors

Systematic decentralisation is generally understood as the devolution of power and funds to local government. Often, however, only central

governments have the capacity to manage the huge resources needed for post-disaster reconstruction. Most governments have therefore coped with disaster by establishing apex-level, central agencies (IDB, 2003). The role of communities or, more often, local governments is then largely determined by their representation on such task forces and the roles they are assigned centrally, with any decentralization approved reluctantly, piecemeal and late.

The competition for political influence over the reconstruction process embodies struggles for political and economic gains, either within the formal political system, that is to say within a government, between the governing and opposition parties or between centre and periphery; or struggles for control of the population by competing powers outside the formal political system, such as liberation movements, protest movements and so on. In both cases, 'capture' of the reconstruction process is likely to be expressed as gate-keeping and control of resources and processes, for example, preferential access to political supporters, or other non-neutral measures. The enormous influx of funds that may follow a disaster may sometimes re-ignite dormant conflicts, and foreign donors may often be unaware of the agendas being played out through the relief and reconstruction processes.

In Sri Lanka, the government established TAFREN, almost immediately, as an apex agency, which would allow it to retain a final say – and therefore maximise its influence – in policy and implementation decisions.

Economic Actors

While small-scale developments are more likely to boost the economy at grass-roots level (Schilderman, 2004), suggesting that local economic and social reconstruction would benefit from the procurement of reconstruction through local SME contractors (Simms, 2003), or direct labour, small-scale actors generally lack the connections, information and coordination to influence decisions made at a national level. As such, their interests are unlikely to influence the framing of reconstruction processes.

In contrast, there is often pressure from government actors for procurement through large-scale projects. These are usually seen as a method of achieving large reconstruction gains at minimum cost, in a relatively short time and with a minimum of input from non-professionals. Importantly, they normally involve large, well resourced, influential and often international land development or construction corporations that are, arguably, more able to carry out procurement on this scale (Lyons, 2008).

Aid Agencies

The presence of international agencies in the reconstruction process and government dependence on donor funding, can create pressure for negotiation of roles and policies. This is also influenced by the nature of the global humanitarian aid system, which has become increasingly dominated by relatively few large agencies in recent decades (Rogerson, 2005). For these organisations, disasters have become an important opportunity for fundraising (ADB, 2005). Yet the approach of large aid agencies to post-disaster reconstruction is often at odds with their day-to-day work in developing countries. Increasingly, agencies are engaged in grass-roots participatory development, partnerships with local CBOs and NGOs, and the integration of livelihoods, health and education with physical planning. Moreover, commitments made are sometimes unrealistic in terms of donor capability or host community absorption capacity (Rogerson, 2005).

In Sri Lanka, the overwhelming majority of large agencies undertook to work quickly, transfer international experience and employ standard procurement methods, bypassing community participation, local reconstruction and integrated development. This is clearly at odds with the 'bottom-up' philosophy that dominates approaches to developing areas.

Sri Lanka's Post-Tsunami Housing Procurement Policies

The tensions discussed here are often geographically uneven. In Sri Lanka, conditions with respect to both economic and political actors varied widely between Southern and Eastern Province. In the case of the Southern Province, the political connections to the national government and to the main opposition party and its interests came to the fore in political power broking. In contrast, the Eastern Province's politics reflect diverse ethnic interest groups and are marginal in national political power structures. An important component of this power distribution is the Southern Province's significant coastal tourism assets. The struggle among large and small economic actors over control of reconstruction in this area was clearly manifested in the debates over designation of the coastal exclusion zone and therefore access to tourism assets. In the East, struggle over land – an economic asset in the housing debate – is a reflection mainly of struggles for control between the formal and informal (army and militias) and among informal entities (rival militias).

It is in this context that the two housing procurement policies published by the government and summarised in Figs. 1 and 2, and their implementation, must be understood and evaluated. The figures are useful in demonstrating the various stages and mechanisms by which inclusion and exclusion can take place, and this, in turn can be related to a range of negotiated decisions. As the figures show, the defining feature of DAP was its distancing of beneficiaries from the procurement process. The defining feature of ODP was their involvement individually and in groups at every stage.

OBJECTIVE 2: ASSESSING POLICIES AGAINST STATED OBJECTIVES

The impact of the tsunami on Sri Lanka was spatially uneven. Damage was concentrated in a relatively narrow coastal strip of 12 districts, covering approximately 2/3 of the coast line. Using UN-OCHA's ECLAC post-disaster damage assessment system, the ADB (2005) estimated that the bulk of Sri Lanka's loss was in assets ($970–$1000 M, or 4.4–4.5 per cent of GDP), rather than income (1.5 per cent of GDP for 2005 and 2006). By far the greatest share of this loss was in housing ($341 m). It was estimated that 99,480 homes were completely destroyed and a further 44,290 homes, partially damaged, together comprising 13 per cent of homes in the affected districts (ADB, 2005, p. 16).

The affected areas were relatively poor, particularly in some provinces (pre-tsunami per capita GDP in the affected Southern and Eastern Province was about US$640, against a national average of US$930) and, within these areas, the poor were the more vulnerable.

The objectives of the DAP were set in terms of dwelling numbers, minimum space standards, conformity to a small range of possible floor plans and completion times. Proxy variables were not needed, since these could be measured directly and issues of construct validity did not arise.

Due to many projects going unreported on DAD, as well as some inconsistencies in the available reporting, the DAD database was initially incomplete. However, it has been improved, and now offers more detail than the GoSL report on certain aspects of the process. The majority of under-reporting in DAD is from the ODP, particularly where beneficiaries and/or their supporting NGOs decided to forego claims to government compensation. Fuller reporting would be likely to increase the differences

between the two programmes, as the ODP is shown to have achieved larger dwelling numbers than the DAP.

Observations on problems with procurement processes were made to the researcher during the many policy meetings and interviews. Thus the qualitative research was able to identify areas for further quantitative research. Thanks to the reliability of the UNHCR data on dwelling starts and completions, it was possible to further differentiate the performance of the two policies in terms of how early they were able to start construction and the proportion of their dwellings which had reached completion, as well as to disaggregate achievements by province. Aggregate programme achievements are briefly summarised in Table 1, while Table 2 presents the differences among provinces.

Table 1. Housing Construction Rates by Program (December 2006).

Houses	Housing Program			
	DAP	ODP	Other	Total
Starts number (%)	12,897 (27)	32,517 (68)	2,445 (5)	47,859 (100)
Completions number (%)	12,207 (19)	48,981 (77)	2,281 (4)	63,469 (100)
Total number (%)	25,104 (23)	81,498 (73)	4,726 (4)	111,328 (100)

Source: RADA, 2006.

Table 2. Housing Completions by Province (December 2006).

Province	Total units required	Housing Completions						
		All units completed 01/12/06		DAP units completed		ODP units completed		Ratio of ODP to DAP completions
		No.	As per cent of required	No.	As per cent of required	No.	As per cent of required	
Southern	31838	31,161	98	8614	27	21147	66	2.45
West & NW	5538	638	12	297	5	299	5	1.01
East	60260	26878	45	2247	4	24287	40	10.81
Northeast	16433	4792	29	1049	6	3248	20	3.10
Total	114069	63,469	56	12207	11	48981	43	4.01

Source: RADA, 2006.

Similarly, interviews threw up cost control as a recurrent issue and, again, this qualitative data formed the basis for quantitative research. Thus, finally, programme efficiency in term of cost was assessed. This was not an explicit objective of GoSL in drawing up the programme, but became an increasingly important issue as the reconstruction process took longer than anticipated to complete, while inflation developed quite rapidly, both typical problems in post-disaster situations. Data was obtained from UNHCR and from GoSL, and triangulated with independent analyses of economic trends. In triangulating the data in this way, certain apparent inconsistencies were identified and resolved through discussion with construction professionals, NGOs and CBOs.

Although the findings cannot be presented in detail here, the importance of contextual comparison for evaluating differential cost trends in housing reconstruction is amply illustrated by two points. First, the cost of house building in Sri Lanka escalated over the reconstruction period. As mentioned above, several supply-side factors contributed to this, including, shortage of buildable land, shortage of managerial, skilled and unskilled labour and a shortage of materials. Price rises in other areas, fuelled by the influx of aid monies as well as by a rising tide of violence towards the end of 2006, have had an inflationary impact on the economy as a whole (from 6.3 per cent in 2004 to 11.6 per cent in 2006) (estimates quoted in Index Mundi, 2006). Moreover, cost inflation in the construction sector has been significantly higher than average, estimated at 30–40 per cent and more by January 2006, largely attributable to rising labour costs (Jayasuriya, Steele, & Weerakoon, 2006).

Second, this relatively widely available data oversimplifies the picture of inflation. Countries which are politically segmented, such as Sri Lanka, tend to have segmented economies. Road blocks and informal taxation by soldiers from both sides of the conflict in Eastern Province, combined with GoSL bans on the importation to the province (and across certain boundaries within it) of generators, fuel and other construction-relevant materials classifiable as security-related all drove up construction costs further than the national average. Similarly, land shortages resulting from geophysical characteristics are exacerbated by the holding of land for military purposes (although some of this has been released for construction) thus driving up land costs. However, it has been difficult to access reliable data at such a geographically close-grained level, in part because statistics are not released at this level, and in part because such trends are subject to frequent fluctuation.

An important strength of the ODP has been its ability to contain the costs without compromising quality, as some contractors have been driven to do

(see above quality of construction). Recent estimates (RADA, 2007) put the cost of the majority of the houses in the ODP at $5000–$6000, increasing to $6500–$7500 where infrastructure development, such as septic tanks, wells, roads or photovoltaic equipment was required. In contrast, DAP housing is estimated to have cost $7000–$9000, increasing to $8500–$10500 where infrastructure was also required (RADA, 2007).

OBJECTIVE 3: ASSESSING POLICY CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

Researching this difficult area was methodologically perhaps more rewarding than any other aspect of the research. Following the analysis of interviews undertaken in connection with *Objective 1*, it became clear that widespread problems were haunting the DAP, which were resulting in *setting back development* in beneficiary communities. As with some of the issues under *Objective 2*, research under this objective began with a hypothesis which had been developed through qualitative work.

In order to examine the hypothesis it was necessary to define criteria and to understand both the mechanisms of failure and its scale. Thus, both quantitative and qualitative analyses would be necessary. To better conceptualise how people would approach the reconstruction of their livelihoods, the research drew on the Department for International Development (DFID) Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA). The SLA identifies actions, constraints and resources affecting the long-term sustainability of the poor's livelihoods in the face of adverse trends and shocks (Rakodi & Lloyd-Jones, 2002).

According to the SLA, actions can be a combination of individual and collective agency (Scoones, 1998), drawing on five forms of 'assets' or 'capital': financial, human, natural, physical and social. Rakodi and Lloyd-Jones (2002) explain that the poor aim to 'cope with and recover from stress and shocks, by stinting, hoarding, protecting, depleting or diversifying the portfolio (of assets); to maintain or enhance capability or assets' (p. 6).

Shocks vary from the general, such as major currency devaluations (for example, that of 1994 which reduced the value of the FCFA by 50 per cent), or forced displacement, to the personal, such as the loss of a partner or sudden costs, such as medical bills. The tsunami, which displaced close to 800,000 people, not only from their homes, but also from proximity to their livelihoods, in many cases destroying boats and other equipment essential to

them, was clearly a 'shock' in both the general and personal sense. It was also profound in destroying multiple forms of 'capital'. At the very least, most affected people lost colleagues, relatives and friends (social capital); as well as financial and physical assets (money, buildings, boats, fields). Displacement from the buffer zone also constituted a loss of proximity to the sea, a fundamental 'natural asset' to fishing communities and to people of all ages basing their livelihoods on tourism.

The research therefore attempted to assess the potential of the two programmes to provide a framework and opportunity for the development of income generating activities, on the one hand, and for the development and 'accumulation' of various forms of capital which could support them. Income generating activities were not widely surveyed by the donor community or the government and large data sets were thus not available for secondary analysis, as with construction statistics. Instead, the research used interviews with key-informants among all stakeholders to ascertain the opportunities open to beneficiaries in each situation; the constraints affecting them in taking advantage of such opportunities; and the extent to which these were attributable to the housing policy in which they were involved.

More difficult to measure directly is the development of supporting assets such as social capital. Again, key-informant interviews among a broad range of stakeholders provided a composite picture of the opportunities and constraints embodied in the two policies. This approach raised a number of methodological issues. First, the selection of key-informants must be valid. In effect, a grounded theory approach was adopted. A conceptual framework was constructed of the stakeholders with influence on these matters in the ODP and the DAP, which was modified over a period as new information was obtained. This was tested in a wide variety of housing projects and organisations and projects were selected and interviews held with all involved in those situations.

Second, investigating this aspect of the policies required winning trust from all concerned. To GoSL, demonstrating success in reconstruction was a key political aim. To foreign NGOs and bilateral funders, a central aim was to demonstrate to their donors or political constituencies respectively that the funds with which they had been entrusted were effectively spent. Invaluable in winning trust and in the identification of key actors and stakeholders at different decision-making fora and in a representative range of locations, was the opportunity for the researcher to participate as an observer in a bi-weekly donor forum on temporary shelter (and later on housing). Equally valuable, were working relationships that developed with

Sri Lankan NGOs over a period of some years. Taken together the sources explained above were able to provide information on the development of new employment and work opportunities; on the development of social and human capital; and on attempts to overcome the loss of access to natural capital.

Finally, the SLA attributes agency to the poor (in as far as they can strategise) in emphasising their strategic use of multiple activities and multiple assets. The research sought to understand the contribution of the two housing policies to people's spirit. In other words, it sought to identify whether, even where opportunities existed within the policy framework, individuals were unable to take advantage of them because they had become discouraged; and, where this had happened, whether it could be attributed to structural factors in the programme itself.

One way to approach the measurement of motivation (or despair) is through psycho-social evaluations. This would have required a wide-scale and properly established survey, using quantifiable data, something which was not within the scope of the study. Instead, the research drew on an indirect, but very interesting source of data.

Shortly after the tsunami, the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission established a small Disaster Relief Monitoring Unit (DRMU), responsible for monitoring human rights failures in the relief and recovery process. The DRMU established small legal teams comprising pro-bono staff and these visited every affected village and temporary shelter camp to introduce beneficiaries to their rights and to log and, where possible, address complaints. These complaints were compiled in reports, which provided a beneficiary perspective on the strengths and flaws of the two programmes.

By the end of October 2006, over 20,000 complaints had been received at DRMU detailing individual or collective beneficiary grievances over the reconstruction process. Over 30 per cent involved housing reconstruction (reaching 43 per cent across Eastern Province). Fig. 3 compares the programmes' rate of complaints in the South and East and shows unequivocally that the ODP generated fewer complaints per completed house than the DAP.

In order to gain a better understanding of beneficiaries' experiences of these processes, textual analysis was applied to the verbatim reports, and this showed that the contrast with beneficiaries of the DAP is striking. These beneficiaries are only able to engage with the local civil servants, whether the district secretary, the divisional secretary or the village officer (*grama sevaka*). And they do so passively, as supplicants, and with no sense

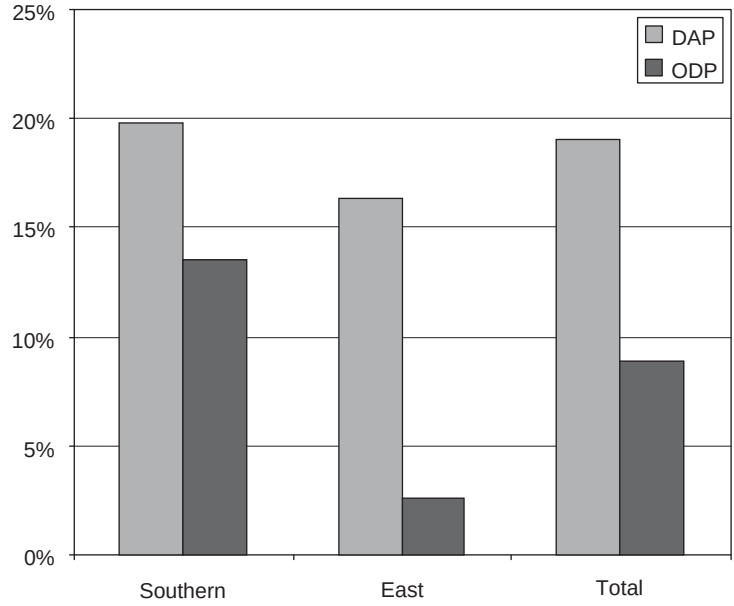

Fig. 3. Complaints as a per cent of Program Completions by Province. *Source:* RADA, 2006; DRMU, 2006.

of agency or power to require accountability. In almost every transitional shelter camp or DAP settlement visited by DRMU, people complained of neglect by authorities, powerlessness and passivity in their voices:

> The AGA [Assistant Government Agent] of X is apparently not a very approachable person. When the village folk go to the office to meet him he apparently ignores them…There exists a lack of regular visits made by the Public Health Inspector (PHI)…The Divisional Secretariat of X is not capable of talking to people in a respective [respectful] manner […] The Technical officer, Public Health Inspector (PHI) and the GN rarely visit the villagers [therefore] they are unable to express their grievances and issues […] The villagers had a very serious problem with the fact that the GN did not visit the village and this made the villagers' problems much graver as they do not have anyone to consolidate their issues with.

This is in stark contrast to the quote below, from an ODP participant:

> Lots of [DAP] organizations are working in X [village anonymised]. Around 1000 houses in total … all [being built] by contractors, and beneficiaries finally are allocated a house/number. There is no transparency, no recourse for beneficiaries, even if construction is

> flawed…[The ODP] is better than all this. Here the people are responsible and have ownership of the programme and they are put in front. There is no secrecy about any transaction or anything like that. (CBO Chairman, Eastern Province, his emphasis)

There is a range of techniques available for textual analysis, and most are associated with a grounded theory approach to research. These texts were analysed for repetition and emphasis, and key concepts were identified and included in the developing theory until apparent contradictions were resolved and new concepts ceased to emerge.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, the findings from the research, although useful and interesting in themselves, have been included only to contextualise and highlight the value of the main methodological issues involved. The study which informed this chapter was based on two hypotheses. The first, concerning the probable outcomes of centralised versus decentralised housing reconstruction policies, was studied deductively, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data. However, the second, concerning the attribution of these outcomes to particular policy characteristics; and the attribution of particular policy characteristics to a given policy environment, was treated inductively, to enable refinement of the original hypothesis (Glaser, 1992). This relied heavily on qualitative data (Charmaz, 2006).

The research undertaken was a comparative policy evaluation. It was unusual in following the policies longitudinally over a period of two years. In a dynamic and complex policy environment, in which relations among actors formed and reformed, financial and other constraints evolved and programmes were modified significantly more than once, this was crucial to gaining understanding of the policy process, as well as policy outcomes.

Data from a range of data sources was analysed, including secondary analysis of quantitative data; semi-structured interviews with key informants; documentary research; and text analysis. This enabled a causal chain to be identified between policy environment, programme formulation, programme implementation, and outcomes. While some of the main caveats which should be borne in mind in relation to the quantitative data used are discussed in the text, it would be further useful to develop some of the comments made above with regard to some of the qualitative aspects of this study.

The interrogation of organisational policies and agendas of aid agencies cannot be carried out with one or two interviews. Complex organisations have multiple agendas and organisational policies are negotiated within, as well as outside the organisation. Therefore, policy must be understood as a negotiated stance. Experience in this research showed the importance of discussions with different branches of organisations such as, the World Bank, or Asian Development Bank, in which social development may be quite separate from reconstruction funding. Following complex emergencies, it is also usual for staff turnover in large organisations to be rapid and opportunities for organisational learning, limited. To understand change over time, it is necessary to meet with a series of informants, who may notionally be holding the same post, but bringing to it very different skills and experience. Finally, to understand the mutual influence and learning of organisations, it is important to observe interactions. Attending meetings of such regular fora as the Housing and Shelter clusters is one possible avenue to gain insight into intra-sectoral debates and concerns.

The understanding of evolving government policies also cannot be divorced from understanding the larger and longer-term political concerns of government actors. While aid agencies may be concerned with the emergency and – to some extent – with reconstruction as a self-contained agenda, for all people who have a genuinely long-term stake in the country, it is part of ongoing political and economic struggles. For example, the empowerment of certain government agencies to act, and the disempowerment of others by the government of the day, may have more to do with long-term considerations than with considerations arising from the crisis itself. The opportunity afforded the researcher in this study to gain access to opposition and majority politicians, and to all government agencies which could have been active in reconstruction, facilitated the development of a better understanding of the policy process and its actors.

Miller and Fredericks (2006) argued that, in education policy evaluation at least, quantitative research methods should frame the questions for subsequent qualitative, in-depth research. The project undertaken here has shown that, in certain instances, qualitative and quantitative data may be used side by side, to study complementary questions. Although obtaining answers to both may be essential to understanding the full picture. Even more interestingly, perhaps, they have shown that findings from qualitative research may usefully form the basis of subsequent quantitative analysis.

NOTES

1. A 'buffer zone' prohibiting construction within 100–200 m of the mean high-tide mark had been delineated in the 1981 Coastal Conservation Act, and at the end of 2004 there was a plan for phased resettlement of buffer zone residents away from the coast, although definitive land allocations had not been identified. The buffer zone was re-introduced in the opening section of the new housing policy document.

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CHAPTER 7

ACCOMMODATING GYPSY/ TRAVELLERS: INCLUSIVE APPROACHES FOR COLLABORATIVE AND PEER-LED RESEARCH WITH GYPSY TRAVELLERS

Delia Lomax

INTRODUCTION

The historical relationship between the state and Gypsy/Travellers in the UK and Europe has been a difficult one. Cultural differences, particularly in relation to nomadism and sedentarism lie at the centre of this fraught relationship (Acton, 1997; Liégeois, 2005; McVeigh, 1997; Molloy, 1998). Some commentators have gone as far as to suggest that policies directed at Gypsy/Travellers amount to a form of 'ethnic cleansing' (Hawes & Perez, 1996). This is not only a matter of history but refers to current legislation, policy and the experience of hostile responses from the settled community and the media (Clark & Greenfields, 2006; Richardson, 2006). Clark (2008) argues that in Britain and Ireland these tensions are shaped by 'core dichotomies' and in the context of social policy one such dichotomy is that

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between 'care' and 'control'. While the current housing and planning policy agenda seeks to improve safety and security in the provision of appropriate accommodation, addressing the needs of Gypsy/Travellers, the tendency to control through monitoring and regulation is also evident (Clark & Greenfields, 2006; Richardson, 2006). It is, therefore, unsurprising that, in the midst of such enduring hostility from the state, authorities and the settled community and tensions and confusion in policy, there may be some reluctance to engage with researchers, especially but not just when they are commissioned to undertake the research on behalf of national and local government.

English Gypsies and Irish Travellers have been recognised as ethnic minority groups under the race relations legislation in the UK and arguably other groups within this broad community, such as Scottish Travellers, may also be covered in the future (Clark & Greenfields, 2006). As such, there is much that can be learned from research on other ethnic minority groups (Boal, 2000) particularly in terms of developing inclusive approaches (Greenfields, 2008; Temple & Steele, 2004) and wider community engagement research. Action Research (AR) and specifically Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Reason, 1988; Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Stringer, 1996) are relevant approaches when considering methods for maximising participation in this context and including participants as reflective and active agents in the research process.

This chapter discusses the key challenges in undertaking research 'on' Gypsy/Travellers with a specific focus on housing, including accommodation needs assessment. It goes on to explore how researchers can seek to minimise these challenges using appropriate qualitative research methods and researching 'with' these groups. The chapter draws on research conducted by the author since the late 1990s on the accommodation needs of Gypsy/Travellers living in housing, on sites and roadside camping, with a focus on local studies from the East of Scotland (Lomax, Lancaster, & Gray, 2000; Lomax, Fancy, Netto, & Smith, 2004; Lomax, Lloyd, Sosenko, & Clark, 2008; Lomax & Townsley, 2006).

In this context, qualitative research analysis is examined as a formative and summative process, through the methods used to collect data on the accommodation experiences and aspirations of Gypsy/Travellers, such as: in-depth interviews, focus groups, events for young people; the processes used in constructing materials to facilitate these interviews, working with focus groups and community researchers to develop research materials and questions; and the impacts of the research process more widely. In particular, this chapter accounts for the development of inclusive research

approaches, leading to collaborative working, with Gypsy/Travellers as community researchers and the development of peer-led research.

This chapter takes the following structure. Firstly, key terminology is briefly discussed, an important issue for debate for many reasons including legal and political and estimates of the number of Gypsy/Traveller families and persons are indicated. The chapter then moves on to examine the policy context in Scotland against which the research has been carried out, and indeed informed, before considering the issues that arise when researching Gypsy/Travellers. The argument then develops the practice of research 'with' and 'by' Gypsy/Travellers. Theoretical comments on inclusive research are discussed before exploring an example of peer-led research, a study undertaken with a site tenants association. In conclusion, the author reflects on the value, implications and lessons learned from collaborative research with Gypsy/Travellers.

GYPSY/TRAVELLERS IN THE UK

The terms 'Gypsy' and 'Traveller' are commonly used in Britain and here 'Gypsy/Traveller' is used, reflecting the adoption of this term by some Scottish Gypsy/Travellers in the 1990s, most notably the Scottish Gypsy/Traveller Association (Clark, 2006a, 2006b). However, a key point is to ensure that:

> …any debate examining definitions of 'who Gypsies and Travellers really are' does not exclude those who are settled and/or those who are presently living in houses. To be sure, culturally, an ethnicity or ethnic identity is not somehow magically 'lost' or abandoned when a family settles into 'bricks and mortar': it continues and adapts to new circumstances, and this is commonly accepted within the communities concerned. (Clark, 2006b, p. 12)

An estimate of the numbers of Gypsy/Travellers is difficult for several reasons: with issues around definition; as a mobile population; as an ethnic minority potentially reluctant to self-identify; as a 'hard to reach' group; and having been historically unacknowledged in the UK Censuses and other datasets. Clark (2006b), as an 'educated estimate', puts the number of Gypsy/Travellers in Britain at around 250,000. His further estimate of 583 households (or about 1,960 people), in Scotland in 1994 reflects only those included on caravan counts of roadsides and sites, with noted concerns about accuracy and the exclusion of those staying in housing, about whom estimates are even more difficult. By July 2006 (Research Consultancy

Services, 2006) these figures had increased to 728 households or 2,402 people.

Accommodating Gypsy/Travellers

In the United Kingdom there is a shortage of sites and other accommodation options for Gypsy/Travellers who have a nomadic or semi-nomadic culture (Niner, 2003; Maginn, Paris, & Gray, 1999). Additionally, there is no legislative duty, since the *Caravan Sites Act 1968* duties were repealed by the *Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994*, to build more sites (Cowan & Lomax, 2003; Richardson, 2006). Although encouraged by the government to build their own private sites and with Gypsy/Travellers' own aspirations to do so, planning permission is not easy to get and lengthy proceedings around consents and enforcement have led to increasing tensions between Gypsy/Travellers and settled communities in some areas (Niner, 2004; Richardson, 2006).

Local authorities in the United Kingdom with statutory housing and planning duties are now required to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsy/Travellers. In England, this duty falls under section 225 of the *Housing Act 2004*. Government guidance on the planning aspects of needs assessment and site provision requires planning authorities to discuss accommodation needs with Gypsy/Travellers themselves at an early stage in the preparation of regional and local plans (ODPM, 2006c). Similarly, since 2002, performance standards have been required of Scottish local authorities in the provision of site services for Gypsy/Travellers, including planning for new and improved provision of site accommodation (Communities Scotland, 2002). As a result, research on the accommodation needs of this community is a rapidly expanding area, in the number and scope of studies (Craigforth, 2007; Lomax et al., 2004; Netto, Fancy, Lomax, Satsangi, & Smith, 2004) and the development of research methodologies, including guidance from government (Home and Greenfields, 2006; ODPM, 2006a).

In examining research on accommodation needs, it is helpful to note the options for a group with such a distinctive culture whose needs differ from the settled community, to include: nomadic or semi-nomadic living; some preference for caravan dwelling; the use by some of sites and roadside camps when travelling; and potential movement between housing and caravans at different points in the life course or if travelling seasonally. Government guidance notes the following options (although the point is made that these

options may not be available to Gypsy/Travellers in some areas or even widely):

- standard owner-occupied bricks and mortar housing;
- affordable housing, or group lets of affordable housing;
- provision of group housing (small groups of purpose built bungalows designated for use by Gypsies and Travellers);
- socially rented site accommodation of various kinds;
- privately rented site provision;
- Gypsies and Travellers' own provision of authorised accommodation providing legal and licensed sites on their own land (ODPM, 2006a, p. 10).

The list does not include roadside camps, although frequently used by Gypsy/Travellers either by choice or through lack of alternative pitches for their caravans; the official terminology for which is 'unauthorised encampments' or 'unauthorised camping' (ODPM, 2006b; Scottish Executive, 2004).

The Policy Context in Scotland

The Equal Opportunities Committee of the Scottish Parliament undertook an *Inquiry into Gypsy Travellers and Public Sector Policies*, examining polices relating to the provision of accommodation, education, health, social services, policing and criminal justice and including the promotion of good relations between the Gypsy/Traveller and settled community (Scottish Parliament, 2001). The Scottish Government responded to recommendations from this report by providing guidance on the development of local housing strategies to include Gypsy/Travellers and a specific performance standard for the provision of accommodation services for this community group, which states:

> We plan and provide or arrange good quality serviced stopping places for Gypsies/Travellers. We let pitches in a way that ensures fair and open access for all. We take Gypsies/Travellers views into account in delivering our services, and we are responsive to their needs. (Communities Scotland, 2002, p. 1)

In 2003, government guidance for planning authorities also referenced the role of local housing strategies in addressing the needs of Gypsy/Travellers:

> Planning authorities should continue to play a role through development plans, by identifying suitable locations for Gypsies/Travellers' sites where need is demonstrated,

> and setting out policies for dealing with applications for small, privately-owned sites. (Scottish Executive, 2003, p. 5)

These requirements have led to the inclusion of Gypsy/Travellers in research commissioned by local and national government, such as studies undertaken to identify housing needs or access to housing services, either specifically for Gypsy/Travellers or through inclusion in studies aimed at the housing needs of black and minority ethnic communities more generally (Craigforth, 2007; Lomax et al., 2004; Netto et al., 2004; Netto, Fancy, Lomax, Satsangi, & Smith, 2005).

Subsequent reviews identified slow progress on the recommendations and little change in the life chances of Gypsy/Travellers (Communities Scotland, 2006; Scottish Parliament, 2005). This situation is unlikely to be resolved until Scottish policy on accommodation for Gypsy/Travellers is further developed. Currently, limited grant funding for new local authority sites and the refurbishment of current sites is available from the Scottish Government, matched with local authority funding, but there is little innovation nor wider consideration of funding mechanisms to provide support for Gypsy/Travellers in accessing affordable accommodation, whether on sites or in appropriate models of housing, across different tenures. Qualitative research aimed at a fuller understanding of the accommodation needs, aspirations and preferences of Gypsy/Travellers for models of accommodation that will meet their requirements is essential for appropriate policy development in the future.

Researching the Accommodation Needs of Gypsy Travellers

Studies on the accommodation needs of Gypsy/Travellers have been limited in terms of the previously collected data available to researchers. Gypsy/Travellers have not been included in the UK Census, the only opportunity to self-identify their ethnicity on the census forms is under the category 'Other', although they were included as a category in the 2006 test Census in Scotland (Clark, 2006a). The Scottish Gypsy Traveller Caravan Counts undertaken in January and July each year, since 1998, provide a snapshot on one day of the number of caravans, the locations of sites used and the type of site. More detailed information on households is collected but only for those living on local authority managed sites (Research Consultancy Services, 2006). Local authorities currently have little or no information about the needs of Gypsy/Travellers from previous housing needs research in their areas (Lomax et al., 2004), whether living in housing, on caravan

sites or roadsides. Also, as Niner (2002, 2004) has noted for England, few agencies identify this group in their record-keeping systems, including for housing management.

Reflecting on the research process for a study of accommodation needs Lomax et al. (2004) identified some limitations and made recommendations for such studies in the future, including one key lesson:

> Sufficient time needs to be given to developing the study and ideally this would be in conjunction with Gypsies/Travellers themselves, either through representation on local liaison groups which need to be fully aware of the research in developing the remit and as it is commissioned, or through representation on a project advisory group. (Lomax et al., 2004, p. 55)

Yet, opportunities for involvement in resident or tenant participation and consultation by this community have also to date been limited, which means that finding representatives is a necessary first step in the commissioning process and in setting up the study. While Gypsy/Travellers may 'fill seats' at liaison group meetings, the experience of some of them is that, in practice, their views are not listened to. A review of services for Gypsy/Travellers noted that although most local authorities had arrangements for consultation, this was mainly limited to residents on sites and even here key issues were not consulted on. Not surprisingly:

> Gypsies/Travellers spoken to expressed dissatisfaction with consultation methods. (Communities Scotland, 2006, p. 45)

This leaves researchers with the challenge of convincing Gypsy/Travellers that their voices will be heard and understood, that their involvement might influence decisions and lead to resources to meet their needs for accommodation.

Gypsy/Traveller accommodation needs assessments in England have led to further developments in research methodologies, through consultation with stakeholders, including Gypsy/Travellers: using methods such as semi-structured interviews rather than postal questionnaires, allowing interviews to develop flexibly and allowing time to build up relationships and work towards developing trust and confidence (Brown, Ahmed, & Steele, 2005). A further study reported by Home and Greenfields (2006) and referred to by Bowers (2006) who assisted with their survey, included Gypsy/Travellers as:

> …full partners in the entire process, from writing the questionnaire, to undertaking the interviews and commenting on the report findings. (Bowers, 2006, p. 10)

It is intended that such partnership approaches will encourage continuing involvement in policy development at the local level:

> …it is envisaged that interviewers and advisory panel members will remain engaged in consultation processes with local authorities and public agencies after the lifetime of the project, and act as a nucleus core of 'policy aware' members who are able to cascade information down through their contacts. (Greenfields, 2008, p. 81)

The involvement of the community in such models of accommodation needs assessment resonates with the principles and values of Participatory Action Research. The frameworks for Participatory/Action Research (PAR/AR) provide theoretical research structures for alternative models of engagement and the development of trust and inclusion in research with Gypsy/Travellers. Stringer (1996) identifies three fundamental themes for AR processes: reflection, active participation of the 'subjects' in the research process and that the research should result in some practical outcome for the participants. Further, Stringer (1996) considers a set of working principles for the development of appropriate methods; relating to relationships, communication, participation and inclusion, all of which are essential to an effective outcome in research with Gypsy/Travellers. However, as Greenfields (2008) notes, partnership approaches take time for the initial planning and setting up of the project and are more expensive than standard surveys for accommodation needs assessments. While costs may be a concern for local authorities Greenfields also argues that:

> This, plus the expectation of Gypsy/Traveller empowerment and meaningful engagement, may make it unattractive to local authorities. (Greenfields, 2008, p. 81)

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACHES AND METHODS

This section will identify the challenges that need to be addressed by researchers working with Gypsy/Travellers and examine theoretical frameworks which assist in addressing appropriate research approaches and methods. With reference to specific research practice and studies, the focus will be on three aspects: negotiating access; the gendered aspects of research; and engaging with young people in the Gypsy/Traveller communities.

Temple and Steele (2004), in their discussion of minority ethnic housing needs assessments, reflect on 'injustices of engagement', in terms of: which communities are included in the research; who from the community is

included; and, how communities are involved. These 'injustices' pertain to Gypsy/Travellers in different ways to other minority ethnic communities. Research on accommodation needs tends to focus on the more easily accessible Gypsy/Traveller, to be found on designated sites managed by local authorities (Craigforth, 2007), particularly so when included in accommodation needs assessments alongside other minority ethnic groups (Netto et al., 2004, 2005). Yet, Gypsy/Travellers in housing may also have requirements for site accommodation, either for seasonal travelling or, as life circumstances change, they may wish to move out of housing and onto sites more permanently (Molloy, 1998). The status of 'who is a Gypsy' has also been the subject of legal decision, with examples of local authority and court decisions determining legal Gypsy status on the basis of whether a person was nomadic for economic purpose or lost their 'legal' Gypsy status once living in housing or on their own land (Kenrick & Clark, 1999). To be fully inclusive, research needs to involve Gypsy/Travellers living in all forms of accommodation.

An awareness of cultural beliefs and attitudes is essential to the development of an appropriate research design. Gypsy/Traveller identity is maintained through cultural 'rules' and a separate existence from the settled community is one mechanism for maintaining this identity. However, racism and discrimination is experienced as 'pervasive' and thus 'anticipated', at times requiring avoidance by hiding Gypsy/Traveller identity, especially when staying in housing (Parry et al., 2004). Identifying Gypsy/Travellers in housing can be difficult without support from the community. Extended family networks are very important, based on reputation and respect and also linked to 'a strong observance of strict moral codes governing relationships' (Greenfields, 2006b, p. 42). This is especially so in relation to gender roles, where men and women are not expected to be alone together. Privacy and the need to avoid gossip and embarrassment are essential. Additionally, local circumstances and events, such as family bereavement, may also require amendment to the research process for a particular study (Greenfields, 2006b; Parry et al., 2004). Okely's (1983) comments, on researching Gypsies as a participant observer, continue to be relevant:

> The Gypsies' experience of direct questions is partly formed by outsiders who would harass, prosecute or convert. The Gypsies assess the needs of the questioner and give the appropriate answer, thus disposing of the intruder, his ignorance intact. Alternatively, the Gypsies may be deliberately inconsistent. Other studies of Gypsies using structured interviews and questionnaires have demonstrated their inefficacy.... (Okely, 1983, p. 45)

Negotiating Access

Negotiating access and developing trust and rapport with potential participants is vital, through trusted organisations and individuals and for the individual researcher to develop that trust in their own right. Feldman, Bell and Berger (2003) emphasise that access is 'relational' and requires relationship-building skills: engaging in conversations and developing rapport; maintaining relationships through keeping commitments and confidences; conveying respect and appreciation; learning to be flexible and taking opportunities. Access requires time to develop relationships and effort to maintain these, with a great deal depending on preparation and presentation of information about the research and the reputation and respect developed by the researcher. Organisations providing dedicated services (such as advice, support and advocacy, health care and education) may have previously put in this time and effort to achieve the trust and rapport with Gypsy/Travellers in a locality. They will themselves require reassurances, to be willing to support negotiations for access.

Research commissioned by the Scottish Government (Lomax et al., 2000), to obtain the views of mobile Gypsy/Travellers about sites and access to other services through in-depth interviews, was designed to take account of the culture and values. Initial focus group work ascertained the views of Gypsy/Travellers on the feasibility of the study. While not fully inclusive, the approach engaged the expertise of Gypsy/Travellers, in the development of the research methods and materials, considering key topics, the format and types of questions for the interviews. Advice about cross gender interviews and interviewing younger people also assisted the research team.

The researchers established access to Gypsy/Travellers initially through contacts with organisations working with Gypsy/Travellers, such as the charity Save the Children (which provides support to families in accessing services, education, health and welfare benefits and advising on threats of eviction from roadside camps) and Traveller Education staff (who work to support children in schools and on sites in delivering education). In addition, the organisations provided contacts with Gypsy/Travellers, who then assisted with access to people living on sites and camps for interviews. Individuals, known and trusted by Gypsy/Travellers, both Gypsy/Travellers and *gorje* (a term for an 'outsider' or non-Gypsy/Traveller (Clark and Greenfields, 2006), also supported learning about appropriate approaches in the context of Gypsy/Traveller culture. Once working on sites and roadside camps and as interviews progressed, the researchers were then able to

establish their own relationships, thus further extending contacts and interviews.

Site managers, sometimes referred to by Gypsy/Travellers as 'wardens', were not utilised in this way. Advice from the Gypsy/Traveller focus groups encouraged the researchers to contact site residents directly rather than via site managers, both to assert the independence of the research from the site landlords, whether council or private sites (a particular issue where there were tensions between residents and managers) and to acknowledge the residents as independent households. It was important not to appear to be requiring permission of landlords to engage with site residents.

Leaflets were delivered in advance of researchers arriving on sites, providing supplementary information in addition to word of mouth communication about the research through Gypsy/Traveller contacts. This approach provided potential interviewees with some familiarity with the aims of the research before being asked to participate in an interview. While there is low literacy among Gypsy/Travellers, due to problems with access, attendance and curriculum issues in schools (Clark, 2006c), information from leaflets could be passed on and discussed by family members.

The issue of confidentiality often looms large in social research, particularly when the focus is on sensitive topics and/or minority groups such as small and tight-knit communities. Gypsy/Travellers, for example, for whom privacy is a fundamental requirement (Parry et al., 2004) do not want to see researchers moving from one trailer to another and risk personal information and views being shared. Potential interviewees will notice body language, researchers' comments and check that information will not be inadvertently passed to another. Gypsy/Travellers who agree to work with the research team also need confidence in the researchers and the project to ensure that they do not, by association, lose respect and trust within their community.

Access is discussed by Feldman et al. (2003) as ongoing throughout the research, with each interview requiring access to be negotiated afresh. In-depth interviews provide opportunities for the participant to assess the researcher face-to-face, to note tone and body language, to further assess the extent of trust they can commit to the interview. Gypsy/Travellers engaging as participants need to be clear about the motives and purposes of the research, how it will be used and to what extent there may be any future benefits or potential disadvantages arising from their involvement.

Eighty three Gypsy/Travellers were interviewed across local authority and private sites and roadside camps across Scotland, for the 2000 study.

However, there was reluctance from some people to engage with an 'official survey'.

> In some instances [Gypsy/Travellers] also explained their reluctance to take part, as arising from the experience of previous surveys or consultations which had led to no progress or action based on their views. They saw little point in taking part. Taking part in such a survey could also be viewed as problematic. One Traveller approached but not interviewed (female) had said that information from such surveys could be used against Travellers, rather than to support their views…. (Lomax et al., 2000, p. 11)

Their experience of discrimination and prejudice (Acton, 1997; Clark & Greenfields, 2006; Parry et al., 2004) supports suspicion rather than engagement and participation. The issue of who controls the research process and how information will be used is important to a community that has poor experiences of contacts with authorities, council officials and the police, harassment from *gorje* neighbours and the legal system (Greenfields, 2006a). Feedback on research findings is important in identifying the value of the research for future action, as recommendations can be used by the community to negotiate service improvements (DDTA, 2006). Participants can be invited to workshops to discuss findings, provided with summary findings in leaflets, or the full report made available to those interested. Feedback helps to maintain the research network and access for future studies.

Gendered Roles

On the issue of gender and injustice, Temple and Steele (2004), argue that women have been marginalised in housing need assessments involving ethnic minorities, where the focus has been on interviews with community representatives or heads of households. In practice, Gypsy/Traveller women are more likely to be interviewed than men (Lomax et al., 2000, 2004) as they are more accessible at home, whether on sites, camps or in housing, while men are more frequently away working during the day and also because such engagement with 'authorities' is part of their role (Clark and Greenfields, 2006). Efforts are required to engage with men, in the evenings for example, and also by working with male researchers. As traditional Gypsy/Travellers of opposite genders should not be alone together, researchers need to be sensitive to cross gender interviews. Reputations need to be protected and family members may 'sit in' on an interview to ensure this, depending on the gender of the interviewer, especially if they are themselves a Gypsy/Traveller.

In a recent research project, working with women Gypsy/Travellers as community researchers (Lomax et al., 2008), sensitivities on gender issues were discussed in terms of the potential impacts on the community researchers if they approached men for interviews, due to these moral codes governing gender relationships. This was resolved, in part, by ensuring that the community researchers could work in pairs or with a non-Gypsy researcher when interviewing men.

Other methods such as specific focus groups with men or women and working separately with young people (such as through specific activities and events or separate research studies (Lomax et al., 2008; Save the Children, 2005)) also provide opportunities for other voices to be heard within the community.

Engaging with Young People

Separation from the settled community has been described as one mechanism for maintaining cultural identity (Parry et al., 2004). This is an important consideration in raising children and negotiation with formal education, especially secondary schooling. Racism, cultural dissonance and low expectations are identified as barriers to attendance and achievement, in addition to mobility (Denning & Kendall, 2008). Research with young people therefore requires careful negotiation and positive parental support. As with access more generally, working with a trusted organisation experienced in engagement with families, children and young people provides reciprocal opportunities (Feldman et al., 2003). Research funding can be utilised within the research design to provide support for activities and events, to promote engagement with young people.

Research with young people needs to be fun, participatory and active, informed by the young people themselves. A project, in collaboration with Save the Children, included the views of young Gypsy/Travellers through a series of events, using discussion, photography and animation (Lomax et al., 2008). Three events were organised over a two-month period, each combining a workshop on the theme of home and accommodation with a fun activity. The workshop facilitators were all trained and covered by the required parental permissions and formal disclosures to work with young people.

Three dimension models were made of 'home', promoting small group discussion of the different homes where people live. Further activities built on photographs taken by the young people of their environments, with

discussion of their images and illustrations of improvements they would like to see. One group produced an animation which transformed a real Gypsy/Traveller site (based on a photograph) into their vision of an ideal site. A second group constructed a model of an ideal site, replacing things they did not like with facilities they preferred, in terms of their own needs. Their views expressed similar concerns to adult Gypsy/Travellers about the lack of facilities on site, safety, harassment and racism yet emphasised their priority for safe and appropriate opportunities for play.

SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE RESEARCH

The third injustice raised by Temple and Steele (2004) is that of how minority ethnic communities are involved, arguing for alternative models of research.

> This kind of needs assessment model involves community development and capacity building at its heart. Its epistemological underpinnings differ from the parachute model. User knowledge is not valued at one point only, that is, in producing findings. People are seen as experts throughout the process of question formulation through to producing the report. (Temple and Steele, 2004, p. 548)

They further argue that while there has been movement in the use of 'community researchers' in Britain and community development models of needs assessment, there remain concerns about control of resources, the adequacy of training and social justice issues in terms of the preferences of existing residents.

Such arguments reflect the broader context of discussions about researching socially excluded or marginalised groups, such as Oliver (1997) on 'emancipatory research' in the context of *Doing Disability Research* (Barnes and Mercer, 1997). Here, it is suggested that 'one can only engage as a researcher with those seeking to emancipate themselves' (Oliver, 1997, p. 25) and that even participatory and action research, while an improvement, does not challenge research production.

Taking a very different perspective, Richardson (2006) links Foucault's theory of gaze with her explanation of media discourse used around Gypsy/Travellers as a mechanism of control. Similarly, these links can be made with the process and interpretation of research. As Richardson argues:

> The crucial element of the gaze is the interpretative element…The gaze is not passive surveillance, but involves active interpretation and domination. (Richardson, 2006, pp. 79–80)

Researchers are just one of the multiple actors involved in the networks of power and control (Cowan & Lomax, 2003; Richardson, 2006), requiring both acknowledgement and consideration in qualitative research analysis.

The research processes previously described (Lomax et al., 2000, 2008) sought to include Gypsy/Travellers through focus groups and as community researchers working with the research team. Representatives from the Scottish Gypsy/Traveller Association on the research steering group for the 2000 study provided a sounding board for analysis, conclusions and recommendations from the research. Nonetheless, the process was controlled by *gorje*. The next steps in improving participatory research on housing needs therefore might be seen as 'peer-led' approaches, research initiated by, undertaken and managed by, for example, Gypsy/Travellers in their own communities. Moving beyond doing research 'on' Gypsy/Travellers to a position of researching 'with' a community, where they are active in the research process from start to finish, is not without methodological problems. Participation Action Research (Reason, 1988; Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Stringer, 1996) provides the theoretical, methodological and contextual framework for peer-led research, in assisting the researcher in addressing concerns around bias, rigour, validity and credibility, as concerns for qualitative researchers.

Peer-Led Research

A Gypsy/Traveller site tenants' association, after making little progress with their local authority landlord in negotiations to improve their site, decided to commission their own research to support their case. Eventually they obtained funding from the Scottish Community Action Research Fund (SCARF), specifically aimed at enabling communities to undertake their own research and to improve their circumstances by getting actively involved in decisions that affect them. The author was contracted by the tenants' association as a mentor, as a 'friendly critic, advisor, trainer, helper, researcher' (Scottish Community Development Centre, 2004, p. 3). Members of the tenants' association were familiar with previous research undertaken by the author, some of whom having been interviewed for earlier studies (Lomax et al., 2000, 2004). The study also provided a further learning opportunity for the author, through the development of research materials with tenant association members and in identifying current issues and concerns in discussions about the research process and analysis.

The aim of the study was to answer the question:

> What are the current and future accommodation needs and aspirations of Gypsy Travellers at Double Dykes? Are our needs being met? (DDTA, 2005, p. 4)

Changes in travelling patterns and tenancies, where families stay permanently on a site, as is the case for this site, required a different range and quality of amenities and facilities. The research objectives were to: put together information about options for improvement; obtain residents' views on their existing accommodation on the site; and discuss the range of options with site residents and applicants on the site waiting list. Former residents who had moved from the site into housing were asked for their reasons for leaving the site and whether site improvements and what type of improvements would have encouraged them to remain on the site (DDTA, 2006; Lomax & Townsley, 2006).

Members of the tenants' association had no experience as researchers, although they had 'been researched'. The funding provided for training in research methods, interviewing skills, ethical and safe researching and writing up research. Further work was planned to support presentations and workshops to disseminate the study findings. A semi-structured questionnaire was constructed by members of the association, drawing on examples of previous questionnaires and adapted for their purposes and experience. In addition to household information, the questions covered what residents liked and disliked about the site, whether a member of the household would be seeking alternative accommodation and what they would be looking for, choice of options for the site modernisation (with detailed information provided in advance of the interview, including plans and photographs), reasons for the choices made, views about site management and the provision of further site accommodation for Gypsy/Travellers in the area.

Two members of the association undertook the interviews and one had primary responsibility for the analysis of the findings and writing up the research report. Throughout the research process, the mentor continued to be involved in discussions with the group and researchers about the progress of the fieldwork, the analysis of findings and the writing up of the report. The role of the mentor was to support the residents association in understanding concerns about the validity and credibility of their research. Issues of bias for this study were addressed by encouraging all residents on the site to participate in interviews, providing numerous opportunities for interviews, so that the views of all the families on the site, and more than one family member where possible, were represented. Findings were then widely discussed and agreed through tenant association meetings.

Part way through the study, the Scottish Government announced £1 million funding a year for three years, to improve conditions on local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites in Scotland and to build new sites, stopping places and transit sites. The study provided interim results to support a funding bid submitted by the local authority for a grant towards the costs of modernisation of the site. The application for funding from the Scottish Government, to improve the site using twin units (or chalets), was eventually successful.

Reflections on the Research Approach

Following this study, the team involved reflected on the research process, its value to them and the implications of peer-led research with communities such as Gypsy/Travellers. On the positive side, the tenants' association had gained hands on experience of designing, obtaining funding and implementing the research process. They had moved from being interviewees of research done to them to initiators and managers of their own research study. The tenants' association had managed the funding, contracted a mentor and put together the research materials, analysed the information from the interviews and written the research report. Throughout the study the researchers had reflected on the process, considered the impact of the questions asked and how they might have been improved, either in the wording or order, and been critical of their own skills in encouraging site residents to take part and to respond fully in making choices about options for their site. They acknowledged the potential for bias and were concerned about the robustness of their methods, validating their findings through meetings with site residents and in the context of the findings from previous studies. In pragmatic terms, the credibility of the study was justified by the success of government funding obtained by the local authority to improve the site, based on research findings.

Negatively, the study had demonstrated to the participants that resources do not flow directly from acquired knowledge, and Gypsy/Travellers remain dependent on decisions made by government and public agencies. The pace at which these decisions about resources are made and improvements then implemented can create frustration. While peer-led research offers an alternative means of generating information this does not necessarily transform the qualitative methods used nor produce fundamentally different findings. The semi-structured interview, as a method, was familiar to the research team and appropriate to this study but, following this experience,

the researchers were able to be critical of the approach, reflecting that a more appropriate method would fully engage with the culture of Gypsy/Travellers, such as through narrative techniques, building on story-telling traditions. Seen as the first stage in a process, however, this study could be said to have developed certain research skills and understanding of the research process, confidence and social capital that has the potential to be used and shared in subsequent studies and campaigns over the living conditions of Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland and more generally.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has highlighted the importance of providing Gypsy/Travellers the opportunity for greater involvement in research that is likely to have an impact on their residential environments. Reflecting on the concerns of Temple and Steele (2004), in the context of this study peer researchers benefited from initial training and continuing mentor support. They were reflective and critical of their own research, with the potential to identify more appropriate research methods. They were successful in bidding for and managing research funding resources and, while the current study was primarily limited to site residents rather than inclusive of Gypsy/Travellers on roadsides or living in housing, as community researchers, they have the potential to undertake a more inclusive study, should they find the research funding to support this.

In terms of a Participatory Action Research process, the tenants' association study built relationships within the research team and with site residents and the data collected provided the opportunity to support a funding bid by the local authority. The community researchers were reflective and active agents in the research process and achieved an outcome that should improve their future site accommodation, thus meeting these three fundamental requirements, described by Stringer (1996) as the basis of action research: reflection, active participation of the subjects and a practical outcome.

The qualitative research techniques developed for working 'with' rather than 'on' Gypsy/Travellers and outlined in this chapter provide sensitive and robust research that is essential for policy making and social justice for this group.

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CHAPTER 8

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY, HOUSING AND CITY RESIDENTS: A SENSORY URBANISM APPROACH ☆

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the role and potential of sensory urbanism as an approach to exploring people's sensorial experiences and understandings of their local environments. Such an approach is warranted given the influential role of the senses in developing and affecting experience of the urban environment. Debate about the role of the senses in shaping urban experience has progressed in recent years and increasingly is taking place across disciplines (Adams & Guy, 2007). Pallasmaa (2005, p. 40) describes this sensory urban engagement when he says:

> I confront the city with my body … I experience myself in the city, and the city exists through my embodied experience. The city and my body supplement and define each other. I dwell in the city and the city dwells in me.

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Sensorial analysis of the city enables deeper understandings of what it means to live and be in the city; and those whose home is in the city centre experience both the positive and negative sensory impacts of that reality (Adams et al., 2007). Many have argued that urban studies often focus on one sense in isolation, particularly sight, and call for a more holistic approach to sensory urbanism. Macnaghten and Urry (1998, p. 110) refer to the 'primacy of the eye' and Bull (2000) talks about the lack of a 'contemporary account of the auditory nature of everyday experience in urban and cultural studies' (p. 2). Classen, Howes and Synnott (1995) identify an 'olfactory silence' (p. 161) while Howes (2003) has criticised the practice of studying the senses in turn without exploring their interactions.

It is within this developing theoretical framework of sensory urbanism that our current study has taken place and from which we devised an innovative methodology that enabled the urban resident to focus on their sensory experiences in order to better communicate their perceptions of environmental quality in their neighbourhood. Our aim in this chapter is to describe this qualitative research methodology that enabled city centre residents to articulate some of the issues and problems confronting them as residents of a 24-hour city. We provide a step-by-step account of our distinctive methodology and an evaluation of its effectiveness in engaging local people with a view to demonstrating its utility as a methodology to be used by authorities who have policy responsibilities for developing housing within mixed-use developments.

In this chapter the terms 'homes' and 'houses' are used to indicate city centre *dwellings* including flats, apartments, terraced houses and studios. We do not wish the reader to misinterpret 'house' as signifying any particular dwelling type. Additionally, we use the term 'resident' to signify all people living in the city centre regardless of their tenure, whether owner-occupier or tenant, whether in the public or private sector.

A SENSORY RESEARCH STRATEGY

A research strategy was developed to explore the more experiential side of city centre living alongside the collection of quantitative environmental data. This was in recognition of the fact that the collection of quantitative data essentially puts the job of deciding the problems of urban sustainability and thereby potential solutions into the hands of experts as opposed to ordinary people. The view here is that ordinary people's experiences should be gauged if the desired outcome is a measure of, and solution to, the

environmental issues they face in and around their homes. It would be fair to claim that many people often feel disenfranchised from their local political processes and do not know how to make their voice heard, especially around such broad global issues as environmental quality and sustainability. Simultaneously, others may feel that making complaints or completing consultation questionnaires wastes time particularly if they have participated in these activities previously and become disillusioned by inadequate or impersonal responses. Here we show that with imagination and innovation, it is possible to involve people in deliberations about the environmental quality of their homes and local neighbourhoods in such a way that enables them to articulate their concerns.

There were three broad aims in our exploration of environmental quality at the neighbourhood level:

- determining positive and negative environmental consequences of living in houses in close proximity to late-night amenities;
- understanding compromises people make when choosing to live in busy urban centres; and
- measuring environmental quality, both actual and perceived, of the 24-hour city.

To this end a post-positivist approach incorporating qualitative and quantitative methods was developed to determine *actual* and *perceived* environmental quality in and around mixed-use (residential and commercial) urban areas. The chief environmental variables included: (1) noise, (2) air pollution, and (3) thermal comfort both in the home and the immediate external vicinity. Here we limit our discussion to research undertaken in Clerkenwell, London, between June 2004 and February 2005. The main concern is to discuss the development and utility of the qualitative methodology and its value in engaging residents in deliberations about the environmental quality of mixed-use urban areas.

The Case Study Site

An area within the Ward of Clerkenwell in the London Borough of Islington, to the north-east of central London, was selected as it met our research objective of a mixed-use area where residential housing is in close proximity to a variety of daytime and night-time commercial and leisure premises and activities. The area is residentially diverse incorporating social housing alongside privately owned flats, apartments and houses, and

economically diverse with a variety of shops, offices and entertainment facilities. The area also included a number of small public open spaces. Specific residential areas were identified that were close to pubs, clubs and late-night restaurants as these generate vehicular traffic and are significant sources of noise at 'unsociable' hours, both of which contribute to urban air quality concerns.

Participants were recruited via a flyer distributed to households, shops and community facilities within the local vicinity and with the help of the Resident Involvement Team at Islington Council and many local community groups and churches. By setting up a stall about the project at the public library, researchers were able to sign up eligible parties directly. To obtain a cross-section of the community, flyers were distributed door-to-door within both social housing and private housing buildings and areas. Interested parties were vetted for eligibility as it was a requirement to have been a Clerkenwell resident for at least 12 months and to be over 18-years old. Participants agreed to take photographs prior to a home visit where researchers would install air quality monitoring equipment; to go with the researchers on a soundwalk; and to undertake an interview at home. A total of 30 people participated in Clerkenwell. To ensure anonymity participants were given reference identification codes (i.e. L1, L2, L3 and so on) that were subsequently used to label all data pertaining to their homes and interviews.

Two weeks prior to each interview a disposable camera (27-exposure, 35 mm film, 400 ISO with flash), a photo-survey log-sheet, a return envelope and detailed instructions were sent with a letter stating:

> The project examines the environmental conditions within city centres and explores what residents feel about their local environment; particularly the positive and negative environmental consequences of living close to 24-hour amenities.

Participants were asked to take photographs of their local area (incorporating both positive and negative aspects). They were asked to note the time, date, location and a short description of the photograph on the log-sheet and to consider their sensory experiences when photographing. Not wanting to be too prescriptive in telling participants *what* to photograph, the instructions simply stated:

> We would like you to take photos that record both the positive and negative aspects of your area. Please bear in mind how things sound and smell when taking the photos as well as what they look like.

Cameras were returned to the research team after a week; the photographs were developed and catalogued according to the log-sheet. Two sets of photos were taken to the interview, one numbered to aid identification during the interview, the other a copy for the participant.

Due to the multiple methods involved three researchers attended each participant's home. Participants completed a consent form and a short questionnaire with general background information (personal data, household characteristics, residence details, local urban form and health details). They also identified a 10-minute walking route outside their house and around their local area and marked it on a large scale map, centred on their home, which was used as the basis for their individual soundwalk. In order to consider the effectiveness and utility of our sensory methodology it is necessary to expand upon the detail of the methods employed.

The Photo-Survey

Photography has been used as a research tool throughout a range of social science disciplines including anthropology, environmental psychology, sociology and human, cultural and urban geography and at a range of scales to engage diverse individuals and communities in processes they might otherwise be, or feel, excluded from. However, despite its utility in specific cases, Markwell (2000) has described it as an under-utilised yet potent methodological tool.

Hurworth (2003) examines various photo-interviewing techniques including 'photo-elicitation' which involves showing photographs to participants to provoke responses, 'auto-driving' where the photographs are taken by the interviewees themselves, 'reflexive photography' where the photographs are taken by the participants to refer to their perceptions and 'photo-voice' where the photographs are taken to enable personal and community change. She concludes that they 'can challenge participants, provide nuances, trigger memories, lead to new perspectives and explanations, and help to avoid researcher misinterpretation' (p. 3). Various studies have used photographs as an aid to prompting memory and obtaining information from respondents. For example, Hagedorn (1994) discusses the uses of 'hermeneutic photography' whereby photographs are used as a starting point for interviewing participants, often educing participants' stories and experiences. And Clark-Ibanez (2004) discusses the photo-elicitation interview demonstrating how it can be used by researchers as a tool to expand on questions, but also can be used by participants to provide a unique way to

communicate certain dimensions in their lives. In making this distinction between researcher-driven and participant-driven photographs Clark-Ibanez states the former is useful for conducting theory-driven research whilst the latter provides a more inductive research approach for gaining insight into the personal realms of the participant. Dodman (2003) reports on the autophotographic process that he used with young people in Jamaica to record their impressions and interpretations of the urban environment. Through this he revealed some of the ways in which social class, age and gender influence perceptions of, and relationships with, the urban environment.

The photo-survey method used in our study followed the rationale of these previous studies but with the significant added factor of ensuring that the participants went out into the field to engage with the research topic in advance of the interview.[1] We found that through our multi-method approach residents became active participants in both the collection of data, by going out and taking and logging photos prior to our visit, and in the analysis of the information collected, with the logged photo-survey, interview and soundwalk providing an opportunity for adding textual explanations to the visual data provided by the photographs themselves. Ultimately, then, the photo-survey provided an insight into the way city centre residents perceived their local environments and enabled socio-spatial relationships within the city centre to be explored.

We found self-directed photography to be an excellent tool in identifying and understanding the experiences of the residents living in city centres. By encouraging participants to go out into their communities to take photos of the positive and negative aspects of their urban areas we ensured that they were already taking a sensory approach to their locality by the time we visited. It was therefore relatively undemanding to ask them to take us on a soundwalk of their locality where we too could experience those positive and negative sensory experiences; our respondents had already got into the research frame of mind.

The Soundwalk

A soundwalk is a walk around an area where the senses are directed towards the sounds that are heard rather than the more commonplace sights that are viewed. Soundwalking is a practice that was devised by R. Murray Schafer, when he established the World Soundscape Project at Simon Fraser University during the late 1960s and early 1970s. It is an empirical method

for identifying a soundscape and components of a soundscape in various locations (Schafer, 1977a, 1977b). The soundwalk does not have to be recorded, although it often is, and it may be conducted alone or in a group. Westerkamp (1974, revised 2001) provides a useful introduction to the art of soundwalking and we adapted this technique to utilise it as a method for engaging city centre residents. There is a significant gap in the qualitative methodology literature on the role and/or value of soundwalking as a methodological tool for engaging people at interview that compares to the detailed discussion of photography as a research tool.

In our soundwalks residents were asked to consider all their senses during the walk and to be aware of what they were smelling, touching and tasting as well as hearing and seeing. They were told not to speak while conducting the soundwalk so that a microphone could pick up the urban sounds encountered but also so that they could concentrate on listening. One researcher walking behind the participant marked observations of specific sounds and sights on the map for reference during the subsequent interview.

We found that conducting a soundwalk with city centre residents meant that we had shared the sensory experience of their urban environments, both inside and outside their homes. This was significant in enabling a more meaningful exploration of the responses made by participants at the subsequent interview. Those residents who had been unable to take photos in advance of our visit, or who were unable to undertake a soundwalk due to mobility difficulties provided a much less detailed and nuanced interview than those who had done both.

The Semi-Structured Interview

On return to the participant's home a semi-structured interview was conducted by one of the researchers. Additionally, in order to collect data on indoor air pollution, equipment was located in each participant's living room monitoring noise, particulates, CO, CO_2, light intensity, temperature and humidity while outdoor equipment was located on lampposts in the area monitoring noise and CO_2 levels. At least one other researcher sat in on each interview, firstly to set up the indoor monitoring equipment but also as part of the research team's safety procedure (Adams & Moore, 2007). With this range of equipment and data we could make connections between residents' perceptions of urban environmental quality and actual levels of air pollutants but here we focus specifically on the qualitative sensory aspects of our methodology and the effectiveness of these methods in

understanding the impacts of and responses to regeneration, by both established and new communities living in city centre houses.

The interview was based upon a number of general questions about the urban environment made specific to the resident's locality. Participants were asked to refer to their photos and soundwalk at any stage during the interview. In the first stage of the interview participants were asked to put the photographs into groups according to some categorisation that made sense to them. Often this followed a positive/negative binary but sometimes the groupings were spatial, included close to home and further away, or reminders of the different senses.

We found that those individuals who took part in all the three activities (photo-survey, soundwalk and interview) provided the richest interview data. This may be explained by the fact that they immersed themselves fully into the process of engaging sensorially with their local environment and having spent time on their way between their home and work, to and from the shops and out with friends in the daytime, evening and weekend, thinking about the locality and engaging with it by taking and logging photos, they were fully primed to take us on a soundwalk and to discuss their experiences.

Semi-structured interviews were deemed to be the most appropriate interview type as they allow a flexibility to question the participant in a way that structured interviews do not. May (1993), for example, considers that structured interviews are dependant upon good pilot work and upon the interviewer being similar enough to the target group in terms of sharing a similar culture so that the interpretation of the questions and the dynamics of the interview do not vary to a great extent across interviews. Given the variation in the background of the participants themselves this uniformity of cultural background did not exist in our study and semi-structured interviews were considered more appropriate. Additionally, given the innovative nature of the methodology in including the photo-survey and soundwalk, a more flexible approach to the interview was necessary.

Notwithstanding the above, an interview question schedule was created to outline the specific areas that were considered desirable to cover during the interview. These were used as the basis for the ensuing discussion rather than being the end in themselves and enabled the researcher to probe each participant about particular points that were considered relevant as the interview progressed, permitting clarification and elaboration. While both focused interviews and unstructured interviews may also have revealed detailed accounts of each participant's particular concerns and allowed them

more freedom to expand in areas of interest to themselves, given the time constraints involved in the research schedule it was important to at least have the bones of the information we hoped to elicit. Robson (1993) refers to this as a 'shopping list of topics' but stresses that 'as a matter of tactics [semi-structured interviewers] have greater freedom in the sequencing of questions, in their exact wording, and in the amount of time and attentions given to different topics' (p. 237). This enabled us to be flexible, with the control of pre-set questions alongside the freedom to deviate and address issues which had not been foreseen.

The recorded interviews were all transcribed and assigned to Atlas.ti, the qualitative data management software. Analysis involved a process of reading, coding, re-reading and re-coding the transcripts. A first reading enabled us to review how respondents answered particular questions and to identify the higher level issues contained within their responses. Examples of codes at this level included *pollution* (where participants made reference to any type of pollution), *community* (where participants talked about the local community, i.e. people), *local description* (where participants gave general descriptions of their local area, i.e. physical locality) and *decision makers* (where participants talked about people in authority who had the power to make decisions affecting the local area). A second reading of the transcripts permitted identification of generalisations and expressions of feelings made by the respondents. Codes developed at this stage included *feeling empowerment* (where participants talk about their feelings of empowerment or disenfranchisement), *feeling safety* (where participants talk about safety issues), *them and us* (where participants talk about differences between themselves and other groups, thereby making the other group 'the other') and *others view area* (where participants talk about how they think other people might view the area).

A further reading was undertaken giving close consideration to theoretical understandings of housing and the urban environment, the 24-hour city, mixed-use development and regeneration. Through this process we identified codes including *night-time economy* (where residents talk about any aspect of the night time economy including pubs, clubs and restaurants), *land use density* (where residents talk about the density of the urban layout including buildings and people), *land use regeneration* (where residents talk about any aspect of regeneration including housing developments) and *land use new housing* (where residents talk specifically about new housing in their neighbourhood) which were related to ongoing debates within sociology, geography, urban studies and urban design. Coding in this way is an iterative process, through which the researcher

becomes more and more familiar with their data and which enables the development of a coding structure through which the data can be effectively interrogated.

Finally, a completely separate level of coding involved assigning each transcript to *document families* which allows only those transcripts belonging to a certain category to be interrogated. Through this process it was possible to only look at interviews with men or women, to compare people who had lived in the area all their lives versus those who had lived there for less than five years or to look at differences between people who lived in social housing and those who owned their own property.

SENSORY QUALITATIVE METHODS: THE VALUE OF AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH

Much research in urban and housing studies has used interviewing as a key method for obtaining data and a number of studies have used a combination of two methods, often including documentation analysis to draw out particular nuances related to gentrification, everyday life, deprivation and policy (Maginn, 2004; also see Martin & Kunnen; Lomax; Perkins, Thorns, & Winstanley, in this volume). Few, if any, have combined the methods that we describe above and in this section we now discuss the utility and value of taking such an integrative approach demonstrating that such an innovative sensory methodology can be particularly productive when designed to appeal to the participant and can yield fresh and revealing data.

By using a combination of photo-surveys and soundwalks it was possible to engage participants in discussion about more than just the environmental quality of their local neighbourhood. Other facets of neighbourhood life such as their sense of community, their feelings about local regeneration and the impact of living in a mixed-use area were also explored. Here we look at a couple of examples, both commenting on new housing developments, which illustrate the ways in which this immersive methodology enabled us to obtain a much fuller understanding of residents' experiences than that which might have been obtained through an interview or survey. At interview these photos prompted specific comments about regeneration and neighbourliness, and the soundwalk provided a context and spatial awareness to the researcher that would otherwise have been elusive. The first example is of a flat and shop development and prompted discussion about the juxtaposition of old and new architecture in the area (see Plate 1).

Plate 1. L1 20. (Rust-coloured façade, not discernible in a black-and-white photo)*. *Photo 1: L1 20 from log sheet: Flats and shop development for G. Gazzano and Sons, Farringdon Rd. Taken at 13:20 in late October 2004 this photo prompted discussion of how some modern architecture works sympathetically with the old.

L1: That is a special one 'cos that's the newest building to go up. It is up there just past the Guardian Building. And it's so extraordinary. I mean this is metal that is rusted deliberately.

Interviewer: So what do you think of that?

L1 (f): We're rather keen on that.

L1 (m): It's lovely, it's terrific.

La (f): Because it looks wonderful, it look specially nice in the sunshine and it's for, there was a little Italian grocer up there and he owned the whole corner block and decided to develop it. He's moved for the moment into the Guardian Building across the road where he'd got his delicatessen and the Guardian people go and have their coffee and lunch. This is being built as a block of flats and on the corner will be his store, enlarged, and shop. So it seemed a really good example of how things are around here. But this is a particularly good one because it's a rather fine and extraordinary building and not what they're planning to do down in Smithfield [which is also going to be redeveloped].

This photograph was taken by a couple of residents to illustrate their belief that it is possible to design exciting new buildings including new residences that fit in with the historic nature of the locality. During the interview this photograph enabled them to emphasise an exciting development in their locality but also to raise the contrasting point that many developments are not done as sympathetically. Specifically, they were concerned about a nearby historic market building currently scheduled for redevelopment and which they were afraid will be destroyed.

The second example is of an old public building that has been converted into private residences and which prompted discussion about the number of historic buildings in the area which were sold off by the government or other public bodies, and how this undermines the sense of community to which the resident belonged (see Plate 2).

L13: That one there was the Laboratory Building of the Water Board, and they made it into flats, right. … We called it the kidney building 'cos it was shaped like that you know. … They had a little bit of space between 'em [two buildings] 'cos they used to do 'em nice with a bit of ground you know, but the flat developers have done it, … and put another one in-between the headquarters building and [this] one.

[…]

… Now this gardens that was there in front of the kidney building, there and there, was a rose garden and when they were developing it they asked a lot of people and we said well okay you're building flats but we should have something kept and so we wanted the rose garden. Inside the thing there is an Oak Room, and it was done by Grinling Gibbons. He's the man that done all the carving for St Paul's Cathedral for [Sir Christopher] Wren and apparently, the story goes, that when he came down to it he needed somewhere to stay to work on that, and he stayed at the Water Board. And afterwards he give 'em this Oak Room as payment. But that, we said we'd like that for our museum, to keep a museum up here.

[…]

And round the corner there is a pump house where they used to pump the water and that. So we'd like the pump house, we'd like the Oak Room and we'd like the Rose

Plate 2. Laboratory Building, New River Head (L13 26)*. *From Log Sheet: Laboratory Building, New River Head. Now flats. Taken at 11:08 in late November 2004 this photo prompted discussion of how some old public buildings in the area have been sold off to private developers who have effectively halted public access to historical buildings by converting them into private homes.

> Garden, just so as the public can come through and see what was here. Yes, yes, Rose Garden, no. You'll have people argue who'll be in the flats, that's their garden, that's what they've paid for, no. So we're barred. The Oak Room it's opened one day a year, when all these public houses are opened you know [National Heritage Day]. And you have to phone up and parties of twelve. So if you work it out the time that they're doing it it's about three parties could get through it to see the Oak Room, so about thirty six people once a year that, that's how much. And the Pump Room, well the government needs more water now and they've told us that we can draw it from the reserves that's in London, 'cos London lies in the water you know, so they, our government, asked them to pump it off 'cos like the water barrier to save flooding. If water gets past that, it quickly flows in now because there's a load of water there, so they said we need this pump to pump up. So in other words you get nothing out of it. All that. Local people. It really breaks your heart.

While the benefits of this type of redevelopment included the maintenance of a beautiful historic building, this resident was particularly concerned about the way in which a piece of local heritage had been lost to the general public. Now consisting of private, non-accessible, residential homes, longer-term residents of the area no longer have access to the previously public gardens.

These residents chose a soundwalk around their home that included passing the locations of these photographs. The integration of the photo-survey, soundwalk and interview gave us a firsthand experience of the locality and provided useful background information for talking to other residents in subsequent interviews. Other photographs (not pictured), discussed by these and other residents, gave further insight into the impacts of regeneration on established local communities and also helped to draw out the complex relationships between different groups of residents in the community. Both lifelong and incoming residents in Clerkenwell had a strong sense of the importance of the history of their local area, although this was not always appreciated by the other. Often longer-term residents expressed the view that newcomers lacked any such interests, while newcomers often cited local history as a key reason for moving there.

The semi-structured interview schedule consisted of a series of open questions about residents' sensory experiences of city centre living and specific questions were not asked about historical or unique features of the environment. However, we found that the photo-survey, soundwalk and interview combination enabled us to access detailed local knowledge on these subjects and many others, including issues relating to the changing patterns of housing development in the area. We believe many unanticipated issues were raised in this way, which may have been missed by undertaking the interview alone as even with a semi-structured interview certain topics may be missed altogether; using multiple methods provides more opportunities to prompt the resident to explore issues related to the research topic.

In the course of conducting the soundwalks we passed through a variety of areas in the locality, including main traffic thoroughfares, residential areas, urban green spaces, social housing estates, pedestrianised areas and shopping areas all in close proximity to each other. The value of the soundwalks exceeded our expectations as residents discussed their views on how the community had changed over time, commenting on people they had passed on the walk and on locations where they might expect to encounter other residents. Additionally, when asked to comment on the soundwalk experience itself, references were made to locations passed on the walk which often encouraged people to refer again to the photographs they had taken, supporting the theory that a multi-method, multi-sensory methodology produces more detailed responses than relying on one method alone.

Having ascertained the iterative value of the multi-method approach taken, we now evaluate the effectiveness of the described sensory methodology in determining the impacts and responses to regeneration,

especially new housing in mixed-use developments and areas, by both established and new communities living in Clerkenwell. We demonstrate that a well-considered, robust methodology can effectively engage local people in urban and housing research despite the relatively lengthy and prolonged commitment required of them. The main findings reported here relate to the effectiveness of this methodology, but in the process we discuss findings related to the impacts of gentrification and its effects on social cohesion and neighbourliness.

All of the participants involved in this study lived in the ward of Clerkenwell, London, within an area of approximately three square kilometres. However, despite living within a small geographical area, each participant's photos varied considerably in terms of spatial distribution. For ease of representation the photographs of the four residents who took part in an initial pilot study (CP1-4) were selected and a map centred on Exmouth Market was produced (see Fig. 1).

The location of photographs may indicate how city centre residents use and move around their local area, as well as revealing the geographical area they perceive as 'local', as their remit was to take photos of their local area which many of them undertook as they were going about their everyday business. During their interview two participants mentioned not having taken photographs of certain amenities which were 'not located within the local area', even though they were frequently used and were located within 10–15 min walk of their homes. Looking at Fig. 1, it is evident from the spatial distribution of photographs that participants CP1 and CP2 both tended to stay within close proximity of their home, whereas CP3 and CP4 moved further afield – this is demonstrated by the fact that the majority of photos belonging to CP4 are not on the map at all. A much smaller scale map would have been needed to represent them all and that would have made the distribution of the other photos less clear. This indicates that the spatial distribution of what is perceived as local is very subjective and does not simply relate to distance from home, frequency of use or type of amenity.

A key aspect of the photo-surveys was to find out how people living in city centre housing perceived the area they lived in, and to facilitate an open and unconstrained discussion through the means of a one-to-one interview. This combination enabled residents to capture the positive and negative aspects of living in the city centre and to communicate these to the researchers. A revealing example of this is the importance with which nature and greenery in the city was viewed, especially when close to their homes, by a significant number of tenants and residents. This was highlighted by the vast number of photographs taken on this subject and the overwhelmingly

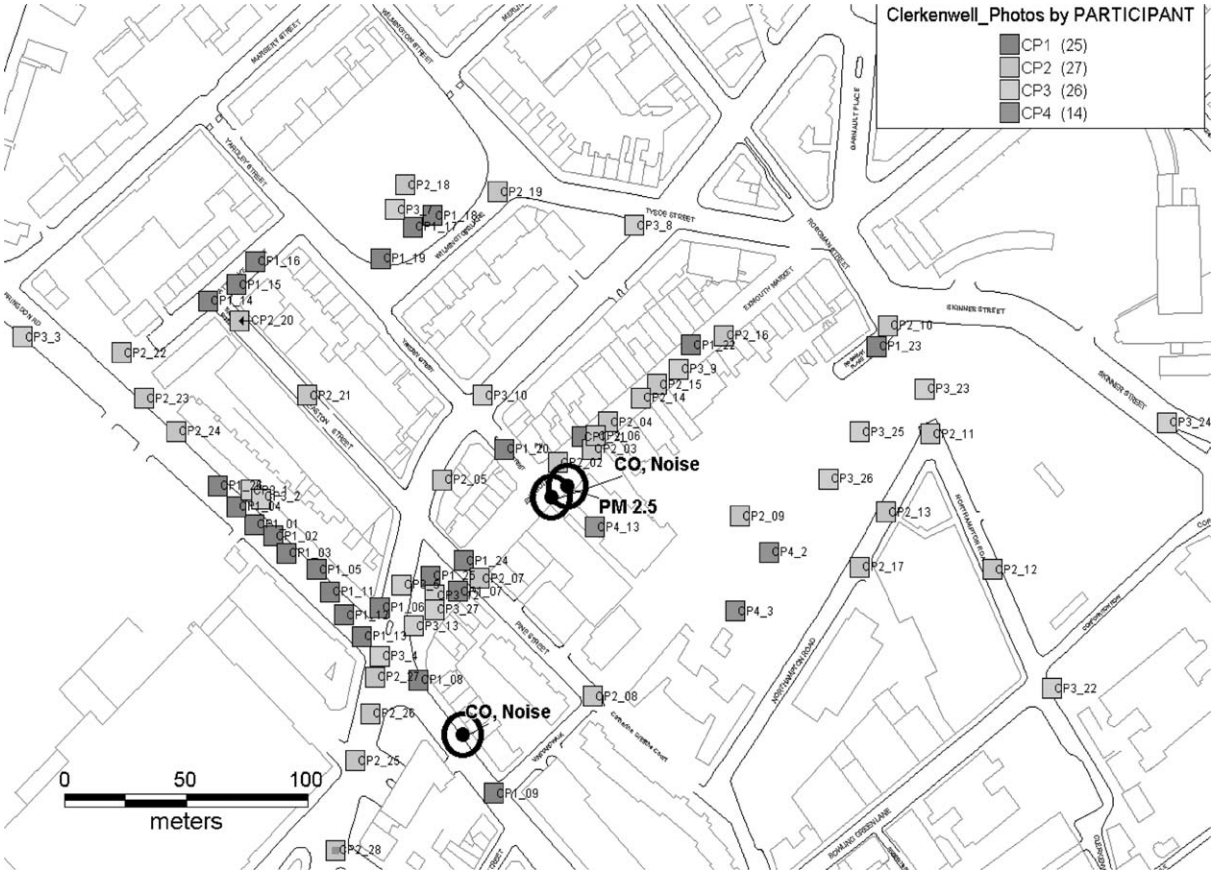

Fig. 1. Location of Photographs in Clerkenwell.

positive comments received about green spaces at interview. In particular this combination of methods revealed that residents felt it was important for new developments whether solely housing or mixed-use developments incorporating housing and commercial premises to incorporate communal green spaces (even if not generally open to the wider public), and that publicly owned green spaces should be maintained and not seen as potential sites of regeneration. Many residents felt that the availability of such spaces added to their sense of belonging to a community, especially if their own houses, flats or apartments had no private outdoor areas in themselves, as these were places where they could sit and enjoy being outside, providing opportunities to interact with neighbours and friends. As one 80-year old female social-housing tenant who lived in a flat without even a balcony of her own told us:

> *L3*: I haven't got to go far for a garden you know in the summer or whenever. Even would you believe it the other Sunday, I mean only a couple of weeks ago, I went down to the market for something and coming back a couple of my neighbours were sitting on the seat there [in the public park] and of course I joined them, so that was in November. So the three of us sat there, and then another came and she joined us, so that's quite, quite pleasant you know. We all agreed it's rather nice. It's not every week, we don't meet there every Sunday, it's just by chance you know we'd all, we'd been down for various things and met up there … it's quite pleasant, um yea.

On a number of occasions photographs were used at interview to illustrate points and confirm opinions, often leading to the expression of thoughts and feelings that would not have been articulated through answering the interview questions alone. For example, on viewing the photograph of the Laboratory Building of the Water Works (see Plate 2) the participant articulated his sense of injustice that a publicly owned building had been sold off by the council, put to private use and that despite conditions being placed on access to the building, it was not really accessible to local residents and the general public. As a long-term resident of the area this participant felt a strong sense of bitterness that the council had been able to do this unchecked.

Methodological Challenges

While the photo-survey method provided a very accessible dimension to our methodology and boosted the quality of the interviews there are some limitations to this method. First, a photograph is but a snapshot of time, taken at a specific moment. The photograph may not represent how the

person feels about its content (a place, person, area etc.) most of the time or how they have always felt about it. This means that researchers should be wary about making 'generalisations' from the individual photos and should go back to the photo-taker for any clarification. Next, our analysis gave equal weight to each photograph, whereas participants may feel more strongly about the content of certain photographs than others. Given time constraints it was not possible to ask all the residents to weigh their photos but this was partially overcome at interview by asking participants to put them into categories that they devised themselves. This enabled them to choose the order in which to discuss the photos. Through using this process we didn't find any specific order to how residents talked about their photos; it certainly wasn't the case that they spoke effusively about the first few and dwindled off later. Often, later photographs that had been placed in different categories prompted equally passionate comments.

A further limitation is the reliance on residents to find the time to actively go out taking the photographs and busy people, elderly people and mobility-impaired people all found it difficult to do this. Some participants had not finished using the camera by the time of the interview and so the photographs had not yet been developed, but they had logged the pictures they had taken and were able to talk about them through reference to the log-sheet. Additionally, they often knew which other photographs they planned to take and were able to talk about these also. These residents sent their camera back after the interview had taken place, but this did not detract significantly from the interview process which still benefited from them having considered their local environment in advance of the researcher visiting their home. Others, particularly those with restricted mobility, had found it difficult to get out at all. The weather played a significant factor in this and so it may be worth considering the practicalities of this methodology with different groups of people and at different times of the year. This group of residents, especially as they also did not participate in the soundwalk, were the most difficult to interview as they were clearly a lot less prepared than those who had done both the photo-survey and soundwalk. The quality of interview data from this group was reduced, although not without some value.

Time restrictions impose limits on data collection in other ways too. The total length of the interview, the soundwalk process and the number of pieces of equipment available for indoor monitoring all set limits on daily participant numbers. It was found that an average of two and a maximum of three soundwalk/interviews and equipment installations were feasible in a day. A pilot study is essential in order to ensure that a realistic timeframe for

data collection is developed, as methods of participant recruitment, interview and soundwalk length, equipment availability, researcher fatigue and ultimately participant availability in terms of times of the day and days of the week, can all be assessed and daily schedules can be calculated.

A final limitation with this methodology, as with any methodology requiring access to private homes, is that participants were all self-selected (they responded to advertisements looking for city centre residents in both private and public-sector housing to take part in the project). The advantage of this is the reliability of the residents in terms of retained interest over a period of time, especially given the number of activities required of them for this project, culminating in a reduced dropout rate. Obtaining similar levels of participation from a non-self-selecting group would be difficult and given the requirement of access to private houses, is not something that can be overcome.

CONCLUSIONS

In this concluding section we turn our attention to a discussion about the wider implications of undertaking qualitative research in housing and urban studies, and the utility of the approach taken in this study. Much has been written about undertaking qualitative research and there are many textbooks for the interested reader that can help introduce the epistemologies, methodologies and methods associated with this type of work (see Silverman (2004); Rose (2001); Flowerdew & Martin (1997); Denzin & Lincoln (1994)). Establishing the utility of our research involves a discussion of the wider debates around epistemology and method. These debates are not new (see for example, Ambert, Adler, Adler, & Detzner (1995); Crang (2002, 2003, 2005)), but in the context of a multi-disciplinary project incorporating a range of researchers and disciplines, they are still an essential part of the research process.

Theoretical considerations of how the urban environment is viewed, whether, for example, as a text to be read or a complex system of interacting but potentially independent entities (political agendas, economic positions, gendered power relations, racial identities) greatly influences how data is understood. Views on the production of knowledge are fundamental as they greatly affect interpretation of data and so it was important that assumptions about ontological and epistemological positions were made explicit from the start. Epistemologies are theories about how knowledge is produced and awareness of different researchers' and different disciplines'

epistemologies helped to determine a suitable methodology. As distinct from epistemology, methods are the set of procedures and techniques used in the field to obtain data. The two are clearly interrelated as a person's or discipline's epistemology will have an effect on the types of questions that are asked about a research problem and therefore the types of methods used. Discussions about our respective positions helped determine the course of the methodological enquiry described. By ascertaining the more deterministic and realist positions of some members (who used more quantitative methods) and the more constructivist positions of others (who used more qualitative methods) we were forced to proceed towards a place where we could find common intellectual ground. To facilitate this, a post-positivist approach was adopted and in doing so acknowledged that as individuals we are all tainted with some form of bias and that our observations are theory-laden. By incorporating multiple fallible perspectives it was hoped that a more 'objective' position might be reached than that which could be attained from one position alone, acknowledging of course that objectivity is an inherently social phenomenon.

This was undertaken by developing a sensory urbanism approach and acknowledging the influential role of the senses in facilitating understandings of city living and residents' perceptions of environmental quality. This theoretical framework enabled a focus on issues deemed relevant by the resident rather than the researcher as it enabled a methodology that was partially participant-driven. As previously stated, Clark-Ibanez (2004) made a distinction between researcher-driven and participant-driven photography arguing that the latter permitted a more inductive research style that gave access to insights into the personal domains of the participant. By extending this reasoning beyond the photo-survey method and incorporating a broader range of methods into our sensory methodology, we were able to obtain a significant quantity of data pertaining to city centre residents and their everyday experiences of environmental quality in and around their homes.

In this paper, we have focussed strongly on the rationale for the methodology employed rather than the research findings which have been discussed elsewhere (Adams et al., 2006, 2007) as this is what gives the data its depth. Qualitative research is sometimes criticised for not being representative so it is worth highlighting some of the aims behind using qualitative methods. In our work we were not seeking to acquire data that could be extrapolated across large populations, we were interested in depth rather than breadth, in understanding the perspectives of city centre residents about local environmental quality and about their experiences in

and around their homes. We were not simply interested in what people do and how they behave in their houses and communities but in a richer understanding of how they think about their environment and why they feel they have the responses that they have. Conducting qualitative research enables such an emphasis on meaning.

Of course qualitative research is varied; no one thing constitutes qualitative research. It includes all the methods we have utilised and more (including participant observation, ethnographic practices, participatory action research, textual analysis including diaries, letter, reports and field notes, oral histories, open-ended questionnaires etc.), and many qualitative researchers themselves specialise in a particular qualitative approach, method and epistemology. What is important is not which methods are used, but how undertaking qualitative research can make a substantive contribution to empirical knowledge and whether it might advance theory in a particular area – in this case, urban studies and housing research. This might be achieved by providing new data and raising new questions that could not come about through quantitative methods; qualitative research allows the unexpected to emerge. What is essential is that the process undertaken by the qualitative researcher is made explicit; by detailing the methods used and the strategies utilised in undertaking the research, it is possible to demonstrate the rigour involved in the work. This is what we have been attempting to do in this chapter by including details of our photo-survey, soundwalk and interview practice, by discussing resident recruitment and by providing details of our analysis procedures.

We, therefore, conclude that our methodology is both accessible and interesting as it allows participants time to consider their views about the quality of their home environment in advance of more formal involvement and that it is robust and efficacious at revealing issues of importance to tenants and residents in city centres about their local environmental quality. Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with one resident who had never been involved in a research project previously expressing a desire to take part in similar activities in the future. In particular the use of photographs and disposable cameras was considered a valuable approach with another participant stating that 'the photos were a good idea, particularly the fact that the subject was not over defined'; this resident valued the freedom to go out into the local community to observe and record what was happening.

The soundwalk was a first-time experience for all the residents and responses indicated that they, as well as the researchers, believed that the practice was very beneficial to the interview process. One resident said,

'It did make me more aware of what noises were around and like the fact that there were other conversations that we passed', while another said, 'It is a bit strange walking in silence with someone recording you and then being followed by someone else. But yea…it makes you think about the sounds more than you would normally'. This resident likened experience of the soundwalk to suddenly becoming aware of a picture that you see everyday but which you have tended to ignore, summing up our intention behind the exercise, 'It's like being asked to look at something that, that you walk past every day. It's like a picture on a wall that you have had for years and years, you never look at it, and then someone says to you well that's, and you stop and look at it for five minutes and you suddenly realise you've never really looked at it properly. So it was interesting in that respect'.

Large multi-disciplinary projects such as *VivaCity2020* stimulate exciting research opportunities, enabling innovative and novel methodological developments and wide-ranging analytical approaches. Within this chapter we have presented a project that is exploring urban environmental sustainability issues through combining different disciplinary approaches and adopting a theoretical perspective based on sensory interactions between people and places. We have found that by combining a variety of methodological approaches a comprehensive knowledge base for understanding many urban and housing issues can be constructed. The use of disposable cameras in conjunction with a soundwalk provides just the right stimulus for enabling people to consider their perceptions of environmental quality both inside and outside their homes, and provides the strongest prompts for people to discuss the impacts of regeneration, amongst other topics, in their community. Not normally used to focussing on their sensory awareness of the urban environment, except perhaps related to unwanted aspects such as noise and smells, the experiences provided by this methodology prompted a fresh reflection on otherwise familiar aspects of the urban area. Making connections between residents' perceptions of their residential environment and the physical measurements of the air quality inside and outside their homes, provides an improved understanding of the trade-offs made by city residents living in houses in areas where regeneration is happening apace, and thus how sustainable regeneration might proceed (see Adams et al. (2007) which focuses more on outcomes of this study and less on methodology). Those involved in planning urban (re)development, especially incorporating housing in new mixed-use developments or established mixed-use areas, should seriously consider the utility of such an approach.

NOTE

1. For a more explicit account of the photo-survey approach used in the study and the coding system adopted see Moore et al. (2008).

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CHAPTER 9

THE ROLE OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN IDENTIFYING RESIDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ABOUT SOCIAL MIX

Kathy Arthurson

INTRODUCTION

Increasing concern about rising crime rates, high levels of unemployment and the anti-social behaviour of youth gangs that are concentrated within particular regions and neighbourhoods of cities has prompted renewed interest in governments to frame policies to create socially mixed cities. Recent riots experienced on social housing estates, including in France (St Denis, Poissy, Clichy-sous-bois), Australia (Macquarie Fields, Redfern in New South Wales) and Britain (Bestwood, Nottingham) have reinvigorated public and community debate into just what makes a functional neighbourhood. The nub of the debate about dysfunctional neighbourhoods is whether part of the problem is to be found in the lack of social mix of residents, that is, the homogeneity of the neighbourhoods in aspects such as housing tenure, ethnicity and socioeconomic characteristics of residents.

Housing and planning policymakers support social mix within neighbourhoods on the assumption that there are numerous benefits for disadvantaged residents of living amongst homeowners and working

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residents. At the present time, the wide range of anticipated benefits includes improved:

- education retention rates (Atkinson & Kintrea, 2004);
- general health and well-being (Scottish Council Foundation, 1998);
- access to a range of health and social services (Scottish Council Foundation, 1998);
- reductions in postcode prejudice, for instance by potential employers, along with the stigma associated with residing in areas that are perceived as negative or undesirable (Atkinson & Kintrea, 2000);
- access to social networks that link disadvantaged residents to job opportunities (Atkinson & Kintrea, 2000); and
- provision of middle-class role models to integrate problematic residents into 'acceptable' social behaviours (see Arthurson, 2002; Atkinson & Kintrea, 2004).

Some academic commentators are sceptical of the proposed benefits of creating social mix through regeneration of established neighbourhoods of concentrated social housing. Arthurson (2002), writing in the Australian context, questions whether policymakers over emphasise the extent to which changes of social mix will assist disadvantaged residents. Some of the negative impacts of social mix strategies are detailed, which include disrupting existing communities, moving problems, such as crime, to other neighbourhoods and decreasing the supply of social housing. The latter argument about decreasing the supply of social housing is particularly pertinent at the current time as housing affordability and the costs of rental in the private market are increasingly prohibitive for low-income Australian households. Wood (2003), likewise, argues that there is insufficient linking between the underlying assumptions made for social mix in contemporary neighbourhood regeneration policy and research findings. Internationally, other commentators contend that more explanations are needed of how individual actors understand social mix and whether or not they think it may 'affect their decisions and therefore life chances' (Atkinson & Kintrea, 2004, p. 20). Rose (2004, p. 12), a Canadian based researcher, maintains that debates about social mix are occurring 'in the absence of a knowledge base as to how social mix is experienced on a day-to-day basis'. Examples of some of the gaps in knowledge include, a lack of understanding of the mechanisms that encourage the formation of social networks between residents from different income levels and housing tenures, and interpretive accounts of the impact of policies to change social mix within particular neighbourhoods from residents' and other relevant actors' perspectives.

Hence, social mix is an important topic in contemporary housing issues but there are gaps in existing knowledge about the effectiveness of policies to change social mix. In particular, policymakers lack a comprehensive understanding of the outcomes of social mix – both its positive and negative effects – yet the social housing communities that social mix policies affect represent some of the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups within society. These groups include the homeless, disenfranchised youth, unemployed and people with mental and physical health problems and substance abuse issues. The key aim of this chapter is to outline how qualitative methods can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the outcomes of social mix and enable policymakers to be better informed about the efficacy of social mix principles. Adopting this approach will ensure a more informed application of social mix policies, rather than blindly accepting that social mix is a panacea for socially disadvantaged groups through the anticipated mechanisms of forming better social networks, role models and assisting social integration. The following section provides a short history of the concept of social mix in order to set the context for how it has come to be embraced by some planners and policymakers as a 'panacea' for addressing the problems of disadvantaged communities. After this contemporary social mix approaches are briefly outlined then the key literature on social mix is reviewed. In particular the range of methods currently utilised in the research studies are identified to highlight current gaps in knowledge. Following this the findings are drawn together to demonstrate just how important qualitative methods can be in understanding the effectiveness, or otherwise, of social mix programmes in achieving good policy outcomes.

SOCIAL MIX: A BRIEF HISTORY

Debate about social mix has a long history in housing and planning studies. Over 30-years ago Sarkissian (1976) detailed how the idea of social mix had its origins in mid-nineteenth century Victorian England as a means to diffuse concentrations of the working classes, which were envisaged as a threat to social harmony. Social mix has informed Australian new town planning policy since the post-Second World War years of the late 1940s. Peel (1995) for instance, in examining the development of the suburb of Elizabeth by the South Australian Housing Trust, in the late 1950s, argues that support for social mix in Australia derived from the British New Towns planning model. Within this model of planning the problems of homogeneous

communities are depicted as due to segregation between the different social classes. From this perspective, the nub of the issue is that concentrations of similar residents with low incomes and educational levels, as well as reduced access to employment, reinforce and exacerbate the problems of inequality over and above the problems of the individuals. At that time the anticipated benefits for disadvantaged residents coexisting with homeowners and working residents, in more balanced heterogeneous communities, were envisaged as incorporating greater access to services, increased equality of opportunity and formation of more stable communities (Sarkissian, 1976).

Arthurson (2008) illustrates how social mix policies across time have generally been a localised response to the problems of social segregation between the classes that arise due to broader social and industrial change. A continuing theme of the ideals set for social mix from the past to present day is about the need for propinquity between poor and better-off residents to enable the poor to become good citizens through the instrument of middle-class leadership. This theme is illustrated in contemporary support for changing social mix through neighbourhood regeneration – the notion that in neighbourhoods of concentrated mono-tenure social housing, residents are segregated from the activities of mainstream society. Specifically, residents are characterised as homogenous social groups, in terms of social class, employment, income and ethnicity (Arthurson, 2002).

ACHIEVING SOCIAL MIX: CONTEMPORARY POLICY APPROACHES

Internationally, often the most visible signs of problems of social dysfunction and community disharmony are on the social housing estates that were predominately, but not always, constructed in the post-Second World War period to meet the shortages at that time of good quality, low-cost housing. In the present day, larger numbers of the most disadvantaged tenants including the homeless and those with substance abuse problems and ex-prisoners are entering social housing. Over the past two decades, global economic restructuring coupled with changes in family structures and progressively tighter restrictions governing access to social housing has resulted in the sector in most jurisdictions moving from housing for families and working tenants to housing for more complex and high need tenants. It is not surprising that common characteristics of neighbourhoods with high-levels of social housing often include concentrations of residents

experiencing greater than average levels of unemployment, low-income and reliance on welfare benefits, poor educational outcomes, mental and physical health problems and crime and anti-social behaviour (Jacobs & Arthurson, 2003).

Contemporary urban planning and social housing estate regeneration policies in Australia, the UK and North America often aim to break down or prevent concentrations of disadvantaged residents from forming by balancing 'social mix', or creating communities with a blend of residents across a range of income levels and different housing tenures. The mix of housing tenures includes social housing, private rental, home purchase and owner-occupied housing. Social mix is adopted in anticipation of it assisting to create more stable and vigorous communities than when disadvantaged residents are concentrated together in one neighbourhood (Arthurson, 2002). The foundations of social mix policies in regeneration of social housing estates reflects however, different countries' policy settings and social and political frameworks. The North American approach predominately relocates low-income African-American and Hispanic households from 'distressed' neighbourhoods of concentrated poverty to areas with wider socioeconomic and racial mix and a range of housing tenures. Compared with Australian policies, which may involve permanent relocation of tenants to other areas of social housing, the UK and European approaches tend to focus more on developing social mix on social housing estates with tenants in situ, although there are some exceptions (Kleinhans, 2004). In the European context, social mix has also been facilitated through targeting social housing to tenants across a wide range of income levels. In Australia and the UK, social mix is generally achieved through tenant right-to-buy schemes, including the demolition and replacement of obsolete social housing with housing available for private purchase, in order to attract higher income homeowners/purchasers into the neighbourhoods.

ASSESSING THE APPROPRIATENESS OF QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE METHODOLOGIES

A review of the literature on social mix from 1990 till 2007, which includes 57 journal articles, seven conference papers, 13 reports and three book chapters is informative. The inquiries of much contemporary research on the topic of social mix are concerned with answering the broad policy

related question of, 'does social mix work'. The studies have generally taken three forms, although these typologies overlap and are less clear cut in practice than is possible to detail here. First, fieldwork utilising particular neighbourhoods as case studies and sometimes involving comparative studies across different neighbourhoods, drawing on quantitative or qualitative methods and sometimes a mix of both. Second, random controlled experiments, including the evaluation studies of the North American Moving to Opportunity and HOPE IV programmes that move poor African-Americans from neighbourhoods of concentrated poverty to more middle-income areas. Third, quantitative statistical modelling studies often draw on secondary data sources for the analysis. Each of these research designs have their own strengths and weaknesses and make contributions to the knowledge base about the effects of social mix, as discussed in the following sections.

Fieldwork: Case Study Neighbourhoods/Estates

As social mix policies are spatially and contextually contingent, the study of particular neighbourhoods through case study designs is one of the most logical methods to adopt in exploring the effectiveness of social mix policies. In general, the research drawing on case study approaches has attempted to assess the impact of social mix on recently regenerated social housing estates where owner-occupiers are introduced, to provide a mix of social housing tenants and homeowners. The case studies have included both qualitative (in-depth interviews) and quantitative (survey) methods of data collection. One of the difficulties encountered specifically in adopting the case study design to explore the topic of social mix through a quantitative lens, is that it is often difficult to disaggregate the effects of social mix from improvements introduced as part of regeneration initiatives, including job creation schemes and physical enhancements to housing and local environments.

Hiscock (2002), for instance, argues that there is a lack of studies that undertake comparative analyses across neighbourhoods with different levels of tenure mix, specifically, comparing mixed-tenure with mono-tenure estates. Existing studies use different comparisons, such as mixed-estates with other mixed-estates (Jupp, 1999), the same estate before and after mixing (Scottish Homes, 1999), new mixed-estates (Beekman, Lyons, & Scott, 2001) and within rather than between estates (Atkinson & Kintrea, 2000). This situation makes it difficult to reach any overall conclusions about the level of effects of social mix or to generalise the results more

broadly beyond the individual case study neighbourhoods. However, Hiscock (2002) summarises the strengths of *qualitative* data collected through the case study approaches. The data provides a greater depth of understanding of the complexity of implementing social mix polices through a focus on important processes, contextual analysis and real life situations and experiences of social mix on a daily basis that can explain anomalies and inconsistencies in its effects. What this illustrates is the importance of matching the key research questions to research design. It is one thing, for instance, to measure the levels of social contact and networks between home owners and social housing tenants but quite another to understand the intricacies of the processes of *how* and *why* contact does or does not occur. If appropriate social mix policies are to be developed then we also need to focus on the *how* and *why* type questions.

Qualitative research conducted on Scottish housing estates by Atkinson and Kintrea (2000, 2004) has, for instance, posed important questions about whether the requisite social contact occurs between public tenants and homeowners in order to provide some of the anticipated benefits of social mix. In particular, Atkinson and Kintrea refer to aspects of social mix related to role modelling and accessing broader social networks. The researchers utilised qualitative in-depth interviews with 50 practitioners and voluntary workers, one quarter of whom were also residents, and diaries completed by 38 households that recorded movements outside of their homes over a seven day period. The studies provided rich qualitative data that afforded a deeper understanding of the complexities of implementing social mix policies, identifying that homeowners for the most part leave the estates to attend work and participate in various other activities outside of the local neighbourhoods. Alternatively, social housing tenants, who often lack access to motor vehicles and employment, tend to spend more time on the estates and develop their social networks more locally. The authors conclude that it is one thing to suggest that social networks are important; however, it is quite another to propose, as happens in estate regeneration, that government can rebuild more socially integrated, cohesive, inclusive and sustainable communities through making changes to the social mix of the neighbourhood (Atkinson & Kintrea, 2000). Important findings such as these are only possible through qualitative research that provides a contextualised understanding of how residents' behaviours may differ to policymakers' expectations, in turn providing opportunities for enhancing the policy process.

There are, however, few studies that explore the nuanced aspects of residents' everyday experiences of social mix. Some exceptions are studies

that investigate social networks and interactions and whether a more diverse social mix leads to reductions in perceptions of area stigma. For instance, Ruming, Mee and McGuirk (2004) in a recent case study of a Newcastle suburb (NSW) in Australia, used qualitative methods through conducting semi-structured interviews with residents and housing managers to build on and enhance the understandings of the findings of the quantitative component of the study, which involved distributing a survey questionnaire to 480 private owners and public tenants. These researchers (p. 240) state that interviewing provided the most unobtrusive means of accessing the conflicting meanings and interpretations that residents and housing managers attach to their lives. They found through conducting the interviews that both social housing tenants and home owners felt that tenure separated and distinguished the local geographical community. The authors concluded that in relation to social mix, public tenants are not readily accepted into communities dominated by private owners and that, like Atkinson and Kintrea (2004), there is little mixing between residents across different housing tenures (Ruming et al., 2004).

De Souza Briggs (1997) in the North American context conducted in-depth interviews with tenants that stayed in traditional public housing neighbourhoods compared to those moved to scattered sites where public housing was inter-dispersed amongst home owners. He concluded that although the new neighbourhoods were safer there was little evidence of interaction between the low-income movers and their new neighbours. This research began to unpack the day-to-day experiences of residents to ascertain *why* there was little interaction between the two groups of residents, finding that some movers maintained ties with previous neighbourhoods, attending church or socialising there. Likewise, Goetz (2002) in a study involving quantitative in-person survey interviews with 618 households involuntarily and voluntarily displaced from public housing neighbourhoods also found that dispersed families lacked integration in the new neighbourhoods. As Goetz (2002) acknowledges, however, while the quantitative nature of the data sets pointed to this finding it did not enable examination of the processes around this lack of social interaction, *how* it affected social capital formation or whether role model effects existed. Thus, little knowledge was provided to assist policymakers and planners involved in implementing social mix policies.

Galster (2007, p. 35) argues that policymakers have given little thought to how advantaged and disadvantaged groups will interact within socially engineered mixed-income neighbourhoods in order to facilitate the anticipated benefits of social mix. Building on this argument, he also

suggests that at the moment support for social mix policies is based 'more on faith than fact'. Collectively, the findings of these studies highlight the lack of current understandings of residents' day-to-day experiences of social mix and in particular processes involved in developing social networks in new socially mixed neighbourhoods. This points to the need as Thompson (2006, p. 18) argues for more qualitative studies to enhance quantitative findings if indeed we are to develop comprehensive understandings of the 'nature of 'ordinary' people and their everyday interactions with local places'.

Random Controlled Experiments

Much of the North American research seeks to evaluate the impact of policies designed to relocate low-income households from 'distressed' neighbourhoods of concentrated poverty to areas with wider socioeconomic mix and a range of housing tenures. The programmes include the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) and Gautreaux programmes (Popkin et al., 2004). Thus far, dispersal or mobility programmes that relocate residents out of areas of concentrated poverty into privately subsidised housing in more prosperous neighbourhoods, in the nature of the US Gautreaux and MTO programmes, have not developed outside of the North American context. The MTO programme was designed with an evaluation methodology in mind as a random controlled experimental design largely drawing on quantitative methods. Random controlled trials are characterised by allocating participants at random, that is by chance, to different experimental groups to either receive the particular interventions or act as a control group. The control group generally represents normal practice. The idea is to compare outcomes for each group of participants to ascertain the effects of the interventions.

In keeping with this design the MTO programme randomly allocated families (volunteers) in New York, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago and Los Angeles to three different experimental groups and communities by using a computerised lottery system. The families were on very low incomes living in public housing and neighbourhoods with high concentrations of poverty. The experimental groups were provided with Section 8 vouchers that could be used to move to housing in neighbourhoods with poverty rates below ten per cent. In each city the families were assisted to move through support provided by a non-profit organisation that provided counselling and assisted with finding and renting suitable housing in a low poverty neighbourhood. Another group of families received the standard Section 8 vouchers that could

be utilised in any neighbourhood but these families did not receive any counselling. The control group remained where they were in public housing neighbourhoods. Selection bias is claimed to have been removed as the experimental group participants lost the ability to select their residential neighbourhoods. However, some critics contend that the findings are limited as the available evidence comes from sampling families that volunteer to move rather than being forcibly moved. Specifically, it is argued that other programmes that compel 'a more representative population of low-income families to move may produce somewhat different outcomes' than for those families that volunteer to move in the MTO programme (Johnson, Ladd, & Ludwig, 2002, p. 126).

To assist in interpreting the findings of the MTO quantitative analyses Popkin, Harris and Cunningham (2002) conducted a qualitative study of 97 families in MTO sites, across the five US cities involved in the programme. The methodology involved in-depth interviews, with the aim of better understanding the intricacies of participants' lives and their various day-to-day experiences and social networks. Within this study it was acknowledged that in-depth interviews were the most appropriate tool to answer important questions about the processes of *how* and *why* the programme worked (or otherwise) for participants. For instance, did participants form relationships in the new neighbourhoods and if so why did they mix with who they did. As Popkin et al. (2002) point out, qualitative methods, such as the in-depth interviewing techniques they utilised in their study, enabled more detailed probing of the broader research topics. Respondents were able to 'tell their own stories, providing data on their opinions, experiences, and perceptions and generating individual stories that can illuminate quantitative findings' (Popkin et al., 2002, p. iii). The researchers found that the information gathered from these in-depth interviews enriched the overall understandings and evaluation of the programme's effects. For instance, they found that few movers formed deep relationships in their new neighbourhood and most still had strong networks that they relied on outside the new neighbourhood. Once again the findings suggest that the foundations of social mix policies, at least in the MTO programme sites, are questionable as little interaction is occurring between advantaged and disadvantaged groups in the socially engineered mixed-income neighbourhoods.

Like the MTO programme, the Gautreaux programme is also very specific about where participants can move to, on the basis that this approach avoids problems identified with other studies that generate non-experimental estimates of neighbourhood effects. The nub of the problem in the other studies is self-selection effects, in that if people choose where to live the

findings could be due to a variety of variables such as neighbourhood conditions, residential choices or behavioural outcomes (Varady & Walker, 2003, p. 127). Nonetheless, despite taking these factors into account in the randomised control experimental design the evaluations of the Gautreaux programme have also encountered some bias, as the programme targets specific families and ensures that they receive intensive counselling before they are relocated. The counsellors not only allay the fears of individual landlords about providing rental accommodation for low-income households, but also ensure that landlords get suitable tenants by avoiding issues such as non-payment of rent, overcrowding and vandalism. For instance, families with four or more children are only accepted into the programme if they have not incurred large debts or have no house-keeping problems.

The focus of these quantitative studies is whether relocating to neighbourhoods with a more varied social mix leads to increases in tenant well-being across a range of factors. There is some evidence of improvements, which include improved physical and mental health (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2003) and improved educational outcomes for children (Orr et al., 2003). However, arguably these findings are limited, given the problems with bias described above, whereby commentators contend that the findings result from self-selection effects and other problems with programme design. As Feins and Shroder (2005) argue, the programmes do not control for the effects of outlying variables, and so caution is urged against generalising the findings beyond the existing studies. What is clear from these discussions is that gathering data that utilises both qualitative and quantitative techniques enhances understandings and strengthens the analyses.

Statistical Studies

Statistical studies of social mix utilising secondary data, such as census and panel data, have also attempted to model and objectively measure the social and economic effects of social mix through manipulating the different variables involved. Massey and Kanaiaupuni (1993), for instance, examine the question in the North American context of whether public housing causes poverty concentrations. They utilise a complex four-equation statistical model drawing on data from the Chicago standard metropolitan statistical area data set. The four equations seek to predict the:

- extent to which neighbourhood socioeconomic and racial composition is related to the likelihood of receiving public housing;

- effect public housing location had on building poverty in particular neighbourhoods;
- effect of concentrated poverty and public housing on net migration out of the neighbourhoods; and
- impacts of net migration and project location on the concentration of poverty.

The researchers concluded that public housing projects were initially targeted to poor African-American neighbourhoods and that the presence of the projects increased the concentration of poverty in later years. Importantly their work enumerates the extent of segregation of poor African-American families in particular North America neighbourhoods. Once again, however, this analysis only tells part of the story as it is unable to explicate the political, social, historical and personal issues attached to the experiences of racial segregation.

Galster and Zobel (1998) drawing on six case studies of scattered site public housing in the United Sates use statistical modelling to explore the relationships between poverty rates in a neighbourhood and residents' propensities to engage in problematic behaviours. While there appear to be benefits for dispersed tenants they argue that it is difficult to attribute improvements to lower concentrations of poverty in the areas that they move to. Indeed, the study finds that improvements result in other structural advantages, for instance, better schools, public services and job accessibility. In view of the findings, the authors conclude that the rationale for dispersed housing programmes 'rests upon a slim reed of empirical evidence' (Galster & Zobel 1998, p. 3). More recently Galster (2007) models, in theoretical terms, some alternative mechanisms for how neighbourhood effects may occur. He illustrates that effects arising from internal social interrelationships or external sources lead to different conclusions about the desired levels of neighbourhood social mix on the grounds of diversity or efficiency. In further contributing to the debates a recent special edition of the journal *Housing Studies* is devoted to exploring different quantitative techniques to measure neighbourhood effects. The principal point, as expressed by Blasius, Friedrichs and Galster (2007, p. 627), is that although there are large numbers of studies that attempt to quantify neighbourhood effects much of the findings can be 'challenged on methodological grounds'.

There is no questioning that these sorts of studies have led to valuable information with which to inform the debates about social mix. Nonetheless, one of the limitations with the use of secondary data is that researchers cannot control the questions that are asked, since they are using

existing data sets. Given this situation, the data are constrained as the research was designed with a different project in mind and may not be relevant to the current researcher's questions and analysis. As well, while statistical studies can point to where relationships exist, these sorts of studies are limited in assisting to understand the processes of how neighbourhood effects are transmitted. De Souza Briggs, Darden and Aidala (1999, p. 45), for instance, argue for the need to take account of contextual factors as without them numbers presented in statistical studies may present 'a false precision, little more than statistical guesswork from the computer keyboard'. Galster (2003) appears to summarise the implications of viewpoints such as these arguing that more qualitative in-depth analyses are needed to complement the statistical work on social mix.

THE MISSING ASPECTS

In general, as summarised, the studies discussed thus far have approached social mix through particular lenses, often asking what is happening in an 'objective' real world situation and seeking to predict or identify the outcomes of social mix policies on low-income residents' levels of education, employment and other factors. Some of the earlier studies, particularly from the UK, consist of a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. However, much of the recent research on social mix compares European and North American findings on social mix and largely comprises quantitative studies seeking to measure and quantify the size and levels of effects. In practice, as Friedrichs, Galster and Musterd (2003, p. 799) state, most of the European and North American research have attempted to answer the question of 'how much independent effects do neighbourhoods have?', drawing on quantitative research methods. While these findings are important and collectively add to the debates about social mix, comparatively few studies have attempted to explore how the processes of neighbourhood effects occur. Studies are lacking that investigate the underlying mechanisms for how social networks form and residents understand or experience social mix. In order to develop good links between research and policy we need studies that seek to understand the meanings in human actions and how peoples' beliefs, attitudes and perspectives interact with social mix polices and affect whether or not the benefits of social mix are accomplished.

In effect, the nature of the research problem determines the type of methodology adopted and from this perspective there is a requirement for more qualitative research strategies, including multi-site case studies, field

studies and ethnography to conduct a fine grained analysis, which is currently lacking in research on social mix. To more fully disentangle questions, such as those raised by Atkinson and Kintrea (2004), about whether or not residents across different housing tenures mix, requires more qualitative methodological approaches. While there are numerous quantitative studies exploring the structure of networks few studies look at the social processes occurring within the networks themselves (De Souza Briggs, 2003). More nuanced understandings of peoples' behaviours and perspectives are needed to investigate whether propinquity in space, of residents across different income levels, leads to role modelling or social interaction for disadvantaged residents. It is only through qualitative methods of research that we can uncover the perceptions of actors themselves, how they construct reality, and consequences of these constructions for their behaviours and those they interact with. While a quantitative survey method might be utilised to ask residents from across different housing tenures whether they converse with each other or what their activities of daily living comprise, this will only reflect analysis at a broad level of inquiry. For instance, residents may indicate in a survey questionnaire that they do not talk to neighbours through ticking a yes/no formatted answer. However, in many social housing estates, comprised of different ethnic groups, language barriers may exist but residents might still communicate and socialise in other ways, such as exchanging vegetables over the back fence. In this particular instance, there are variables that are not known and cannot be tested using a quantitative model but the issue could be enlarged upon by drawing on qualitative methods to provide rich and informative data.

Hence, while research on social mix using quantitative analysis when appropriately designed can produce results that are generalisable and quantifiable, in contrast qualitative research offers to uncover a richer and more nuanced understanding of some of the policy issues around social mix. This is the relevant approach to adopt in answering the questions of interest, such as how social mix is experienced by residents on a day-to-day basis and whether there is mixing between residents across a range of income levels and tenure types. Qualitative research can move beyond empirical descriptions of social mix to an understanding and interpretation of peoples' experiences of social mix. It is important to recognise that in taking this stance, it is not being argued that any one research method is better than another, nor is any single approach advocated. Rather, in understanding the effectiveness or otherwise of social mix as a tool of policymakers, utilising a variety of methods enables responsiveness to the subtleties of particular

questions and awareness of different stakeholder needs and understandings of reality. Popkin et al. (2002), for instance, in their qualitative study of the MTO programme found that the information gathered from the in-depth interviews enriched the overall understanding of the effects of the programme, particularly through evoking the viewpoints of participants. Another advantage in combining both qualitative and quantitative methodologies is that it offers triangulation of findings from different sources of data.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, social mix has emerged as a key issue in contemporary housing policy debates. However, in this chapter it has been argued that the aspects that are missing from recent accounts of social mix are in-depth studies that explore the underlying mechanisms for whether tenants in mixed-income developments interact in ways that might lead to the anticipated benefits of social mix. Other key unresolved issues are whether social mix matters or has any real effect on their decisions or life chances from the viewpoint of those most affected by social mix policies: the residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. While there is a plethora of quantitative studies of neighbourhood effects, as detailed many of these are plagued with methodological problems and only show small significant effects of neighbourhood social mix. To get to the nub of the matter requires qualitative research techniques to provide opportunities to understand the processes by which neighbourhood effects operate and effectiveness of social mix policies in achieving good social outcomes. Nevertheless, as discussed, different methods make contributions and have limitations and there is value in combining a variety of approaches. Qualitative methods provide insights in exploring enquiries such as these, around actors' perceptions of social mix that are about 'how' the processes involved in social mix may or may not work and meanings that people form from their everyday experiences. The value of qualitative approaches is that they offer a means of unravelling these and related issues in more depth and detail–key questions should start from how and why, and the day-to-day processes involved in whether or not social mix programmes work or have unexpected outcomes. Qualitative approaches offer one way forward in providing more nuanced accounts, with a wealth of knowledge and increased depth of understanding of the processes whereby social mix is experienced by residents.

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CHAPTER 10

METHODOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: THE VALUE OF ETHNOGRAPHY FOR HOUSING STUDIES

Talja Blokland, Paul J. Maginn and Susan Thompson

INTRODUCTION

In Western liberal democracies over the last decade or so, community development, housing policy and neighbourhood renewal have been increasingly underscored by a philosophy of participatory decision-making (see Imre & Raco, 2003; Lo Piccolo & Thomas, 2003; Maginn, 2004). At one level, it appears that central and local governments have experienced a policy and democratic epiphany. This is reflected in a 'new' acknowledgment that 'when citizens themselves are the key to the quality of neighbourhoods, a new avenue of policy intervention is opened up' (Lelieveldt, 2004, p. 534; see also Crenson, 1983). In this context, participatory models of decision-making are seen as having the potential to 'empower' local residents who were previously the subject of 'top-down' or command and control forms of planning (Healey, 1999; Meredyth, Ewing, & Thomas, 2004; Barry, Osborne, & Rose, 1996; Rose, 1996;

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Dean, 2002). On another level, however, there is caution, suspicion even, about this paradigm shift. A perception exists that governments are essentially displacing, redistributing and/or retreating from their historical welfare responsibilities (Chaskin, 2003, 2001; Fraser, Lepofsky, Lick, & Williams, 2003; Pierre, 1999).

This apparent democratisation of decision-making is arguably admirable but it raises more questions than answers in relation to issues such as access, inclusion, equality, social capital and ultimately, power. Swyngedouw (2005), for example, has noted that participatory-based governance is an idealised normative model of horizontality and inclusion, but as such is 'systematically oblivious to the contradictory tensions in which these forms of governance are embedded' (p. 1992). Nevertheless, in light of the increased importance policymakers have attached to resident participation, it is becoming imperative to understand the mechanisms, processes and outcomes of this form of inclusion (Burton, 2003; Burton, Goodlad, & Croft, 2006; Maginn, 2007; Robinson, Shaw, & Davidson, 2005). It is not enough to simply quantify the numbers and affiliations of those participating in planning processes. Nevertheless, ensuring that representation encompasses all interest groups in terms of race/ethnicity, age, gender, political persuasion and so on, is important. There is a need to ensure that representation is inclusive and broad, thereby reflecting, as much as possible, the dynamic character of local neighbourhoods.

In order to develop a genuine in-depth understanding of the context, culture, machinations and impacts of participatory structures, we need to go beyond the personal accounts of those who claim to represent the whole community and/or particular groups within that community. Participatory governance models need to incorporate different types of knowledge claims and voices so that a full understanding of place, problems and resolutions can be developed. This is no easy task. Healey (1999) has argued that attempts to escape modernist planning thought via the inclusion of participatory forms of governance have resulted in the dismissal of 'both strategic conceptions of how places were and might develop and models of systematic relationships within places'. Consequently, she maintains that 'place qualities have been collapsed in much Western public policy into the design and assessment of projects' (Healey, 1999, p. 111). This suggests that policy-making is still underscored by a positivist or, in urban planning terms, a technocratic rationalist philosophy.

In this context, as Jacobs (2001) noted, local neighbourhoods have tended to be viewed as having little or no history, existing in social and geographical isolation and accordingly, lacking a sense of relationality (see

Massey, 1991, 1995; see also Harvey, 1993). Moreover, when residents do participate in decision-making and are asked to deliberate and decide upon, for example, the design of a public park or a communal garden, they often face significant challenges in developing and communicating *their* views about aspects of such projects. Healey (1999) stresses the need for policymakers to recognise the contextual and cultural dimensions to local places and communities. She favours a perspective that includes both actors *and* structuring dynamics, emphasising 'interactive processes of defining governance problems and constituting interests' (p. 112). Residents, then, should not be seen simply as individual rationalists who merely express pre-existing preferences through participatory structures. Rather, they need to be viewed as actors with complex and dynamic senses of spatial and social attachment, as well as detachment, to their local neighbourhood and beyond. Healey asserts that in recognising these relational issues, policy-makers will appreciate how 'frames of reference and systems of meaning evolve' (1999, p. 113). In turn, this will better equip them to design meaningful and contextual participatory processes through which they can engage residents.

Healey's (1999) call to 'develop understanding and strategies for evolving more inclusionary approaches to integrated, place-focused public policy' (p. 111) is articulated via a theoretical exposition of the potential of institutionalism and collaborative planning (also see Healey, 2006). While this is an extremely useful normative framework for understanding how things ought to work in institutional and procedural terms, Healey's framework says nothing, in explicit terms at least, about the methodological implications of evaluating the efficacy of participatory processes. Our chapter explores this gap. In order for place-focused public policy to develop more nuanced and contextualised understandings of socio-spatial interrelations, it needs to develop an *empirical* body of knowledge. Put simply, if any geographical area is 'the locus of multiple place identities' (Healey, 1999, p. 118) and the objective is to engage this plethora of identities, it is incumbent upon policymakers (and researchers) to avoid: (1) place-blindness; (2) only listening to the 'noisy voices' who claim to represent the local community and (3) assuming that peoples' preferences exist a priori.

How can housing research rise to such challenges given its historical legacy of quantitative and empirical inquiry methods (Clapham, 2002, p. 59; see also Greed, 1994)? Jacobs and Manzi (2000) have noted that housing research is often 'reactive to the professional housing lobby' (p. 35) and as such, likely to be 'methodologically conservative' (p. 35; see also Allen, 2005). The techno-rationalistic outlook, often assumed by policymakers, has

resulted in households being viewed as instrumentally rational and unified agents. Further:

> There is little focus on the relationship between the attitudes and behavior of the actors and the constraints and opportunities which they face. In other words, approaches to the analysis of the housing field have failed to keep up with recent developments in sociology, which have taken this agency/structure interface as the focus of their attention. (Clapham, 2002, p. 59)

It is precisely this agency/structure interface that is crucial to developing a new knowledge base about participatory structures and processes. In recent years, a number of housing scholars have advocated that discourse analysis has the capacity to shed new light on understanding and resolving housing issues (Clapham, 2002; Jacobs, 2006; Jacobs, Kemeny, & Manzi, 2003; Jacobs & Manzi, 2000; Marston, 2002; Manzi & Jacobs, 2008). Marston (2002), for example, has argued that discourse analysis can help challenge the ways in which 'housing researchers have tended to take for granted the definitions of housing policymakers [...] to be objective facts' (also see Saugeres, 1999, p. 94). Moreover, Marston suggests that policy and social change is achievable through the adoption of discursive analysis in applied housing research. Such change is necessary if governments are sincere about creating more genuinely inclusive forms of governance that actively seek to engage residents in decision-making. As Pierre (1999) and Rhodes (1996) have noted, governments need to shy away from their traditional core business of *regulation*, *coordination* and *control* if they are to close the democratic deficits in decision-making that they themselves acknowledge exist.

This chapter works from the premise that ethnography is an ideal means of understanding the place-related systems of meaning that shape residents' perceptions of housing and their neighbourhoods, together with their participation *and* non-participation in local decision-making structures. Accordingly, ethnographic research has the potential to expose the cultural and relational characteristics and dynamics of institutionalised micro-settings and thus help resolve policy dilemmas (Maginn, 2007). The chapter comprises several key sections. Firstly, the chapter provides a brief overview of ethnography and its general utility for housing studies. Next, drawing on empirical research from two case studies, one in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, and the other in New Haven, USA, the chapter highlights how ethnographic research produces different knowledges that do not emerge from quantitatively-informed research methods. Specifically, ethnographic research has the ability to detect the 'not-so-loud' voices in local

neighbourhoods and factors underpinning 'non-participation'. Furthermore, participant observation fosters understanding of the relational contexts that structure practical contestations over housing and other aspects of shaping places. Finally, the key challenges of participatory decision-making are outlined and how these may be (partially) resolved through acquiring different, qualitatively-informed knowledges.

ETHNOGRAPHY: A METHODOLOGICAL PATHWAY TO UNDERSTANDING RELATIONALITY

Statistical research came to dominate housing and planning studies because social reformers felt the need to 'prove' that problems in urban areas required planning solutions. As a consequence, 'the human element [of planning] got lost' (Greed, 1994, p. 121):

> Rather than looking directly at the inhabitants of the areas under study as human beings with needs, wants, opinions of their own, and tongues in their heads, they became merely "population data".

The shift to more participatory forms of decision-making in urban planning and housing in the UK and EU suggests that the human element is being brought back. This does not mean that it is enough to quantify the type and range of local people involved in decision-making to (dis)prove the degree of representativeness. Rather, what is needed is an appreciation of the contextual and cultural nuances of socio-spatial relations and politics within local neighbourhoods and governance structures.

It is fairly common in quantitative research, particularly in statistical modelling, for relatively fixed values and/or characteristics to be assigned to certain variables, especially humans. Moreover, such fixed values are often derived from other quantitatively-informed research that has produced statistically generalised results. Such values, or labels, are considered to be 'objective' given that they are statistically representative of the wider community. Ironically, however, these 'objective' values say nothing about the subjective *meanings* and *social processes* that underscore exactly *why* and *how* groups exhibit certain characteristics and behaviours within different contexts (see Schuyt, 1986). This is not to say that there is no merit in quantitative research in analysing participatory structures. Nor are we suggesting that qualitative methods are superior per se to quantitative approaches. As Maginn, Thompson and Tonts (2008) have noted, both methodological traditions have a comparative advantage over one another.

In simple terms, quantitative research is stronger at addressing questions of a 'how much/many' nature, whereas qualitative research is better suited to exploring questions of a 'how' and 'why' nature.

This has not stopped some qualitative researchers from trying to quantify their research and develop generalisations via the use of 'a ''pretend'' quantitatively representative sample' (Greed, 1994, p. 125). For traditionalists, statistical representativeness and generalisability are anathema to qualitative research. As Levi-Strauss (quoted in Comaroff & Comaroff, 1992, p. 7) stated: 'all that the ethnographer can do, and all that we can expect of [him or her], is to enlarge a specific experience to the dimensions of a more general one'. Ethnography thus serves theoretical generalising of processes and mechanisms.

What, then, *is* ethnography? There are extensive debates about this (see for example, Fetterman, 1989; Hammersley, 1990a, 1990b; Franklin, 1986). Sociologists and anthropologists have used ethnography to describe a large set of research, methodologies and writing practices. Some have limited the use of the word 'ethnography' to the process of describing a culture (Low, Taplin, & Sceld, 2005), reserving the methodological term 'phenomenology' for 'total' involvement with research subjects and for the study of 'experiences'. Others have argued that ethnography as a method is particularly suited for grounded theory (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). Ethnography is defined here as trying to make sense of semantic spaces: 'the field of signs and practices in which human beings construct and represent themselves and others, and hence their societies and histories' (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1992, p. 17). From a traditionalist perspective, the role of the ethnographer is not to speak *for* others but to speak *about* them (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1992, p. 9). This differs from so-called critical ethnographers who lay claim to variously articulating the plight of minority and excluded groups in the name of emancipation (Hammersley, 1992). For Comaroff and Comaroff (1992, p. 9), then, ethnography:

> ...is not a vain attempt at literal translation, in which we take over the mantle of another's being, conceived of as somehow commensurate with our own. It is a historically situated mode of understanding historically situated contexts, each with its own, perhaps radically different, kinds of subjects and subjectivities, objects and objectivities.

Ethnography is particularly suited to unmasking the relational complexities and dynamics that exist in all manner of semantic spaces. This relational approach rejects the notion that individuals are self-propelling essences. It also eschews a view of the world through a structuralist lens wherein social reality is imposed on people (cf. Tilly, 1998). Instead, social

reality is viewed as more akin to a soccer game in which individual players produce shared outcomes that subsequently inform further actions (Tilly, 1998). This necessitates adopting methods that can help see the game itself, together with the stories people tell each other about what happened during the game – not just the end result of winning or losing. Such a relational perspective attempts to avoid the relativism sometimes associated with social constructivism (see Jacobs & Manzi, 2000, p. 38). It does not reject the notion of a 'reality' – it merely argues that the spaces where such realities exist consist of multiple *social ties* – not aggregates of individual attitudes.

A fuller comprehension of the evolutionary contextual and cultural facets of participatory and community development practices in housing and urban renewal requires a different methodology. We should not simply look for more 'humane', 'bottom up' or 'real life' accounts. Letting people tell their own stories enables us to see how agency is constructed via individual life histories. But such methods do not readily illuminate systems of meaning, and even less, how they evolve. This is because the processes and mechanisms whereby systems of meaning develop, are *relational* and embedded in bonds, not essences. Nor do we need to take a postmodern turn. Instead, we require ethnography for its ability to shed light on relationality. After all, human understandings about community are not waiting to be registered either quantitatively or qualitatively. Such understandings are brought into being through interactions with others in communicating the nature of such interactions. The resulting stories may live for long periods of time, whereas others may dissipate quickly, assuming the status of folklore or urban mythology. If this happens the key question that needs to be resolved is the extent to which they are 'true' or 'corrupted'. Ethnographic research provides a way forward.

'True' ethnographic research, whereby the ethnographer spends extensive periods in the field 'living and breathing' the phenomena under investigation, has never really been a feature of policy research. For sure, there have been several ethnographically-informed analyses of policy settings, but such inquiry has tended to be contained in doctoral theses or academic journals. When ethnographic research has been part of the policy evaluation process, it has been conducted in haste. This is not surprising given the costs of such research and the time constraints generally imposed upon policymakers (cf. Allen, 2005). If, however, there is genuine commitment to realising the ideals of participatory forms of governance in developing effective policies, it is incumbent upon policymakers to develop a deeper understanding of the complex and dynamic relationships within local communities. Ethnographic research, through the use of participant observation and interviewing, has the

potential to bring community development and participatory policies to another level. To illustrate how this can work, the next section discusses ethnographic research conducted in two urban neighbourhoods – 'Hillesluis', Rotterdam, in the Netherlands (Blokland, 2003) and 'the Ghetto' (or 'the G'), New Haven, in the US (Blokland, 2008a, 2008b).

RELATIONAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF (NON-)PARTICIPATION: STORIES FROM THE STREET

The case study of Hillesluis illustrates why it is important to look beneath the surface of apparent disinterest in participating in local decision-making. While individuals may well lack interest in getting involved, such disengagement may signal deeper meaning and/or context. Policymakers can choose to simply accept non-involvement and declare that they at least tried to include local people in decision-making. If, however, there are serious deficiencies or statistical patterning in participation and non-participation rates, there is an onus on policymakers to find out why and how such situations evolved. Ethnography has the potential to do this, revealing the institutional and relational dynamics that contribute to the development of people's views and actions towards participation, especially outside the immediate realm of the participation activity itself.

Hillesluis is an inner city neighbourhood in Rotterdam South. It was built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to house increasing numbers of migrants. These residents came from other parts of the Netherlands. They were attracted to the city by expanding employment prospects and declining opportunities in the rural areas from where they came. In 1994 when data was collected, Hillesluis was a diverse immigrant neighbourhood of 12,000 people with native Dutch residents constituting a numeric minority. The area is divided by a shopping street into three main sections, each of which has its own physical characteristics. Nevertheless, all have low-cost housing stock, generally owned by housing corporations and let as subsidised dwellings.

The case of 'the Ghetto' demonstrates the power of ethnography in illustrating how systems of meaning evolve relationally. It does this by focussing on the production of social realities of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' residents and the resultant embedded ambivalences. Individual statements about participation, together with actual actions of residents in relation to involvement, are directly connected to such realities.

Explanations of non-participation, we argue, are not contained within individual attitudes, preferences or demographic characteristics, but embodied and perpetuated *in* the local community. 'The G' is part of a larger socio-economically, racially and ethnically mixed ward in New Haven, Connecticut. It is a public housing neighbourhood defined by two dead-end streets with a fenced park in the front and a grocery store across the main road. In the late 19th century, 'the G' was home to a working-class Italian migrant community who lived in over-crowded tenements. The area has been the subject of two episodes of urban redevelopment. The first in 1942 saw public housing constitute the dominant tenure. The second in the 1960s resulted in 'the G' effectively being cut-off from the rest of the neighbourhood. Data on this case study was collected in 2000, 2001, 2003 and 2004, in periods lasting from as little as two weeks to as long as 13 months. A total of two years fieldwork was conducted.

USING ETHNOGRAPHY TO IDENTIFY AND EXPLAIN PARTICIPATORY APATHY

Historically, policymakers have frequently been blind to the existence of diverse systems of meanings within territorial spaces such as public housing estates or project housing areas (Maginn, 2004). The tenants of such localities have tended to be seen as homogenous in relation to their housing and social needs, wants, aspirations and life chances. Further, their socio-economic life chances have often been marginal. Opportunity for these socially excluded groups has been promoted through urban renewal policies that place a strong emphasis on community participation. Community participation not only offers local residents the opportunity to exert power within decision-making processes. They also stand to be empowered (Taylor, 2003). But what of those community members who fail, for whatever reason, to participate?

A common and apparently sensible reaction by policymakers seeking to engage large numbers of residents in community development and regeneration decision-making is to note, often through surveys, that people are not interested, and that participation thus needs to become more fun. Creative new ways are being used, often combined with festivals, open days and offers of snacks and drinks, in an effort to entice more people to become involved. Nevertheless, participation rates tend to remain low (see for example, Blokland, 2002; Williams, 2005).

In community meetings with modest attendance, housing officials may conclude that their planned interventions are acceptable because people did not raise objections when given the chance to do so. Opponents of redevelopment plans may claim the contrary, arguing that people were not interested in participating because they did not believe that their presence or views would make a difference. Both of these perspectives point to the simple conclusion that non-involvement *does not* equate to disinterest. Put another way, how can one possibly be disinterested in a nearby major housing policy initiative involving demolition and redevelopment of a housing estate?

In Hillesluis, community leaders and professionals explained residents' lack of participation en bloc. It was asserted that inhabitants had no trust in each other nor in the political process. This is in line with broader common understandings of participation in the Netherlands. National advisory reports, such as those of the *Wetenschappelijke Raad voor Regeringsbeleid* (WRR), an influential scientific advisory committee to the national government, maintain that residents would participate more if they had more trust in each other (WRR, 2005). However, through triangulating ethnographic fieldwork data collected via casual conversations, events recorded in a field diary and notes, taped informal interviews, and more structured interviews, a different conclusion emerged.

Those who stated that they were 'not getting involved' because they were 'not interested' arrived at this position through very diverse and contextualised processes. Some explained their non-participation as a function of the fact that those who 'ran the world' – policymakers and politicians – had never shown any genuine interest in 'them' (see Blokland, 2003 for details). On the other hand, there were those who, for a variety of reasons, gradually *became* disinterested over time.

The first group of non-participants were eclectic in their demographic make-up. They comprised a range of age groups and ethnic backgrounds. There was relatively little inter-group contact in this community, but they had a strong bond with their respective peer group in common. Accordingly, young and old people, and different ethnic group members, made intense use of the neighbourhood space to live their lives within and through peer relations (cf. Gans, 1962). Notably, however, their strong relational attachments were not to the neighbourhood as spatially understood. Rather, their attachment was a function of the social ties they had with similar people who coincidentally, lived in the same place that they did. Their lack of interest in getting involved in participatory processes was embedded in a general 'distrust' towards wider society. It was *not* related to

the community development or housing regeneration activities going on around them. It would be erroneous to suggest that they did not have high levels of trust in their neighbours – they did, albeit only with those with whom they were acquainted and with whom they associated as part of their 'in-group'. Everyday conversations about their relationships with other institutions, such as the social services department or local schools, revealed a similar kind and level of ambivalence as they expressed in relation to getting involved in neighbourhood planning. Ethnographic research tools were able to reveal the wider meaning of community to the residents, together with the role that neighbourhood and neighbourhood institutions played *in* their sense of community. In turn, this helped to situate their lack of interest in participating in discussions about housing regeneration within a broader framework (unrelated to the participatory exercise) that structured their attitudes and behaviours (cf. Williams, 1968).

The contextual backdrop to the declining interest in participation by the second group of residents was premised more on the dissolution of traditional values, practices and institutions. This was especially true for older male residents who, prior to their closure, used to work at the nearby docks or in shipbuilding factories. They recalled the first half of the 20th century as the 'Golden Days' of the Social Democratic Party (SDAP). For this group, the industry in which they worked and the political climate of the day, defined their social identity and relationships (see Lijphart, 1968). At party meetings and the many social functions organised through the SDAP, one could meet others of like mind with whom one could experience and develop a sense of familiarity. These 'pillars' of social democracy, alongside the role of the Protestant and Catholic Churches, guided every aspect of daily life. National political elites always found a way of arriving at a compromise. But local life for the working class was very much divided along Catholic, Protestant and Social Democratic affiliations. Politics was inherent: a structuring, relational context in which political and social participation was closely intertwined. But this changed over the course of a century. As the welfare state grew and secularisation gained a strong foothold, the compartmentalisation of Dutch society was slowly undermined.

For this group of Hillesluisians, the diminution of their class identity and ties, which provided the basis of a unified and radical culture against dominant, more powerful classes (cf. Williams, 1991, p. 415), underscored their suspicion of contemporary participatory practices. To them, politics and community participation had become a matter of selfish people thinking about their own gains as opposed to wider community benefits. Neighbourhood affairs and wider politics as a space for sociability had

changed and the overall rationalisation of society worried them. Solidarity had been usurped by self-serving interests.

What *appear* to be the same attitudes of 'not interested' non-participants, are actually quite distinct outcomes of complex accounts of why people do not get involved. Qualitative data can thus help to *explain* statistical variation. They help us *see* the processes and mechanisms that underpin categorical inequalities in participation (cf. Tilly, 1998). It is essential to develop an understanding of these processes and mechanisms as these are arguably much more relevant than simply quantifying the attitudinal statements of individuals towards participation if policymakers are to determine alternative means of engaging more people.

In summary, the application of ethnographic research in Hillesluis helped to illuminate that while people may express the same attitudes, this should not be inferred to suggest that they mean the same thing. It is quite likely that there will be different meanings and contexts behind the same attitude. There are three reasons why this is of importance to inclusive participatory processes in housing policy:

- It shows how residents are actors with complex attachments to place and how frames of reference evolve.
- It highlights the relational and institutional dynamics related to such frames of reference: these concern explanations *outside* the decision-making process of urban planning and community development.
- It provides a direction for housing policy, in which carefully selected networks of life-style groups form the basis for finding linkages in the neighbourhood and one that tempers too much reliance on statistical categories. Instead, it invites the creation of categories of residents based on various forms of place attachment (which may or may not reflect demographic categories).

THICK DESCRIPTION: UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL CONTEXTS OF EVOLVING FRAMES OF REFERENCE

Ethnography can, as we have seen, reveal disparate and *real* reasons behind apparent disinterest in community participation. Further, field notes of small and seemingly trivial matters can provide additional understanding of the relational constructions through which housing researchers assign categories to individuals or groups. Such fieldwork data may, as Geertz (1973, p. 7) has noted, take the form of 'thin descriptions' (for example,

'25 people attended a community meeting', or 'people enter a community room and take seats') or 'thick descriptions' as illustrated below. These notes relate to a community meeting between the local Police Captain and several housing officials after a lethal shooting in 'the Ghetto':

> ... The housing authority official had arranged the chairs in a square around a table with plastic flowers in the middle. [When I entered with the African American President of the Tenants Representative Council] the President started re-arranging the tables right away. She lined up a few chairs behind a table and invited the white, 30-something woman who is the deputy-director and Police Captain to sit there. She ignored the two police officers wearing their bullet-proof vests who stood aside and another female resident entering made a joke to her about them – how they wore their vests even to such meetings. Slowly some female residents, *AS* and *H*, both Black, and their Hispanic friend, *T*, and three women whom I did not know, flocked in through the back door, none of them took the first row seats. *A*. came, she did not sit down but stood in the back with her arms folded, then *G*. and her girlfriend came and hang against the table that stood aside in the back ....

Such descriptions can be used for 'sorting out the structures of signification': 'the thing to ask is what it is, ridicule or challenge, irony or anger, snobbery or pride, that, in their occurrence and through their agency, is getting said' (Geertz, 1973, p. 10). Ethnography as a written text, then, comes about through analysing the thick descriptions of events such as the community meeting outlined above. As noted earlier, Healey (1999) stipulates that frames of references evolve in interactive processes. Thick description can demonstrate how existing categories of residents who 'care about the community' are labelled positively, while residents who appear disinterested, or who manifest as 'not caring', are recreated and confirmed. Thick description, unlike specific labels or defining categorisations, enables a more nuanced understanding of complex community interactions. In the case of 'the Ghetto', notions of *active* and *passive* residents were developed along corollary lines of *deserving* and *undeserving*. When professionals and local residents engaged with one another, they actively perpetuated such constructions. This became apparent right after the opening of one meeting as illustrated in the edited excerpt below:

> Ms Magnolia opened the meeting saying they had called it because "the police have been chasing us out here until it got to the point of a boy being killed". She connected the shootings, safety and intensive police control. The Police Captain leaned over the table and said: "No one was chasing anyone". But he first wanted to point out something about trespassing – the dead boy had had a trespassing notice:
>
> "It doesn't matter if you have a relative here, or even if your own mother lives here, if you have been involved in a problem here, or anywhere else on housing authority property in

> the city, then you get a notice you're not allowed on the property... That is how we try to help people keeping people out, and it is your responsibility too to keep them out".
>
> The Police Captain ignored the ambivalent meaning of 'safety' and excluded those stopped by the police from residents, dividing 'decent' residents and 'undeserving' others. Nobody asked the residents what they thought of this. Nor did any residents take the floor. The Housing Authority managers added that resident trespassing regulations were meant to work "alongside with residents" on "improving their living conditions", and residents themselves could "play a part in increasing awareness about the regulations." *They* had to make sure that people in *their* community obeyed to rules (that the Housing Authority had set).

By the end of this meeting, those present were engaged in creating an understanding of 'the Ghetto' as a place where the 'deserving' suffered as a result of the actions of the 'undeserving' (i.e. criminals). The 'deserving' residents had to assume some responsibility for the community by participating more in its daily life:

> When the example of another complex issue, mostly housing the elderly, was brought up, Keesha, a full-time nurse assistant and single mother of three under the age of ten, commented that the elderly "stick together" and young people "are not like that and have their own lives and things to take care of". But the people behind the table collectively railed against her, speaking at the same time, that "it is all based on the people" and that "right now they are scared", but that they now had "to set their rules" in the streets. The Social Services Manager said that with "the attitude that is presented here, you're feeding into it, you're encouraging it. Don't just stand there hold out your hand!" The atmosphere got a little tense. Before the discussion evolved into claim and counter claim – "It isn't!"; "It is!" – the Police Captain interjected:
>
> "Let me give you an analysis from our side... When an area starts to look dilapidated, things get worse and worse. And that's what you need to do here. I drive through here everyday on my way to work. And I see people throwing their trash out. We have scheduled pick-ups... But there is a lot of junk out here."
>
> He stressed that this way, people were giving a message: "these people don't care about their properties, so we might as well sell drugs out here." A resident responded that the Housing Authority cleaners "don't do their jobs around here." A lively discussion about trash followed. Finally, someone said a homeless man searched the trash and threw things on the ground. The property manager asked the captain: "Can he be issued a non-trespassing notice?" The captain laughed: "Sure". The Social Services Manager then announced that they should bring this meeting to an end. Ms Magnolia thanked all for being present and all went their ways.

At this and other occasions, residents appeared withdrawn. When they reacted that 'it's impossible' to, for example, 'be the eyes and ears of the community and call the police', they affirmed their position as passive dependents. This impossibility must, however, be understood in the context

of complex and competing relationships that residents negotiate in their daily lives. For example, the perpetuators of neighbourhood crime are also these residents' sons, brothers, lovers and friends. A relational perspective enables the complexity of this situation to be understood. The women at the meeting may reject some behaviour, but cannot cut their ties with the perpetrators given the relationships that they have in everyday life. And in the meeting they could not afford to lose their position as 'respectable', constructed by their very presence. So they kept quiet. By remaining silent they helped reproduce the either/or opposition, as well as the imagery of residents as passive victims, dependent on others to take care of their issues, thereby reinforcing the image of the 'welfare dependent poor' in public housing (cf. Judd & Swanstrom, 1994; also Katz, 1993). Such a stigmatising representation resulted in references to dimensions of blame, social rejection, perceived dangerousness and visible unattractiveness and disorder being inscribed onto 'the G' (Phelan, Link, Moore, & Stueve, 1997; Jarrett, 1996). Such collective categorisations and non-participation resulted in an imagery of 'people here don't want to get involved'.

In summary, residents of 'the Ghetto' could not be classified from the outset as people who were 'interested' in participation versus those who were not interested. Nevertheless, the normative understandings of what it meant to be an *active* and *decent* resident and how this linked to broader categories of *deserving* and *undeserving*, came about in an active process. This demonstrates how frames of reference *evolve*. In housing policy and planning, this process of constructing meanings deserves greater attention if we are to achieve more inclusive participatory processes.

The use of qualitative methods in housing research will help inform policy decisions by taking a critical stance through thick description. Ethnography is about giving all actors a voice – the seemingly 'deserving' and the seemingly 'undeserving'. When qualitative researchers are only interested in key informants, usually active residents and community leaders to whom researchers ascribe a representative role, they neglect residents who do not play an active role. Their inclusion is critical as it will reveal contestations among groups of residents and ambivalences in the categorisations that residents employ that would otherwise be hidden. This, then, will provide professionals with a much more complete and realistic, albeit complex, account of social structures of neighbourhoods.

For researchers, these basic lessons can be drawn:

- The inclusion of thick description in qualitative methods is a labour intensive process. Some data will not make it to the actual text because

they turn out to be irrelevant for the purposes of the research. However, the subtle mechanisms of agenda setting, inclusion and exclusion, and categorisation in the interactions of, for example, community meetings, provide a wealth of information that help researchers understand how frames of reference evolve. Researchers cannot, however, limit themselves to such collective settings and expect to understand the categorisations. The relational contexts in which such meetings take place are also crucial. At such meetings, as much remains unsaid as is said. Only through access to a variety of settings will the researcher learn about ambivalences, enabling a contextual understanding of evolving frames of references.

- In taking ethnographic field notes, researchers may want to focus on details of meetings and exchanges of people about such meetings afterwards. This will help them to see how stories about community participation, including the way residents and professionals position themselves in the process, come about, and how the participatory process itself develops. Such an approach does not deny agency or intentionality. Ethnography through relational understanding, allows for the fact that intentions and preferences do not explain outcomes. It shows how the participation process itself alters and creates frames of reference, within specific contexts, affecting the efficacy of participation.

CONCLUSIONS

We started this chapter with the argument expressed by, among others, Patsy Healey, for new forms of thinking about planning and community development theory, aimed at a participatory model of housing policy. While housing policy has generally shown a limited interest in theory, and often works from either a statist or a neoliberal perspective for empirical investigations, Healey identified the need for a different approach. She noted that 'command and control' perspectives have resulted in 'dismissing both strategic conceptions of how places were and might develop and models of systematic relationships within spaces' so that 'place qualities have been collapsed in much Western public policy into the design and assessment of projects' (Healey, 1999, p. 112).

This chapter focused on the methodological consequences of Healey's position, arguing that we must understand how structuring dynamics are manifested in practical contestations around shaping places. It is not enough for policymakers (or researchers) to simple listen to the 'noisy voices' in

community forums, nor is it prudent to unquestioningly accept claims from those who say they are 'not interested' in participating. There is a need to comprehend the stories that sit behind such attitudes. This was illustrated through two case studies drawn from ethnographic research.

It was highlighted that disinterest in community participation is rarely one-dimensional. Life histories leading to non-participation are complex, varied, and socially and historically embedded. We have seen through thick description how professionals and participating residents alike engaged in the construction of a duality of 'deserving' residents versus 'undeserving' others, a duality that then hampered further resident participation. We have also seen how ethnography creates the opportunity to go beyond public transcripts into the more hidden transcripts (cf. Scott, 1990) that people construct in casual interactions. These sketches indicated that it is critical to uncover the social processes and trajectories that lead to non-participation. Even when we can establish statistical co-variance between people with certain characteristics and their willingness to participate, their categorical characteristics do not *explain* their positions towards community participation.

While ethnography may be ideal for the study of processes and mechanisms in community participation, actual research practice does not always allow us to employ such an approach. Ethnography aimed at thick description is a costly and time-consuming method. It is often inefficient, especially when research questions are narrowly defined. Here, then, we may want to do more of two things.

Firstly, we may want to use surveys as quick scans to identify which residents are keen to be involved in more qualitative methods, especially when such surveys are conducted using random samples. But this is not to indicate that qualitative material is reduced to the status of illustrating vignettes in research reports based on statistics. Systematic analyses can and should, after all, be part of qualitative research. Statistical data derived from surveys may provide the questions that qualitative methods can, as a next step in the research process, seek to answer. Second, there is a need to avoid treating so-called community representatives and leaders as *the* 'voice of the community'. We should be careful not to conflate interactional community with a spatial definition. This, then, means a stronger focus on the inclusion of *all* groups that we expect to be present in an area and that we uncover during fieldwork (cf. Baumann, 1996). All of this raises further questions and challenges about access and rapport in the field.

Relational contexts are the sites where frames of reference and systems of meaning evolve. These contexts need to be better understood if

policymakers are to encourage more people to participate in decision-making and create better neighbourhoods.

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CHAPTER 11

GROUNDING THEORY IN INTERGENERATIONAL CITIZEN PARTICIPATION: A GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH IN THE CONTEXT OF PUBLIC HOUSING RESEARCH

Dawn Jourdan

INTRODUCTION: MOVING ON FROM TRADITIONAL METHODS IN STUDYING PUBLIC HOUSING

Housing researchers often seek to investigate the needs of the populations they study so that they may evaluate the policies targeted at 'fixing' the problems faced by the residents of public housing communities. Traditionally, researchers base these recommendations on the statistical exploration of primary and secondary quantitative data. However, some researchers contend that these traditional research tools fail to capture the meaning and significance of housing for its inhabitants and offer little insight into larger related issues of politics and economy (Jacobs, 2003). From the perspective of this group of researchers, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to craft a survey instrument or any other measurement tool, for that matter, which

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could capture the divergent human experience of families living in public housing across the nation given the diversity of factors that shape the lives of residents.

As a result of the complexity of the subject matter, many public housing researchers have begun crafting mixed method studies to better understand how people become conscious of and give meaning to their surroundings. As Jacobs (2003, p. 14) notes:

> A clearer understanding of the links between communities and individual outcomes would benefit policymakers seeking to design and implement targeted, effective, and efficient programs. Embracing mixed-methods research is critical for clarifying our understanding of neighbourhood effects. Detailing the causal relationship between communities and outcomes for families and individuals in these communities requires both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

A mixed-methods approach, allows qualitative and quantitative findings to complement each other via the corroboration of patterns in the numbers and elaboration of statistical evidence (Rossman & Wilson, 1994). However, mixed-methods approaches have been criticised for resulting in 'philosophical compatibility and methodological sloppiness' (Probert, 2006, p. 4, citing Baker, Wuest, & Stern, 1992; Hopwood, 2004; Johnson, 2001; Maggs-Rapport, 2000; Skodal-Wilson & Ambler, 1996; Thorne, Kirkham, & MacDonald-Emes, 1997).

Addressing these same needs to study complex social phenomena in a manor as rigorous as those employed in positivist paradigms, Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 5) call for a 'redefinition [of research methods] in order to fit the realities of qualitative research and the complexities of social phenomena'. Envisioned by Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory seeks to offer a methodological approach to meet these needs.

The primary aim of this chapter is to demonstrate to readers how grounded theory may be employed in housing research that seeks to embark to answer questions on issues not previously explored. Readers will be introduced to the theoretical underpinnings of grounded theory research. In addition, the mechanics of this research methodology will be outlined to help facilitate the reader's understanding of this approach to research design. Subsequently, this chapter introduces the tenets of the grounded theory approach to research and explores how this tool may be employed to facilitate the development of new theory in the realm of housing research, relying on an illustrative example of the use of this methodology to study an intergenerational planning process for the redevelopment of public housing.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of how researchers might bring grounded theory into the mainstream of housing research.

AN INTRODUCTION TO GROUNDED THEORY

Utter the term grounded theory in many academic settings and the typical response given is: 'grounded what?' While the tool is frequently employed by researchers in many academic disciplines, it has not found familiarity or general acceptance in all genres of research, particularly those with positivistic traditions. A cursory review of urban planning literature related to public housing reveals few efforts to employ this approach to research. Of those that do, many are case studies which rely on select parts of the approach, i.e. the data coding process (Dalton & Rowe, 2004; Gotham & Brumley, 2002; Edin & Lein, 1998).

Describing the theory that they assisted in the development of during the 1960s, Glaser and Strauss (1967) contend that the primary purpose of the grounded theory approach to research is to 'discover what's going on' (p. 97). Grounded theorists make these so-called discoveries by employing a symbolic interactionist approach to sociological research. Symbolic interactionism seeks to explore the meaning of events to people and symbols used to convey meaning. As further described by Chenitz and Swanson (1986) 'the researcher needs to understand behaviour as the participants understand, learn their interpretation of self in the interaction, and share their definitions' (p. 7). In this way, the research seeks to discover, describe, and understand a phenomenon in the context of existing theory.

While all researchers, at least to some degree, are seeking to understand 'what's going on' with respect to the phenomena they study, most researchers develop a rigid research design in order to control the collection of data and resulting analysis. Grounded theorists, by contrast, embrace maximum flexibility in their research in an effort to ensure that the dynamic nature of the phenomenon studied is captured. This is accomplished, among other departures from traditional approaches to research and as more fully explored in subsequent sections of this chapter, by 'entering a research setting without a pre-conceived hypothesis' and through the concurrent collection and analysis of data (Probert, 2006, p. 5). By openly entering into a research project, the researcher is allowed to fully explore all facets of the phenomenon studied, allowing the important aspects of the research to reveal themselves. This should not be taken by the reader to indicate that the grounded theorist does not employ a rigid research protocol. In practice,

the mechanics employed by those engaged in grounded theory-driven research are well-developed.

The Mechanics of Grounded Theory Research

Any type of information, qualitative or quantitative, may be considered data in grounded theory research, from a newspaper article to an observation made by the researcher or the collection of demographic data. Once collected, the data is coded into concepts, categories and propositions (Pandit, 1996). Coding is a process by which a researcher attempts to describe the contents of each piece of data so that it may later be compared with other data collected. For example, a housing researcher may read a human interest story from the local newspaper chronicling the installation of bright stadium-style lighting to illuminate a particularly crime-ridden public housing complex. The researcher may find it interesting and know that it is relevant to his or her study of safety in public housing. As such, the data is coded. In this case, the researcher may assign the label 'lighting in public housing' to the data, knowing that lighting may very well be an issue that comes up again in his study of safety. Grounded theories are not built on these individually observed or reported incidents alone. Rather, as Corbin and Strauss (1990, p.7) have noted:

> the incidents, events, happenings are taken as, or analysed as, potential indicators of phenomena, which are thereby given conceptual labels. If a respondent says to the researcher, "Each day I spread my activities over the morning, between shaving and bathing", then the researcher might label this phenomenon as 'pacing.' As the researcher encounters other incidents, and when after comparison to the first, they appear to resemble the same phenomena, then these, too, can be labelled as 'pacing.' Only by comparing incidents and naming phenomena with the same term can the theorist accumulate the basic units for theory.

The conceptualisation stage of grounded theory focuses on giving a name to those reoccurring behaviours in a way that allows researchers to understand what the data is. While a researcher might be able to draw some limited conclusions about what issues are relevant or the frequency with which certain behaviours occur in the conceptualisation phase of grounded theory research, further analysis and data collection are critical in the pursuit of meaningful studies of this nature.

Following the conceptualisation process, grounded theory researchers engage in the process of *categorisation*. While categories are typically derived using the same processes as used to generate concepts, these indicators seek

to group concepts more abstractly. By grouping concepts in this way, researchers are able to better understand the interrelationships between conceptualised raw data. Taking our previous example of the newspaper article labelled 'lighting in public housing', we attempt to conceptualise additional coded information. Exploratory efforts have uncovered a conference paper given on the design of walkways in public housing communities, suggesting that safety can be improved by installing pathways that follow straight lines, rather than meandering through the community. We might code this concept as 'pathway design and safety'. In addition, we have conducted an informal interview with several mothers living in a public housing community who told us that they would feel much safer if their community was gated. This concept might be titled 'gated communities and safety'. Even an untrained observer can ascertain the theme that is emerging from these concepts, that is, better design (actual and the perception of) may enhance feelings of safety by residents of public housing.

The third phase of grounded theory involves the creation of propositions. Propositions 'indicate generalized relationships between a category and its concepts and between discrete categories' (Pandit, 1996). While similar in nature to the creation of hypotheses, propositions reflect the development of conceptual rather than measured relationships (Whetten, 1989). Returning to our previous example of public housing and design, the collection of additional data may indicate that there appears to be a difference between what design features improve safety and those features that respondents perceive to improve safety. Therefore, we might propose the proposition that there may be a disconnection between perception and reality with respect to design features identified as increasing the safety of residents living in public housing.

It is important to remember at this point that the formulation of concepts, categories and propositions is an iterative process (Pandit, 1996). The relationship between data collection, analysis and theory generation represents a reciprocal relationship and according to Strauss and Corbin (1990) 'one does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge' (p. 23). As such, upon the identification of the aforementioned proposition, the researcher would likely return to the literature on design and safety issues in public housing to see how such findings fit within what is currently known and identify those areas that have newly revealed themselves and merit further exploration. This iterative process continues until the researcher reaches a point of saturation – that place where no new data is revealed.

DEVELOPING A GROUNDED THEORY: A CASE STUDY OF INTERGENERATIONAL PARTICIPATION IN A PUBLIC HOUSING COMMUNITY

Many challenge the validity of reliance on the grounded theory approach for building social scientific theory. While most would agree with the usefulness of the approach in attempting to describe unique phenomenon, some researchers would challenge the approach's ability to generate theory. Certainly, data obtained using the grounded theory approach is rich in its ability to describe a particular phenomenon like the intergenerational planning committee. It is often upon such descriptions that quantitative research is formulated. Grounded theory need not end in description. Rather, the data gathered in such studies must be conceptualised and interpreted in order to build theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Phenomena Selection

In order to provide more than a mere description of a unique planning process, this case study, like other similar studies, required the development of 'a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 24). Like all research, the first procedure of grounded theory involves choosing a research problem (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Research problems typically avail themselves to research because they have been (1) suggested or assigned; (2) revealed by reading the technical literature in a particular field or (3) a manifestation of personal or professional experience (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The phenomena studied here were a result of all three methods of selection. Like many doctoral students, I did not enter my programme with a fully fleshed out research programme. I did not know what I wanted to study or how best to go about studying it. Early on, I was given a good piece of advice: pick something you are passionate about. I began sorting through those things for which I felt passion when I happened across a legal document – adoption papers – which carry with them many memories, as well as lessons learned. This personal story is relevant, though I did not know it at the time, to the selection of this research agenda. As a graduate student, I served as a guardian ad litem for an eight year-old child who had been removed from her home and placed in foster care. The court instructed

me that my job was to study the facts of the case, to read all relevant documents and interview all related parties. Upon completion of my review, I was to inform the child of the recommendation I would make to the court. I did my job and everything went smoothly until I attempted to explain my recommendation to the young girl and she said, 'That's not what I want. Aren't you going to ask me?'

I learned an invaluable lesson from that client. It is this. Young people are highly cognisant of what is occurring in the world around them. Based on their observations and experiences, these young people have strong opinions about how their lives may be improved by changes in both the physical and social environments they inhabit. Often, their ideas will mirror those of their parents, teachers and neighbours. In many instances, however, young peoples' suggestions for change reflect an ingenuity and creativity unparalleled by their adult counterparts. This particular experience, along with some other interactions with youth, spurred my interest in the ability of youth to contribute to their own well-being as well as the vitality of the communities where they reside.

This memory was triggered by another class assignment. I was assigned to read and report on Lynch's *Growing Up in Cities* for a planning theory course. In his book, Lynch introduced the proposition that understanding the child's experience of urban environments is a critical component of city planning (1977). In a study sponsored by UNESCO, Lynch (1977) assembled research teams in Argentina, Australia, Mexico and Poland in an effort to document the effects of economic development on the way in which a child uses and perceives his or her surroundings. Lynch's insights were heralded as groundbreaking for a number of reasons, including his suggestion that planners should learn about the built and natural environment from all users, including children. *Growing Up in Cities* showed readers that young people have a very sophisticated understanding of the world in which they live.

Further research revealed that Lynch's work lay dormant for nearly 20 years. Some suggest that the reason for this period of dormancy was the progressive nature of Lynch's ideas (Chawla, 2001). At the time I began my own search for a research agenda, the sustainability movement was on the rise and renewed attention was being paid to Lynch's work with children (Malone, 2001). According to Malone (2001, p. 7):

> The principles of sustainable development clearly demand that the simultaneous achievement of environmental, social and economic goals should meet the needs of the present generation without compromising those of future generations.

The renewed interest of involving children in planning practices was also heralded by the Convention of the Rights of the Child presented by UNICEF at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in Istanbul in 1996 (Malone, 2001). The report states:

> Children have a special interest in the creation of sustainable human settlements that will support long and fulfilling lives for themselves and future generations. They require opportunities to participate and contribute to a sustainable urban form.

The recognition of children by the international development community as an indicator of sustainable development brought health and well-being of the young people to the forefront of policymaking and international aid.

Thus began a worldwide effort by planners to tap into young peoples' knowledge about the built and natural environment. Capitalising on this new found knowledge, planners began to seek to create new ways to empower youth to participate in planning processes. My review of these planning activities revealed that such processes were often conducted separately from those designed to garner participation by adults on similar issues. While useful, I wondered if such experiences would lead to sustainable and life-long participation in the absence of the participants' understandings of intergenerational equity issues. This notion propelled my search for an example of a planning process where young people had been brought together in the same forum with adults to engage in decision-making of any kind.

In this pursuit, I encountered an article detailing preliminary efforts by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to include youth in planning decision-making for HOPE VI related projects. I phoned the listed contact at HUD seeking information regarding such activities. I was told that the programme was new and the type of activity I wanted to study was currently underway. The activity was being sponsored by the Atlanta Public Housing Authority (AHA) for the redevelopment of the McDaniel Glenn public housing community. I went to Atlanta.

At the onset of this project, my knowledge of U.S. housing policy was limited. Prior to commencing my studies in Atlanta, I dedicated a significant amount of attention to the study of such policies, particularly those hereinafter referred to as HOPE VI. HOPE VI, also known as the Urban Revitalization Demonstration programme, was established as part of an appropriations act in 1993 (42 U.S.C. Section 1437 (2007)). A more formalised version of HOPE VI was adopted by Congress in October 1998. The new act, known as the *Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act*, guaranteed the permanency of HOPE VI. Pursuant to the terms of the act,

HUD annually issues a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) requesting the local public housing authorities to submit applications for consideration. As detailed by Fitzpatrick (2000, p. 437), these applications are reviewed based on the following criteria:

> level of obsolescence of the current project, consultation and cooperation with residents, density and income mix of the proposed project, leveraging of outside resources, family self-sufficiency plans for residents, size of the new development, and the need for funding.

Upon review of the applications submitted by local public housing authorities, HUD grants monies to local housing authorities for the following purposes (42 U.S.C. Section 1437 (2007)):

- improving the living environment for public housing residents of severely distressed public housing projects through the demolition, rehabilitation, reconfiguration or replacement of obsolete public housing projects (or portions thereof);
- revitalising sites (including remaining public housing dwelling units) on which such public housing projects are located and contributing to the improvement of the surrounding neighbourhood;
- providing housing that will avoid or decrease the concentration of very low-income families; and
- building sustainable communities.

HOPE VI funds have been used to obliterate public housing high-rises in favour of mixed residential compositions (Salama, 1999). In addition, the residents of these new communities are economically diverse, with a third or less of the residents living in units paid for with public housing subsidies (Salama, 1999). The overarching philosophy of the HOPE VI programme is that such integration will assist lower income residents in becoming more self sufficient, with the ultimate goal of turning public housing residents into homeowners (Salama, 1999).

I expected to go to Atlanta to conduct a traditional case study that would respond to two research questions: How do the youth and adult members of the planning committees perceive their participation? Do perceived participation levels of youth and adult members of the planning committee match actual participation levels, as gauged by the researcher's own observations? As originally designed, this study would have provided new and useful knowledge about perceptions of and actual participation by youth and adult members of a planning committee, adding to existing literature that hypothesises the opportunities of bringing adult and youth

stakeholders together to deliberate about and propose solutions for dealing with urban problems, which are of mutual interest to both groups.

However, further investigation into the planning process undertaken by the AHA at McDaniel Glenn led to additional and intriguing questions related to the proposed study of the intergenerational planning committee. It became evident early on that this study would fail to fully comprehend the true uniqueness of the intergenerational planning process going on at the site without beginning with a broader lens. That broader lens required the development of a research methodology that would explain why residents, both adults and youth alike, were experiencing a low-level of anxiety about the prospect of being displaced if the HOPE VI grant was awarded to the AHA for the redevelopment of McDaniel Glenn.

The question became how best to study a unique phenomenon without becoming encumbered by the rigidity of the original research questions. The answer to this dilemma lay in adopting a grounded theory approach for this particular qualitative case study. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 23), 'a grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents'. In choosing to employ the grounded theory approach, this meant rejecting the traditional rational approach to research that involves crafting a research question and gathering data to prove the theory upon which the research question was based (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). With grounded theory, the authors' contend, 'one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this case, the area of study was the intergenerational planning committee. What emerged was a much richer understanding of that phenomenon, as well as the much broader context in which planning committee operated. In its final form, this case study addresses the following questions: (1) Does participation in the planning process for the redevelopment of a public housing community alleviate the relocation grief experienced by participants? (2) Does participation on the intergenerational planning committees contribute to the grief reduction experienced by the youth and adult residents? (3) Has the presence of an advocacy planner contributed to the reduction of relocation-related grief among the members of the intergenerational planning committee at McDaniel Glenn?

Data Collection

Data collection is the next procedural step of the grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). There are many sources and methods available for

the collection of qualitative data. This study was built on data collected from document review, by interview, through questionnaire, and via observation.

As the phenomenon of study was the intergenerational planning committee, I wanted to attempt to understand the operations of this informal governing body. The planning committee was created in August 2003. The group worked with AHA officials from August 2003 to January 2004 in developing an application for the receipt of funds from HUD for the redevelopment of McDaniel Glenn. While not statutorily mandated, the intergenerational planning committee continued to meet through July 2004 to discuss the status of the grant application, as well as issues associated with the redevelopment of McDaniel Glenn. The grant for redevelopment was awarded by HUD in July 2004. While the AHA has made a commitment to continue convening the intergenerational planning committee through the relocation and redevelopment phases of the project – a period that may exceed five years – the scope of this study is limited to the period prior to the award of the HOPE VI grant in July 2004. The reason for this limitation is based on the function of the planning committee. From August 2003 through July 2004, the purpose of the committee has been planning for the redevelopment of the entire site. Following the award of the grant, the focus of the group switched to the relocation of individual families. Community redevelopment is no longer the planning committee's focus. In addition, a new team of AHA officials was assigned to assist with relocation, further ending the continuity of the planning process. The post-award endeavours of the planning committee are disconnected from their pre-award activities and seemingly less relevant to the phenomenon being studied.

I learned of the intergenerational planning committee long after the group had commenced its efforts. I did not begin to attend meeting of the planning committee until February 2004. My knowledge of the planning process prior to that date has been gained through interviews with planning committee participants and AHA officials, as well as through the review of a meticulous set of minutes from those prior meetings prepared by AHA staff.

I conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews with the youth and adult members of the intergenerational planning committee, as well as AHA staff. The youth participants were interviewed both individually and in groups to keep the attention of the participants and in an effort to derive the highest quality of data possible. Thirty youth were interviewed between February and July 2004. Adult participants were also interviewed individually and in small groups. In total, 25 adult members of the planning

committee were interviewed. Eight AHA officials availed themselves to me for interview during that same period. In most cases, I had the opportunity to interview participants, especially the key AHA officials, multiple times during my visits to the site.

While somewhat unstructured, the topics discussed in my initial interviews of planning committee members and staff focused on two sources. First, many of my questions were derived from my own reading of the HOPE VI statute, as well as scholarly literature about the HOPE VI programme. The interviewees were willing to clarify and elaborate on these questions in an effort to further develop my understanding of the HOPE VI process and how Atlanta adhered to or deviated from those norms. My second wave of questions was derived from my review of the minuted meetings from August 2003 through January 2004. These questions more specifically focused on what had occurred at the early meetings of the intergenerational planning committee.

Another very rich source of data for this study was the executive summary for the HOPE VI grant application. Even though the grant application had been filed in January 2004, I was denied access to a copy of this document until July 2004, after the grant had been awarded. It was within the AHA's authority to deny such permission during that period. Understanding the usefulness of such information to me, AHA officials, along with legal counsel, arranged for me to review the executive summary for the HOPE VI grant application. In short form, this document detailed the planning process, as well as the redevelopment plan crafted jointly by the AHA officials and members of the intergenerational planning committee.

In addition to interviews and document review, I had a unique opportunity to have many of my questions for the youth answered by questionnaire. I had not intended to collect data for this study by questionnaire, nor was a formalised questionnaire ever prepared. Due to travel delays, I was not able to attend a special meeting of youth members of the planning committee that had been set up to give me the opportunity to conduct a group interview. Rather than cancelling the meeting, the AHA official who typically led meetings of the youth asked that I forward my questions to him via email. Believing that he would conduct an 'ask and answer' session with the youth, I sent the AHA official over 30 questions. When I arrived in Atlanta the following day, I was given approximately 25 questionnaires containing the questions I sent and the answers of the youth participants. Many of the young people who filed out the makeshift questionnaires attended another meeting on the day of my arrival, giving me the opportunity to further discuss their answers with them.

I also attended the meetings of the intergenerational planning committee from February to July 2004. I was welcomed to these meetings by both committee members and AHA officials. I did not actively participate in these meetings. I was allowed to sit quietly in the back of the auditorium where the meetings were held and take notes. As time passed and the members grew more comfortable with my presence, I was often asked questions about HOPE VI. Rather than answering those questions myself, I referred those who asked to the appropriate AHA staff members or passed such questions along when the members where too shy to ask themselves. The youth members of the planning committee remained interested in my presence throughout, often joining me in the back row seats of the auditorium and asking about the notes I took. I allowed them to look at my notes and comment on the things I had written down. I opened my notes to outside reviewers as well. This is a common approach employed by grounded theorists. The goal of this review process is to provide an outside look at data to ensure that the researcher's interpretation of evidence is on point. In many cases, outside review will confirm a researcher's findings. In some instances, this sort of review will open new channels of research.

As with any qualitative case study, the amount of data collected can be overwhelming. Rather than waiting to analyse all the data at the end of the collection period, I engaged in data interpretation beginning in the early stages of this research project. The method of analysis I employed throughout was coding. Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 61) describe coding as 'the process of analysing data'. Three types of coding are typical in grounded theory research: open, axial, and selective. Researchers of this school may employ one or all of these methods throughout the course of a study. I employed both open and selective coding. Open-coding is most common and labour-intensive. When employing open-coding, a researcher looks at every piece of data collected and attempts to engage in a process of 'breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising and categorising data' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61). As explained by Glaser and Strauss, open-coding involves categorising 'all relevant data that can be brought to bear on a point' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 101).

Open-coding is a particularly useful process for a qualitative researcher as it provides a rubric for the classification and analysis of all types of data collected in the preliminary phases of a study. Researchers begin collecting relevant and necessary data long before a questionnaire is drafted. The inspiration for a study may be planted as the result of a conversation a researcher has with another or as a result of a story on news radio, even before the researcher has identified the phenomenon she will endeavour to

describe and analyse. As a result of this initial inspiration, the researcher will likely investigate the topic further through other conversations, internet searches, perusal of academic journals, and countless other knowledge-seeking endeavours. While researchers from many disciplines may recognise the importance of these inquiries, they may not consider this search for information a part of an on-going study; instead, such activities are viewed as mere preparation. A grounded theory researcher, on the other hand, would begin chronicling each source of knowledge gained from the inception of the idea of interest. For instance, a grounded theorist would chronicle the source of the inspiration, even if he did not know that such knowledge would be important to his study.

I open-coded the data collected from my review of the meeting minutes and my initial interviews with members of the planning committee and AHA officials. In this data, I searched for reoccurring concepts and themes to analyse. More than 50 concepts emerged from the initial process of open-coding and these are outlined in Table 1 below.

As is most often the case with the open-coding process, a researcher will generate far more codes that will likely be relevant for a particular study. The second phase of the coding process involves a 'weeding', if you will, of the data. The purpose of this weeding activity is to identify the themes that have emerged from data collection effort. This process is typically referred to as selective coding. As defined by Strauss and Corbin, selective coding is 'the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 116).

During the selective coding process, the researcher seeks to find the similarities between the open codes. Where there is overlap or a relationship amongst the data, new codes are formed – selective codes. Often, researchers will return to the field of study to gather additional data to further flesh out the themes that emerged from the open-coding process, as was the case with this study. It is important to note that data which does not fall within these new selective codes is not discarded. Rather, it is archived for future use in the on-going study or research endeavours.

In the case of this study, three core categories emerged. The first core category related to the youth and adult participants' feelings about *moving away* from McDaniel Glenn for the redevelopment to take place. The next core category that emerged involved the participants' attitudes about *participation* on the intergenerational planning committee. The final key concept centres on the role of a particular bureaucrat from the AHA and the role taken in facilitating the participatory process of the committee.

Table 1. Open Codes for McDaniel Glenn Public Housing Study.

1. Researcher's first view of community
2. Security issues at McDaniel Glenn
3. Researcher's description of meeting place
4. Incentives used by AHA to get people to attend meetings
5. Positive attitudes held by McDaniel Glenn residents about the proposed project
6. Negative attitudes held by McDaniel Glenn residents about the proposed project
7. Residents' perceptions of the current state of McDaniel Glenn
8. Mentions of youth by residents of McDaniel Glenn
9. Location of the site in relation to the rest of the city
10. Stature of the planning committee's chairwoman
11. Level of group interaction engaged in at meetings of the planning committee
12. Significance of the sign-in sheet to members of the planning committee
13. HUD/AHA conditions on residents for return to signature property
14. Residents feelings about the planning process
15. Monthly HOPE VI update
16. Residents concerns relating to credit
17. HUD/AHA qualifying factors for housing choice
18. Residents interest in home-ownership
19. Continued maintenance of McDaniel Glenn while awaiting for the grant
20. Reuse of demolished materials
21. What a mixed-income community looks like
22. Residents responses to viewing the grant application
23. Concerns raised by residents relating to relocation issues
24. Role of case manager in relocation
25. Purposes of planning committee meetings beyond HOPE VI
26. Youth perceptions of HOPE VI grant
27. Youth concerns about the HOPE VI process
28. Concerns raised by youth and adult residents about the school
29. Unnamed
30. Youth priority list for attributes to be contained in the new design for McDaniel Glenn
31. Youth demands for future planning related activities
32. Continued advisement by AHA about status of grant application
33. Youth concerns regarding relocation issues
34. Youth questions about housing choice
35. How the planning committee at McDaniel Glenn was formed
36. Who runs planning committee meetings
37. Planning committee membership
38. How AHA give notice of planning committee meetings
39. Origin of the idea to involve youth in the planning process
40. Separate meetings for the youth
41. Feelings about ability of youth to contribute to the planning process
42. Residents' role and attitudes about site design for redeveloped McDaniel Glenn
43. Relocation options available to residents
44. Timeline for the project

Table 1. (*Continued*)

45.	Impediments to return to signature properties
46.	Persuasive techniques employed by AHA to garner support for HOPE VI application
47.	Structure of youth planning committee
48.	Familiar relationship between youth and adult planning committee members
49.	Researcher describes completed signature properties
50.	Identification of stakeholders for HOPE VI proposals and projects
51.	Systematic efforts to make up for lost housing opportunities
52.	AHA's feelings about the participatory model created for HOPE VI
53.	Efforts to make McDaniel Glenn new urbanist
54.	Description of Mechanicsville neighbourhood

The open-coded categories for each of these core categories are shown below and collectively they highlight the richness, complexity, and dynamism of the phenomenon being studied:

Moving Away
2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 13, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 39, 40, 41, 43, 45, 46, 48.

Participation
3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 45, 46, 47, 48, 52.

Bureaucrat's Role
14, 15, 25, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 47, 52.

Beginning with the open-coding process, a series of theoretical and factual memoranda were developed to more fully describe the data within each of the codes. These memoranda sought to provide a detailed analysis of the data and to connect the data to existing and relevant theoretical perspectives. The memoranda also served as a useful mechanism for determining what additional data was necessary to reach the point of saturation on each topic. During the months of April through July 2004, the primary focus of my interviews and observations was to fill in any gaps in the data already collected. Upon reaching the point of saturation, I turned my attention from coding to the data analysis. During the analysis phase, I returned to scholarship with which I was familiar and some that was new to me, to see how the knowledge from my study contributed to the existing literature.

In the end, my study described in detail the mechanics of a successful intergenerational planning process that might be modelled by others interested in introducing such processes. What I did not expect was what was revealed regarding the relationship of citizen participation and relocation grief. I was not looking for this initially. However, my data collection and analysis revealed a real excitement about relocation that had not been predicted by the literature in the field. It is my belief that my study would have been limited if I had been led by an hypothesis rather than by an interest in a general phenomenon. What would have been lost was meaningful knowledge regarding the reason why the intergenerational planning group was so successful, that is, their collective lack of grief with respect to relocation.

BRINGING GROUNDED THEORY INTO THE MAINSTREAM OF PUBLIC HOUSING RESEARCH

Grounded theory is not a new approach to research within the social sciences. However, this methodology has not been fully embraced by those engaged in housing research in the field of urban planning. There is likely to be a number of reasons for the reluctance to welcome this method into housing scholarship. One of the primary criticisms of this methodology relates to the issue of social construction. As is the case with other methodological approaches, a grounded theory researcher collects a number of sources of data, ranging from empirical to experiential. The researcher assumes that all data are a reproduction of reality. The data are not treated as true or false. Instead, they are evaluated with respect to their level of sophistication (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Critics charge that the data collected by grounded theorists are socially constructed by both provider (the research subject) and analyser (the researcher). They allege that proponents of the methodology often fail to put in place measures to minimise the encroachment of subjectivity in the analysis of data (Hall & Callery, 2001). As a result, the reality described in grounded theory research falls short of the expectations of the positivists traditions from which such theories originate, especially with respect to the issue of validity.

Hall and Callery (2001) suggest that the introduction of reflexivity is the cure for increasing the validity of grounded theory studies. Truly reflexive grounded theory research calls for the researcher to 'come clean about predispositions' (Guba, 1990). This self-study, if you will, requires the

researcher to honestly assess his or her own perspectives and to disclosure how such biases might have effected the collection or interpretation of the data. This process requires the researcher to systematically document and examine the nature of his or her decision-making processes throughout the research process. Journaling is a useful tool in accomplishing this end. The researcher should begin writing about the events and issues that inspired the research and questions upon which it is based, as well as other matters that may shape the questions asked and the manner in which data sources are interpreted. This technique may not rid the research of its subjectivity entirely. However, it does offer an added element of transparency, indicating that the researcher is aware of the level of social construction occurring.

Grounded theory is yet another approach to scholarly research. As with any other research methodology, public housing researchers should give careful consideration before employing this approach. Probert (2006, p. 9) suggests to researchers that if they follow in her steps they consider:

- the nature of their research topic;
- the methodological possibilities;
- the approaches used in different fields;
- the challenged notions of others and the researcher herself; and
- emotional and rational connection to the approach.

The need for a grounded theory approach is likely to reveal itself, where most appropriate, when answering these questions. Once the decision to employ this methodology is made, the researcher must actively document his or her data collection and coding processes in an effort to heighten the level of transparency associated with the research. This documentation process will carry with it the stamp of legitimacy necessary to bring grounded theory into the mainstream of public housing research.

While it may not be possible for a researcher employing a grounded theory methodology to escape fully from criticisms regarding social construction, my own experience employing this methodology is that there is value in taking the time and risks associated with conducting grounded theory studies. It is by exploring these approaches that are new to us that we continue to better understand how to study complex problems related to public housing that do not always fit neatly into a single research question or statistical formula.

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CHAPTER 12

ETHNOGRAPHY AND HOUSING STUDIES REVISITED

Adrian Franklin

INTRODUCTION

I would like to be able to report that the film *Salmer fra kjokkenet* (*Kitchen Stories*) (dir. Bente Hamer, 2003) was a direct consequence of the powerful arguments I made for the use of ethnography in housing studies almost 20 years ago (Franklin, 1990). Sadly, I cannot! In this touching comedy drama from Norway, a team of Swedish ethnographers working from the Swedish Home Research Institute descend on a remote rural locality in Norway during the 1950s in order to study the kitchen habits and cultures of single living men. It is an improbable quest, until one learns that the same team discovered how Swedish housewives needlessly walk the equivalent distance between Stockholm and the Congo every year as they go about their routine kitchen business; a finding that successfully paved the way for more efficient kitchen design and culture. So it was that the team descended on the very perplexed and uncooperative Norwegian bachelors (the last sub-group in their programme) in order to map out *their* domestic inefficiencies. Comic tension is built both through their ethnographic props (the researchers were to sit on giant stools in the kitchens, giving them panoptic vision), rules (they were not to talk to respondents, although that proves awkward when lights are turned out by thrifty Norwegians) and living spaces (they were to live in specially designed, round caravans parked outside their respondent's homes).

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The film would have been a vindication of my arguments not so much because it demonstrates the truth that practical housing outcomes can arise from spending sufficient periods of time studying *cultural* milleux, but because it also demonstrates that the relationship between researchers and respondents become more productive over time, resulting in more reliable data, better understandings of that millieux and what their problems (and therefore often 'ours') *actually* consist of.

I would also like to say that notwithstanding its obvious failure to penetrate Scandinavian thinking, my original paper did make a powerful impression elsewhere, particularly in the UK where it was written. Sadly, that is not true either or at least as it is evident from its number of citations, a grand total of 11 to date. Maybe it did influence without being cited, though here again I am not prepared to be overwhelmed. Although the number of housing studies articles published since then with 'housing' and 'ethnography' in their key words is larger, (around 40), we are clearly not talking about a major paradigm shift having taken place. Perhaps it influenced a new generation of housing workers, planners and designers without necessarily being cited by them in turn. Maybe. I *am* cheered by finding a new (since 2004) and very rich source of ethnographic activity focussed on the home, of which more later, however the intellectual pathway leading there was via the burgeoning interest in material cultures rather than housing studies. In sum therefore, there are not many reasons to be cheerful. However the point of this chapter is not to crow or to celebrate but to revisit the history of ethnography in housing research since my original paper was written and to account for its persistent absence, despite its evident promise. I will try to show where it has been taken up and where it has not, and this is a useful exercise in its own right because it demonstrates that there have been significant innovations and progress. However I think the most useful task it can perform is to diagnose why such an obviously useful method is (still) apparently under-utilised.

This chapter will briefly restate the key points of my original paper and then go on to evaluate the record of ethnography in housing studies between 1990 and 2008. This evaluation is structured by considering both those papers that cited and used my original piece, as well as other housing studies where ethnography was employed. In addition to considering the difference that these ethnographic approaches make to address the housing questions they posed, I also evaluate the quality, application and interpretation of the ethnography in these studies. In particular, I offer a series of critical comments that relate to: (1) a discernible drift from the original understandings and *purpose* of ethnography as it emerged as a tool of social anthropology and was adopted more widely by the social sciences;

(2) the unwillingness of funders of research to properly finance ethnography and even to accord it the scientific status that it deserves; and (3) the difficulty of matching ethnography to focussed studies of policy (which is a dominant if not exclusive characteristic of housing studies). These three comments may account for why we have not seen as much full-blown ethnographic research as we would like, at least in mainstream housing studies, but that should not be taken as grounds for continuing to sideline it. Rather, they are arguments for reasserting the original arguments of my 1990 paper. The chapter concludes on a positive note by identifying and showcasing an area of housing studies where ethnography has blossomed and is demonstrating its true potential.

ETHNOGRAPHY AND HOUSING STUDIES: AN INITIAL FORAY

My initial foray into the potential of ethnography in housing studies (Franklin, 1990) originated from the coming together of two disciplines, urban studies (and more specifically housing studies as a policy driven sub-discipline) and social anthropology that too often in the UK setting have remained apart. Indeed for most of their history they have rarely addressed the same research questions or settings. Generalising, social anthropologists have developed a remit in largely overseas, developing regions (where traditional society is still significant) while urban studies has seen its role as part of the broader remit of sociology to assist in the management of the inevitable sequence of social transitions that modernity entails. I was lucky to find myself the PhD student of Ray Forest and Alan Murie in 1983 who, in their conversations with others, notably Jeff Henderson, Valerie Karn and Jim Kemeny (see Henderson & Karn, 1987; Kemeny, 1992 for a good taste for the development of new ways of thinking about housing research) had begun to see serious problems in the positivist approach that characterised housing research at the time and particularly its dependency on social survey data alone. As someone trained in social anthropology but who remained sceptical of its restriction to 'other cultures' overseas, I was very keen to enter into this experimental relationship. I had closely observed its success in the excellent study of Sheppey conducted by Ray Pahl and his team of ethnographers and surveyors while doing my Masters at the University of Kent. My feelings were that if this study could overturn the misconceptions and distrust of Margaret Thatcher's reserve army of the

unemployed and the newly disorganised labour markets of the 1980s, then a similar approach could be applied to what was often called 'the housing question', a series of issues that related to the social and political churning around major transitions in tenure and ownership of domestic property (Ball, 1983; Saunders, 1990).

I suspect that the other important player in the coming together of these disciplines, when they did and in the way they did, was the city of Birmingham, England. Ray, Alan, Jeff, Jim and Valerie were all from the close-knit Centre for Urban and Regional Studies 'tribe' at the Birmingham University who had been intellectually touched, reconfigured and energised by the emergence of the Cultural Studies at the University's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies.

In theory, the heady brew that was the potential of inter-disciplinarity offered exciting possibilities. However, as with all tribes it is possible to make local alliances and even marriages, to trade and cooperate, but tribal loyalties are always powerful and endure to form the basis of future social cleavages. As an anthropologist recruited into such a culture, relationships and collaborations were entirely possible but one remains an outsider; the uninitiated one, always suspected of holding loyalties to other questions, agendas and groups and disturbing tendencies to wander off-song. I was always surprised how often I was told that I was an outsider not a proper School for Advanced Urban Studies (SAUS) person and the language was disturbingly close to that of kinship and village belonging as revealed for Elmdon, Essex by the social anthropologists Audrey Richards, Marilynn Strathern and associates at Cambridge University (Strathern, 1981).

It is for this reason that I am now convinced that disciplines and their various sub-disciplines are no longer (if they ever were) the appropriate social organisations for research; which is not to say that this applies to any one discipline's preferred methods, such as ethnography or survey instruments, which have no disciplinary affiliations in and of themselves. Nonetheless, even with the benefit of this hindsight and it will soon become apparent why I detoured here, I remember our discussions about the potential of incorporating ethnography as a tool for investigating housing questions as very exciting and intellectually stimulating. I count myself as very fortunate to be associated with the initiative shown by Forest and Murie that I believe happens only too rarely.

Ethnography and Housing Studies not only had an interesting and talented genealogy, it also had some assistance from some generous and kind commentators, one of whom, for the record, was Anthony Giddens. This was an opportune time to make the case because agency and culture

had begun to seriously bite into the intellectual sensibility of (the hitherto dominant) structuralism in sociological circles.

On the one hand there was Anthony Giddens' (1984) stab at understanding the important *emergent* nature of the relationship between structure and agency in his *Constitution of Society*. In his view, Paul Willis' (1980) *Learning to Labour* remained the archetype best practice demonstration of the double hermeneutic between structure and agency, and critically this was an ethnography. On the other hand, there was interest in critical realism that argued that agency was a property of almost everything. However, in the view of critical realists ethnography was promoted to an intellectual position far ahead of where most people placed it (as the source of good 'illustrative material'). Andrew Sayer's (1984) excellent *Method in Social Science*, for example, made the case for both extensive approaches (i.e. data sets, social surveys) and intensive approaches (in-depth interviews, observation, participation, etc.). However the critical thing is that whereas extensive approaches merely enable you to understand the distributive nature of an issue, how it is spread across a variety of social and spatial parameters, only methods such as ethnography are capable of investigating and interrogating causal mechanisms (how and why things work the way they do).

The intellectual endorsement of ethnography as an important scientific tool is perhaps best expressed by one of the leading edges of sociological enquiry, the so-called Science and Technology Studies (STS). In one of its founding texts, Latour and Woolgar's (1979) *Laboratory Life* show how the construction of scientific facts only makes sense if one understands the anthropology of a laboratory. As Knorr Cetina (1995, p. 141) went on to say:

> Laboratory Studies have turned this territory into a new field of exploration. The method used in laboratory studies, ethnography (participant observation) with discourse analysis components, has become something of a contemporary equivalent of the historical case study method that became popular in the wake of Kuhn. Ethnography furnished the optic for viewing the process of knowledge production as "constructive" rather than descriptive; in other words, for viewing it as constitutive of the reality knowledge was said to "represent".

It is a fact that lends more credibility to any renewed call for more ethnography in housing studies to point at the recent and current influence of Actor Network Theory (ANT) and the various relational materialisms and posthumanism that followed in its wake (Manzi & Jacobs, 2008). These have been growing in significance strongly through the 1990s and it shows no sign of letting up. For scholarship in this tradition ethnography reigns supreme and rarely requires the supportive backup of extensive data to establish its wider relevance or the theoretical idea that structure is also out there

somewhere. This is because in ANT type research the anthropology of any given network is the only explanation that matters (in this regard it is widely regarded as atheoretical) and anything beyond it or disconnected from it is literally another thing or irrelevant to it. Because all things in a network are co-constitutive of each other, none of them exists as a separable entity. And while interest in ANT is not restricted to relations of propinquity but connectedness, it is an anthropology that ranges over a variety of spaces, times as well as agencies (both human and non-human). It is this latter quality that most readily lends itself to housing studies, because in ANT terms all things relating to any housing question, including homes, architectures, houses, administrative systems, policies, neighbourhoods, housing practices and cultures must be treated symmetrically, which is to say that none of them may be bracketed out of investigations. All of them must be assumed, by virtue of their connection to have potential effects and that it is these effects that are of interest. This is of great interest to these debates because in the early 1980s it was fashionable to reject what came to be called environmental determinisms, where buildings, designs, plans and other environmental invariants were held to be important to housing outcomes (degrees of crime on a housing estate; feeling of well-being and so on).

Clearly housing studies is on the verge of breaking into these forms of analysis, though it seems to prefer its own language of the 'post-social turn' (Smith 2004, 2007; Gabriel & Jacobs, 2008). Gabriel and Jacobs (2008, pp. 529–535) does a good job surveying this embryonic new turn, suggesting that it may span the full gamut of housing studies from the performativity of housing material culture to post-social accounts of housing neighbourhood, the operation of housing markets and housing policy and neighbourhood planning. New demonstrations of this turn include Hitchin's (2004) example of how freezers enact and make possible new forms of domestic life, and how plants produce enlivened presences both indoors and in gardens that are otherwise considered inert cultural landscapes, and also Franklin's (2006) analysis of housing and the home as a multi-species, posthumanist space where dogs both act and matter in housing decisions and design.

ETHNOGRAPHY AND HOUSING STUDIES SINCE 1990

This section considers first those (published) works that referenced the original 1990 paper and second, to broaden the scope of this revisit, those

that did not reference my paper but which nonetheless had an ethnography and housing theme. I am interested in seeing how and where ethnography has been deployed in housing research, the extent to which the early call resulted in full-blown ethnographic studies or the extent to which it was used more sparingly (if that is not a contradiction in terms) within other studies using a battery of methods. I am also interested in seeing which traditions of ethnography have been deployed (social anthological, ethnomethodological, biographic/life history and so on).

At the outset it is interesting to note that one of the more recent papers that did reference the original paper (Maginn, 2006, p. 8) makes the same point I made at the beginning of this chapter, that enthusiasm for ethnographic approaches may have waned, at least in some countries: 'For an in-depth British or Australian perspective on the role and potential of qualitative research in urban studies one has to look back 10–20 years'. Of the 16 papers reviewed in this paper, five were British or Australian (most by a small handful of authors) and the rest were North American (and Canada seems to be disproportionately enthusiastic).

Studies Citing the Original Article

Given the previous paragraph, it is not surprising that two of the five journals (Jacobs, 2001; Maginn, 2006) citing the original paper repeated calls for the deployment of ethnography (and related methods in housing/urban studies) and a third is in 2008 (Gabriel & Jacobs, 2008). However there is a sense of progress in these papers. Jacobs (2001) refines the importance of historical analysis and context that is often missing in snapshot surveys whether quantitative or qualitative. This highlights the benefit of spending longer periods of time in the field (where respondents are more likely to reveal the relevance of their cultural pasts in the present) or ethnographic methods that specifically aim to reconstruct cultural milieu and lives from personal and contextual pasts (biographical/life history, local history, oral history and so on). Maginn makes the important point that even where ethnographic and other in-depth qualitative methods have been used in urban and housing research, there has been little discussion or refinement of the targeting of these methods in these contexts and worse that 'it tends to be relatively cursory in nature' in published works. Ironically, he argues, it tends to be only in PhD theses in housing/urban studies where 'methodological issues are discussed at length'. I will come back to the significance of the relationship between ethnography and PhD theses

towards the end where I want to discuss some broader issues and problems. In a way this is doubly ironic given what Gabriel and Jacobs (2008) argue: for them, the post-social turn is not merely a theoretical revolution but a methodological revolution. In addition, I would say it was predominantly the latter since many post-social 'theorists' wish to abandon theory in favour of method (see Latour 1993, Law & Mol 2002), in which ethnography is less an option than an obligation.

Although Gurney's (1999) paper is a substantive case study from his own PhD in St George, Bristol, it is also making an important methodological/theoretical point about the importance of metaphor and analogy as they arise spontaneously in everyday life settings, and the significance they have in the social constructions of the meaning of home, tenure and ownership. Part of our problem, always, is not only knowing what people think and say about issues but also how they arrived at them and the social processes behind them. This is where, and only where, the link between policy, politics and culture can be established; where assumptions can be tested and refined. Gurney argues that all people tend to think about issues in terms of analogy (likening unfamiliar concepts to familiar ones) and metaphor (explaining unfamiliar concepts by likening them to the *characteristics* of familiar ones). Given that sociological understanding itself proceeds through the use of metaphors (Urry, 2000) we ought to be more sensitive to its significance more generally, and not treat the values and understandings of others as already-made (and not of further interest). As Gurney shows, it is the cultural context and cultural language repertoires that unlock the secret to analogy and metaphorical construction and thus to more of our research questions.

Otherwise, I could only find two papers that were purely applications of the ethnographic method. Both cases illustrate very plainly that when we are thinking about people and their housing we are always talking about specific cultural milieux that have an *ethnos*. Surveys may be able to build in ethnic taxa or categories but they do not always capture the important cultural variations within ethnic majorities (for example, the significance of nationality, locality, city and neighbourhood can be paramount in explaining difference) or the significance of regional and tribal cultures among broader ethnic minorities (where custom, aesthetic, kinship, family and household structure vary enormously). It is therefore important that more focussed ethnographic studies are applied particularly where questions of planning or problems are being addressed. Bowes, Dar and Sim (1997), for example, show how an ethnographic method is really the only suitable approach to understanding the difficulties Pakistani people and households encounter in

Glasgow, Scotland. This setting has at least two distinct cultural dimensions: a local city's housing norms and culture, and the complex nature and variation of immigrant housing norms and culture within one ethnic category. Of course, any ethnographic housing study has to be sensitive and address both, which is why milieu is the key word in ethnography. The same problem is identified by Varady and Carrozza (2000) in their research on customer satisfaction levels in public housing in Cincinnati, USA.

Some major studies that I am familiar with in the UK did not show on my rather crude radar for finding relevant literatures and this may be because some of the objects of ethnographic study have now been taken on board in mainstream housing and urban research and evidence-based government policy. This is certainly the view of Maginn (2004, 2006) who has argued that whilst ethnographic methods form part of the policy evaluations conducted by academic researchers, they are generally seen as playing an exploratory or supplementary role as opposed to a leading one in such research endeavours.

Other Works in Housing and Ethnography since 1990

Ten further articles selected for this chapter are those that did not cite my paper but which were identified by *Google Scholar* as including housing and ethnography in their key terms. It is interesting to see patterns in their scope and origin. Mostly they were North American and there are three distinct clusters: (1) those that investigate housing and homeless people; (2) those that investigate the elderly living in care homes; and (3) those that address public housing issues, particularly those with a strong racial/ethnic focus. Not surprisingly, the first and last of these clusters feature in this volume. Also very prominent is their disciplinary clustering around health and social work issues rather than housing studies per se (although of course the former belong to the Catholic Church of the latter). However it may illustrate a more serious concern (which I will pick up in my concluding sections), namely that when the issue is focussed on the *care and well-being* of (certain groups of) people, ethnography becomes imperative, essential, whereas when housing is seen as a provision of the more abstract idea of service or policy and/or in more concrete terms the supply of (affordable) housing products again to certain types of groups (particularly to poor and underprivileged people) it is less so. This may be a question of scale (the closer we are to people the more we know we have to understand them

properly) and it might be a question of pragmatic politics and funding, and it might be both.

In my original paper I highlighted one work of astonishing dedication and breathtaking implications: it was Biebuyck's (1982) study of homeless men in London. It showed what could not be known before: that counter-intuitively these figures whom we encounter in the urban landscape as lonely and isolated are in fact living in a cultural world, which has its own political economy, labour market, norms of behaviour, spatiality, moral economy and patterns of association and exchange. It showed that this was not always a particularly pleasant cultural world but that it was nonetheless structured and amenable to improvement (whereas of course most assume they are ungovernable, fundamentally disordered and fit only for the dispensation of charity). In his three year ethnographic study of an emergency homeless shelter in Massachusetts, Lyons-Callo (2000) uncovered a similar 'institutionalising' idea in which homelessness itself was medicalised using a discourse of deviancy, which in turn became a key aspect of self-making for the homeless themselves.

Thrasher and Mobray's (1995) study of homeless women with children in the Detroit area used a 'strengths' perspective (that identifies key areas in which their agency is effective or active), and which rather like Biebuyck's study rescues the humanity of their situation; providing as they argue, 'guideposts for social workers as they search for practice models' (1982, p. 93). These papers show that ethnography is not merely butterfly collecting but aimed at understanding what practitioners need to know. In a similar vein, papers by Angus, Kontos, Dyck, McKeever and Poland (2005) and Luken and Vaughan (2003) illustrate how research on the meaning of the home (see Gurney, 1995, 1999; Franklin, 1989, 1990, 1991; Blunt & Dowling, 2006) is becoming more important to understand in terms of an ageing society where often the same family dwelling is changed in order for care to be delivered or where people have to adapt to living alone. This theme is also picked up by Perkins, Thorns and Winstanley in this volume. As something that will be one of the next major shifts in the demography and ordering of housing, such studies will be significant since we are entering into a new era of housing experience and housing provision.

Finally, ethnography has been central to researching the changing housing experiences of North American public housing. This is also an emergent field of culture as older public housing developments have been through crisis, then redevelopment and regeneration, often by restructuring them into less homogenous neighbourhoods and often leaving the original inhabitants and new immigrants in a very different, culturally confused

milieu. Reid, Liebow and O'Malley's (2006) study of Rainier Vista, one of the HOPE IV re-development projects in Seattle, USA, is an investigation of precisely this new configuration of circumstances and cultures by way of designing and planning appropriate community development and social support. So too is Jourdan's chapter in this volume.

Ethnography is also considered as an appropriate tool for studying the uneven housing experiences (for example, uptake of owner occupation and housing as social capital) among ethnic minorities in the USA (see especially De Souza Briggs, 1997, 1998; Ratner, 1996). De Souza Briggs (1998) demonstrates that taxonomic variation alone cannot explain why some neighbourhood experiences provide African-American youths with the fillip to achieve social mobility while others become involved in crime, and why ethnographic work is essential to strengthen data required for Housing Mobility Programmes (De Souza Briggs, 1997). Through a comprehensive ethnographic programme in four ethnic minority and immigrant housing areas Ratner was able to understand the barriers to owner occupation. Some of the findings were predictable (absence of affordable housing, limitations of existing financial packages, absences in the knowledge of and know-how in credit judgement) but other factors distance these groups from the institutions and cultures of owner occupation (cultural gaps, misunderstandings, biases etc.). Again, ethnography proved to be a reliable way of accessing the necessary knowledge under circumstances where other instruments would be too blunt and unable to achieve the same degree of trust, and thus the *reliability* of data (see also Blunt & Dowling, 2006, pp. 43–45) – the issue of reliability of qualitative data is discussed in more detail by Maginn, Thompson and Tonts in Chapter 1.

The message that hails loud and clear from this revisit is that the original reasons for promoting ethnography in housing studies are still valid. Subsequent research has extended this work in new practical domains, in methodological refinements and elaborations, and as a promising nexus between users, practitioners and policymakers especially where the coordinates of housing demography and housing provision are fluid and changing. It is therefore all the more disappointing that it is still a relatively minor tool in housing studies and housing policy debates. In the final section, I will address what I believe are the main reasons for this paradox but before that I want to showcase and celebrate a new and fruitful venture in housing studies, the journal *Home Cultures* that began in 2004.

Although *Home Cultures* is only four and a half-years old (as I write) and spans the disciplines of design practice, design history, social history, literary studies, architecture, gender studies, cultural/social history, anthropology,

sociology, archaeology, urban planning, legal studies, contemporary art, geography, psychology, folk studies, cultural studies and art history, I have found at least 12 articles so far where ethnography is referred to or used. Given that at one time it was considered highly problematic to conduct ethnographic study in the often private and secretive spaces of the home, this is some achievement and change. *Home Cultures* is unashamedly *material,* and its ethnographic explorations of the material cultures of our housing and homes seems such an obvious and central element of our housing experiences (none of us would consider a dwelling devoid of its objects as a home). So it is all the more stranger that until quite recently we felt it was possible (and appropriate) to excise such objects from housing studies altogether. Even studies that began in the 1980s around the meaning of home rarely felt the need to explore the materiality of the home, thinking that it was an essentially human, linguistic, emotional and cognitive construct – which of course it is – but it is so much more too.

Generalising, one can identify both humanist and posthumanist strands of ethnography in *Home Cultures*. The material anthropology of Daniel Miller represents the humanist tradition through 'the social life of things perspective'. Here, as his excellent study of the kitsch (Miller, 2006) as an expression of social belonging shows, a great deal of our social life is mediated by and made possible by the objects we use to articulate ideas and emotions. Miller shows how cluttered displays of bright kitsch objects play an important role in respondent Marcia's life as it does for sociality generally in Trinidad, Jamaica and throughout the Caribbean.

> What it achieves for her is the replacement of specific memorabilia of actual friends and relatives with the generic material culture whose very ordinariness allows one to renege on aspiration and settle into acknowledgement of what fate has granted. Kitsch transcends particular relationships and associates her with the wider world, of happy times and sunny places that at least speak to the diversity and goodness of creation. (Miller, 2006, p. 248)

At the other extreme, posthumanist studies (as exemplified by Hitchins, 2004) want to point up the way objects engage with us, are not merely the means of representation of human emotion and meaning, and do not stand apart from us. Indeed the claim would be that we are mutually constitutive of each other and that therefore the role of ethnography is to reveal how in this way housing is achieved in a 'lively exchange' between a wide range of actants, both human and non-human. In this way also, housing ethnography can be seen in network terms that do not focus necessarily on the house or merely the experience of housing. Relieu, Zouinar and

La Valle (2007) are interested in how humans interact with their newly elaborate machinic homes: what do they actually do and how does it *matter*? This is not only a new and exciting venture in the ethnography of home, it also introduces new ways of recording it (using video) as well as ways of interpreting it (using the techniques of conversation analysis) – something that was also suggested by Franklin, Travers, Haraway and Emmison (2007) in their study for understanding how humans and dogs create domestic relationships.

In many ways, the arrival of *Home Cultures,* as well as the other works visited here ought to be enough to satisfy me that ethnography and housing studies has arrived, is still developing and expanding, is doing good work and is in good shape. I ought to be satisfied and yet I am not. In the concluding section I will say why.

CONCLUSIONS: SOME FURTHER PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

I want to pay something of a tribute to Ray Pahl who I see as making one of the most important contributions to our understanding of urban social life in the 20th century, particularly for his ability to keep a strong sense of ethnography alive. Pahl's (1984) *Divisions of Labour* is the result of many research techniques. All of this should remind readers of my original argument that ethnography is an essentially and ideally multi-method approach and should not be confused with in-depth qualitative techniques alone. In many ways it resonates with the multi-method approach used by Chicago School sociologists who are often (mis)perceived as being largely practitioners of ethnography (Bulmer, 1984). Hence, *Divisions of Labour* in my view remains one of the richest and best ethnographies (or translations of a cultural milieu into terms that can be understood by those not familiar with it). It is at the same time historically informed, informed by micro-sociological investigations of household relationships and labour, as well as informed by extensive data sets on all manner of work and labour in a small island (just about), run-down town off the Kentish coast, England. He is therefore well qualified to make generalisations about ethnography as he found it, a few years before I wrote my *Ethnography and Housing Studies* essay.

In reviewing the extraordinary advantage, depth and richness contained in a new series of ethnographies using life-histories and biographical methods Pahl (1983, p. 15) identified some crucial aspects not so much of

ethnography but of how ethnography relates to intellectual life and endeavour. I summarised the bones of this article as follows:

> [Ethnographies] are extremely time-consuming and rarely done by established academics (most are PhD projects); relative to other methods they are difficult to frame in terms of clear and determinate research proposals and from the outset it is not always clear exactly what will be discovered (if anything) when one goes that deeply into an issue. (Franklin, 1999, pp. 2426–2427)

It may well be therefore that a lion's share of ethnographic work in housing studies is contained in PhDs (for example, Alleva, 1988; Franklin, 1989; McCarthy, 1990; Gurney, 1997; Karabanow, 2000) but these are all too often hidden away unpublished and unread. I have never come across a single reference to my own or the group of similar theses produced at that time. In the not so distant past many PhDs did find their way into press, but this is now extremely rare and many social science publishers avoid PhDs even more than they do publishing other monographical works. Of course their value is not so much their findings but their role as a form of academic training, but if Pahl is correct we are training people to do something that we continue to recognise as worthwhile, but which they will never do again – other than indirectly, as supervisors of other theses. Given that the training required to produce ethnography is always reckoned to be at least two–three years of intensive fieldwork, then this would seem to be a training that is subsequently squandered. Looking at it from another angle, it means that trainees rather than their masters produce almost all of our ethnographic data/work.

As I have alluded to already, this has serious implications for the type of data and findings that make it onto the published page by the most read and trusted authors. It is a truly ludicrous situation and would be laughed at surely if it were the way the physical sciences operated. Junior research scientists do a lot of the basic science, but the point is their PhDs trained them to produce good data and analysis. In the social sciences similar types of training are put to good use by PhD graduates in almost all areas of methodology (social survey, data base analysis, research based on interviews, archival retrieval and so on) except, or only very rarely in the case of ethnography. The obvious exception is in the discipline of social anthropology where ethnographic fieldwork is their main research tool. Trained social anthropologists frequently go back to the same fieldwork areas to extend their investigations or to open up new investigations elsewhere and somehow this does not require a radically different university labour process: they still manage to do this and run their teaching programmes. In other words it is not an impossibility to enrol ethnographic

methods into routine academic life and given the growing intellectual respect for it as a method, it is a profound anomaly that is it so absent.

Its absence is best accounted for by Pahl's second and third points. Specifically, because ethnographies are radically open-ended, often entering into much uncharted territory of culture and social practice, it is unlikely that problems identified by a research proposal (produced in advance) will prove to be the most apt, relevant or critical. The classic case of Paul Willis' (1980) investigation into why education fails working class kids found precisely that the question was wrong in the first place: it is not that schools fail but that working class culture offers more attractive options – that educators were unlikely to recruit working class lads into what is essentially a different and unvalued cultural habitus. The problem is that the funders of research are increasingly identifying the problems they wish to see addressed by the research community and given the second of Pahl's points, it is less likely that they will fund any form of methodology that is not tightly focussed around them; still less, given his third point, fund a methodology that is likely to shift the very nature of the question itself. These various points seem to underscore the concerns shown by American-based educational and qualitative researchers towards the Bush government's No Child Left Behind programme that advocates the use of scientific methods to generate valid and reliable data/evidence (Lincoln & Cannella, 2004).

Of course, not all funders pretend to know what the key questions and problems are in advance; if that were the case they would need fresh research far less often than they appear to. So there is still a residue of cases where ethnography would seem the most apt method to be deployed, but where it is routinely not.

Given the difficulty of being funded to do ethnography and its relative rarity in the housing studies publication record, one obvious answer is that most sensible social researchers tend to equip themselves to offer and then actually offer in their proposals, other methods or a mix of extensive and less intensive methods. Even much of the ethnographic work reviewed here has in my view been pared back to a minimum; to the point where they are not actually making sense of a cultural milieu but engaged largely in in-depth interviews. In so many, where one sees an excellent application of qualitative data collection and analysis at the level of a few households, one is left wondering whether the notion of a cultural milieu has been tackled at all – or at least whether 'a household' can be a meaningful cultural *milieu*. In many, the necessary historical depth to establish a cultural milieu around the individuals concerned is so minimal that one has very little sense of their being in the world at all.

However, the cues for much of this minimalisation have to come from the funders themselves and given that these are predominantly government organisations, their relationship to the objects of research is also critical; maybe none more so than in areas such as housing.

By virtue of its close ties to public sector housing and government housing policy, housing research like the services it monitors and evaluates is never lavishly funded. In an area of public service funding with a long track record of budgetary restraint and minimalism, it is hardly likely that any part of the housing process especially perhaps soft-end research will be funded differently.

I have long held the cynical view (one that made me want to leave housing research altogether, in fact) that governments of all persuasions (at least in the UK and the USA) can't be bothered to know properly or don't want to know about the people they govern and house. All too often designs are obtained from architects and planners that have often thought through many social and cultural problems but when they are constructed at lowest cost it is often those refinements that addressed important cultural and social issues (such as amenities) that are cut.

These are generalisation, of course, but it must be one conclusion from my analysis here that even though the research community may be aware of the best practice and regularly remind themselves of it through their own journals, they know intuitively that it is not worth the effort of asking to put it in practice when it will not be funded. There is a culture of cheapness and quick-fix in the housing field that makes being a housing researcher a less than edifying experience. I note here my previous observation about its apparent need in caring situations and its relative absence in large bureaucratised situations such as state/public housing.

The analogy I always make is with medicine. Before a new drug or procedure is licensed and brought into clinical use there are enormous procedures in place to make sure it will do what the manufacturers claim, that it will be safe, and even that its unintended consequences (side-effects) will be known and within acceptable limits. It seems that nowhere near the same concern is expressed over housing and the building of living spaces which have as serious implications and are similarly big-ticket budgets.

This is what always surprised the British housing researcher when visiting or working in Scandinavia; that over there people seemed to know (and care) that housing *mattered*. So part of the problem I am going to lay firmly and squarely at the feet of the government, of uncaring and penny pinching governments who seem, by virtue of showing little interest in an apt level of ethnographic understanding of their own people (particularly sections of the

so-called undeserving poor) to have produced the very problems they seek to solve; that housing researchers are then called in to sort out with inadequate funding and resources and methods.

This brings me back to the warm hearted Norwegian satire of Swedish modernism I began with. It brings me back to the people who are so committed to the idea of a well ordered, well planned and workable life world that they have armies of trained 'career ethnographers' concerned with how an obscure and remote and politically irrelevant population of elderly single men set about boiling eggs and making coffee in outmoded kitchen settings. Of course this is preposterous, but it begs questions about balance and intent. If we can see that ethnography is a rarity in the understanding, planning and social construction of our domestic lives and cities, then it probably means that both the intent and the balance still needs to be thought through.

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