Living through Challenges in Low Income Neighbourhoods:

Change, Continuity, Contrast

Final Research Report

*Living Through Change in Challenging Neighbourhoods:
A Research Project funded by the Joseph Rowntree
Foundation*

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Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction

This document is the final report of the research project, *Living through Change in Challenging Neighbourhoods*, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in order to examine, through a mix of research methods, the changing circumstances and experiences of households living in six relatively deprived neighbourhoods across Britain. The research was carried out over three years and sought to develop an understanding of:

- how the experience of households living on low incomes in Britain varies according to space and time;

- the salience of 'place' in the perceptions, actions and decisions made by different types of household, in different contexts;

- comparisons and contrasts between the experiences of households in deprived neighbourhoods with divergent geographical, social and economic characteristics; and

- the implications of households' experiences and perceptions as captured in the research for the assumptions behind policies designed to tackle deprivation at both the household and neighbourhood level.

This research project has therefore sought to explore the interaction between 'poverty' and 'place' by focusing on how poverty is *experienced* and what prompts subsequent action and behaviour, in different geographical settings, and over a specific period of time. It seeks to draw on analysis and insights from two analytical traditions and academic disciplines. Some of the established 'poverty literature' in the social policy tradition has focused, like this research, on qualitative interviews with and biographical accounts of people living on low incomes (e.g. Hooper *et al*, 2007; Orr *et al*, 2006; Parker and Pharoah, 2008; Ridge, 2009), but the focus has often been relatively *aspatial* (although see Robertson *et al*, 2008; Hall, 2007; Mumford and Power, 2003; Martin, 2005; Lupton, 2003). The impact of the neighbourhood, town or city on individual experiences has tended to recede into the background compared to the focus placed on the role of family, home, school, workplace or social networks.

We have attempted to explore in this project the ongoing interactions between household and area-based deprivation by looking at how the experience of living in particular kinds of towns and neighbourhoods acts to shape, reinforce or counter the daily challenges that confront people living on relatively low incomes. It also reaches back into the different historical trajectories of the localities, changes during the three years of the research project, and the implications for the resilience of both individual households and wider communities in the face of recent economic and social changes. The research aims to indicate how the experience of living in relatively deprived areas is mediated by time and space. At an analytical level, the project reflects the growing interest in mapping the qualitative experiences of local 'geographies of poverty' (Milbourne, 2010). At a policy level, it is concerned with the

development of more nuanced place-based interventions for deprived neighbourhoods, how these need to be supported by economic and social policy interventions at the macro-level and with the way that informal social networks, relationships and forms of support might be sustained, nurtured or fractured by taking up different policy options. In particular, the research findings provide an opportunity to reflect on the salience of the emerging poverty, social and urban governance agendas of the new Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government, characterised by themes such as the 'Big Society', 'new localism', welfare reform, cultural change and an emphasis on the private and voluntary/community sectors (*see* Conservative Party, 2010; Cameron, 2010).

Recently, there has been a shift from cross-sectional accounts of poverty to a more dynamic perspective, in which the duration of poverty spells and the nature of recurrent poverty have become a focus for analysis (Shildrick et al, 2010; Walker and Leisering, 1998; Alcock, 2004). This research project sought to add to our understanding of these processes, by undertaking an iterative study of a sample of households in six places across Britain and examining not just changing household circumstances in the research period but the ongoing interaction between households and the neighbourhoods they live in.

The increasing focus in research on the *dynamics* of poverty and disadvantage changes not only how poverty comes to be viewed and experienced, but also what kinds of policy responses might be developed (Ellwood 1998). A contrast might be drawn between poverty and disadvantage being understood as affecting a significant minority, over extended periods of time, or as affecting a larger number over much shorter spells (Smith and Middleton, 2007). The point scarcely needs to be laboured in the midst of the current recession and pressure on public spending that the financial position of many households can change dramatically over time. Poverty is closer to a much larger proportion of the population than any snapshot count would indicate.

This research has, therefore, focused on how those living in relatively deprived neighbourhoods make sense of changes in their own circumstances, including their relationship with their immediate locality. It acknowledges their role as *active agents* seeking (within very obvious constraints) to act on, accept or change their circumstances over a specific period of time. This includes their propensity to stay in or leave their neighbourhood, and their reasons for this.

The research methodology (Chapter 3) was designed to let respondents' *own accounts* of life in their neighbourhoods come to the fore, rather than impose a template onto them (*see* Beresford *et al*, 1999). It sought to examine '*a world comprised of meanings, interpretations, feelings, talk and interaction that must be scrutinised on its own terms*' (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997: 13). The nature of the qualitative research interview is one of constant negotiation between the respondent and the researcher, where the interviewer inevitably imposes some shape and structure on the encounter (*see* Allen, 2005 for an account of the limitations of much qualitative research). But attempts were made from the outset to allow the accounts of respondents' personal circumstances and the extent of their attachment to, or disengagement with, their neighbourhood to emerge without trying to force these accounts into any pre-ordained analytical framework. Ultimately, it is for our research participants to judge how successful we have been in conveying an authentic representation of their views, actions and intentions. The themes that we focus on in the analysis of this material (Chapters 4 to 9) emerged from an analysis of responses from over 300 interviews, and over 200 hours worth of transcribed commentary. They were guided by the focus of the interview on certain themes - personal history, family, patterns of sociability, neighbourhood, work, residential mobility – but they remained relatively open-ended. They did not seek to evaluate a

particular policy programme, or facet of poverty and deprivation. Further information about the study, including a series of research papers, photographic images, audio clips and films are available from the study's website.[1]

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[1] http://research.shu.ac.uk/cresr/living-through-change/index.html

2. The Constant Interplay: the Dynamics of Poverty and Place

2.1 Introduction

How can we account for how 'place' might impact on the experiences of households living on low incomes? What characteristics of place might emerge as important here? How do processes of neighbourhood attachment (whether strong or mild), manifest themselves in terms of intentions and actions over residential mobility? And what does this say in terms of the rather contradictory policy messages often directed to those living in relatively deprived areas: to *stay put*, to (re)build community and cohesion, or to *move out*, to shake off the detrimental shackles of place on economic ambition and opportunity?   This chapter considers these questions through a review of literature on household and area deprivation and the relationship between them.

2.2 Place Effects on Poverty

In recent years there has been a resurgence of interest and a proliferation of studies exploring the place effects on individual experiences, attitudes and well-being. Much of this activity has taken advantage of developments in data collection and analysis and the availability of small area/neighbourhood statistics to apply quantitative methods to the analysis of place effects. In the UK, considerable effort has been put into identifying and charting the spatial distribution of poverty and disadvantage and the extent to which poverty is concentrated in some areas, and at some scales, rather than others (Fieldhouse and Tye 1996, Berthoud 2001, McCulloch 2001). Other studies have traced the trajectories of people living in poor neighbourhoods (Kearns and Parkes, 2003) and analysed the trajectories of change in different locality types (Batty *et al*, 2010a; 2010b; Beatty *et al*, 2009; 2008).

Research has also examined the characteristics, institutions and policies of areas which promote 'capability' and 'resilience' amongst their populations, despite apparent adversity (for example, Bartley, 2006). These debates have been important in informing policy discussions around the justification for area-based resource targeting, but the causal pathways through which place might inform experiences of poverty have remained relatively uncharted. Some studies have used qualitative methods to explore individual experiences, behaviours and trajectories (Lupton and Power, 2005; Lupton, 2003; Power and Willmot, 2005). These have tended to reveal the sheer complexity and variation in outcomes in similarly deprived areas, and the impact of place on experiences of poverty remains elusive.

Further afield, and especially in the United States, this question has become something of a *cause célèbre* among urban researchers, not least since the prominence given to claims that concentrated area poverty promoted 'underclass' behaviours (Wilson, 1987). Many of the studies that were subsequently undertaken to examine the 'underclass' dynamic, and to chart place effects, applied quantitative

methods and statistical modelling. The focus was on the aggregated attributes of individuals - for example, as measured in censuses - and assumptions were made about potential place effects from these population characteristics. Some studies have gone further, to consider whether observable differences between places might reflect aspects not captured through population characteristics alone, such as the wider social or institutional context (see, for example, Galster, 2003). The tendency, however, has been to treat population characteristics (who lives there) and contextual features of the physical and social environment (what is there) as competing explanations for place effects. Most of these studies have arrived at similar conclusions: where people live matters, but not nearly as much as the personal characteristics of the individuals themselves (Friedrichs *et al*, 2003).

There are some interesting parallels between these approaches in urban research and work exploring if, and how, places matter for variations in health status variation and the distribution of health inequalities. Similar quantitative methods have been applied, and place effects inferred from aggregated population characteristics, so that 'places' and 'people' have been constructed as mutually exclusive and competing explanations. The result in many of these studies has been broadly the same as in research on neighbourhood deprivation: that where you live has an effect on your health status, but not as much as who you are (Pickett and Pearl, 2001).

Macintyre *et al* (2002) have provided a detailed critique of this approach towards the study of health status variation. They criticise the treatment of 'people' and 'place' as mutually exclusive competing explanations for health outcomes, for three key reasons: it is conceptually opaque; it inadvertently controls for, or overlooks, variables that might *mediate* causal pathways between place and health; and it therefore serves to undermine efforts to explain the mechanisms through which area of residence and health might be related. For these reasons, they argue, empirical evidence on what specific aspects of place matter for which health outcomes inevitably remains weak. In recognising the importance of these multiple dimensions of place for human well-being, Macintyre (1997) puts forward three types of explanation for geographical variations in health:

- *compositional* explanations, that draw attention to the characteristics of individuals living in particular places;

- *contextual* explanations, that draw attention to opportunity structures in the local physical and social environment; and

- *collective* explanations, that draw attention to socio-cultural and historical features of communities.

While recognising that existing empirical research has played an important role in putting 'place' back on the agenda for understanding how inequalities are created and maintained, Cummins *et al* (2007) have proposed a way of moving beyond existing conceptualisations. In particular, they emphasise the importance of recognising the *relational* nature of different dimensions of place. This has an important bearing on this research study. Place is not space. It is not just an inert 'setting' or 'backdrop' to social life, and it is more than a cluster of variables. Place is a geographic location, which has a material form. It constitutes and contains social relations and physical resources and is invested with meaning and value (Gieryn, 2000; Cummins *et al*, 2007).

In studying particular neighbourhoods as places, this research does not assume that these are '*container spaces'* (Amin, 2005) in which social experiences and outcomes are all generated internally. The social networks of residents in geographically defined neighbourhoods can extend well beyond these boundaries although grand

claims about the *'death of distance'* (Cairncross cf. Clark, 2007) brought about, for example, by new technologies of communication may overlook the spatially circumscribed lives of residents on low incomes. Equally, the contextual factors that affect the content and outcomes of urban social life may lie well outside demarcated neighbourhood boundaries. Labour and housing markets at broader spatial scales will, for example, impact on the experiences of life in low-income neighbourhoods (see Watt, 2003; and Smith, 2005).

These different modes of explanation may be applied to examine the relationship between neighbourhoods and variations in the incidence and experiences of other outcomes relevant to individual and area deprivation. In the literature on poverty and place, a great deal of attention has been devoted to 'compositional' explanations, and some studies have also attempted to capture 'contextual' explanations, looking at the impact of different social, locational and economic factors on opportunities for residents. The programme of research summarised in this report focused attention on 'collective explanations' – the 'collective memory' of the neighbourhood and the course of local social and cultural change. These factors are not possible to unravel effectively through the dominant paradigm of quantitative research methodology (see for example Watt, 2006; Charlesworth, 2000; Allen, 2005; Robertson *et al*, 2008). Of course, as Cummins *et al* (2007) acknowledge, these are not mutually exclusive categories. Individual experience, opportunity structures and collective memory inform and impact on each other through a host of processes and interactions. The challenge for research is to recognise and seek to comprehend this complex connectivity between people and places.

This 'read across' from studies of place effects on health to an assessment of effects on poverty is not without hazard. It may be reasonably straightforward to specify the difference between a positive and negative health outcome. It is far less easy to specify an unalloyed positive or negative outcome for a household or a neighbourhood. There are multiple criteria that can be invoked to assess outcomes and contested interpretation is inevitable – while 'coming to terms with one's disease' might be seen as a positive outcome in psychological adaptation to a long-standing illness, can acceptance of one's fate as an impoverished household in a run-down neighbourhood be viewed in a similar light? And who is judge and jury here?

In seeking to weave together a 'collective' analysis of the socio-cultural and historical features of both individual biographies and the development of communities, a broader methodological span is needed than is often the case in studies of poverty and place. Large scale quantitative analysis has cast light on the geography of poverty, and the associations between population characteristics and the incidence of poverty. Various studies have also explored the possibility of 'neighbourhood effects' on different outcomes for households (Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Friedrichs *et al*, 2003; Ellen and Turner, 1997; Atkinson and Kintrea, 2001) – whether living in a poor neighbourhood makes you poorer than you would otherwise be. Although these studies and others argue that 'place matters' (Baum *et al*, 2009), the messages and policy lessons from this research are contested territory (see Cheshire, 2007 for a deeply sceptical view about whether areas affect outcomes independently from income and wealth effects). Specific studies of local experiences of poverty have also examined perceptions of neighbourhood change, residential mobility, access to and use of services, and the extent of cohesion or social capital among residents (for example Hall, 2007).

However, these studies have sometimes struggled to explain nuance or inflection in individuals' experiences and perceptions of place and what this means for living in or on the margins of poverty. They have also found it difficult to develop conceptual models to explain how living in particular types of neighbourhood might inform experiences of poverty (see Chapter 10). The qualitative approach employed in this

research therefore sought to understand more thoroughly the experiences and perceptions of people in low income households in six areas, as they move through different places and contexts over the course of a day, week, month or year and are in consequence exposed to, and react to, a range of different environments.

Rather than adopting a perspective in which 'neighbourhood effects' are in one corner, as it were, and 'personal attributes' in another, the research seeks to explore how members of low income households are affected by 'place', and by others' perceptions of their neighbourhood, but how in turn they 'use' place, what it means for them and how important it is in their daily life, and how this in turn affects the characteristics of place both in tangible terms of amenities and services but also as a site for social interaction. The research therefore attempts to explore the *reciprocal relationship* between 'people' and 'place', and how that might vary, both *within* a specific neighbourhood, and also *across* six deprived neighbourhoods with different social and locational characteristics.

2.3   Agency and Motivation

To summarise simply what has been a rather more complex process, modes of analysis of 'poverty' in social policy have reflected wider shifts in the discipline, by moving away from prescriptive, top-down and needs-based accounts towards more open-ended, bottom-up and agent-centred accounts. The shift to 'agency' has helped to move away from external designations of 'the poor' as a discrete group, and marked by undifferentiated passivity in the face of multiple forces beyond their control (see for example, Canvin *et al*, 2009; Edge and Rogers, 2005; Frost and Hoggett, 2008). However, by giving a sense of 'agency' to those facing poverty, or living in low income areas, there is a concomitant risk that this will produce an unduly voluntaristic approach, in which real and immediate constraints of factors such as ethnicity, class, gender are neglected (Deacon and Mann, 1999; Orton, 2009; Mooney, 2009). Constraints do not just inhere in observable attributes and characteristics, but in social processes as well. An example is Lister's (2004) reference to 'othering', a process that denies respect and recognition, as well as resources, to poor people. Hoggett (2001) has also pointed to how the construction of policy measures in itself may compound the sense of shame or stigma among those who use certain services. He refers to them being involved in '*complex negotiations about commitment and motivation*' with service providers, as they struggle to conform to an individualist agenda of 'responsibilisation' and choice.

Even if one acknowledges that the capacity to 'act' will vary by personal circumstances, social contexts and economic opportunity, the question remains: what *kind* of agency is being assumed here? What motivates action and behaviour and how might this differ, if at all, from one relatively deprived neighbourhood to another? In a recent overview, Taylor-Gooby (2008) presents what he terms a 'simplified spectrum of agency', between the rational actor goal-oriented approach stemming from neo-classical economics and more sociological perspectives which place greater emphasis on shared norms and values, social trust, reciprocity and cultural and social tradition. He notes the need to explore the extent to which the behaviour of those who use public services may contradict the expectations of policy makers because embedded social values conflict with the interest generated by the incentives that policy manipulates (Taylor-Gooby, 2008: 271).

We were interested in exploring this potential 'gap' in this research. The research programme provided an opportunity to look beyond simplistic categorisations and characterisations of 'poor' people and places and describe the values, priorities and lifestyles of households living in relatively deprived neighbourhoods (of quite different kinds), as expressed in interview, through diaries, photographs and other visual

representations. Their views are not necessarily the product of self-conscious deliberation about alternative moral paradigms or an exposition of behaving as reflexive social actors. It is often, more prosaically, about what seems the 'right thing to do' in certain situations, about 'what matters' or what is 'normal' or 'natural' and therefore beyond debate or dispute.

2.4   Structure of the Report

Following a discussion of the research methodology in the next chapter, the report summarises the different contexts for the six case study areas and how they have been shaped by economic forces and policy interventions over time. This is set alongside different narratives of neighbourhood change emerging from the interviews with research participants (Chapter 4). Chapter 5 then addresses the theme of continuity , looking especially at accounts of how various financial challenges have been managed by the households over time and the 'weight of history' in shaping some of their expectations about residential mobility and their future financial prospects.

Chapters 6 and 7 are concerned with spatial differences and similarities, rather than changes or continuities over time. Chapter 6 examines the spatial routines of participants, in order to assess the variable significance of the neighbourhood in their daily lives. Chapter 7 explores differences in the role of family members, friends and neighbours and how patterns of reciprocity and support, as well as social division, varied among the respondents and across the neighbourhoods. In Chapter 8, neighbourhood difference is less evident in the analysis of the positive and negative influences on respondents' self-esteem and on what aspects of their lives they both valued and were anxious about.

Chapter 9 illustrates some of the issues aired in the preceding analysis through the medium of biographical accounts of three of the research participants. Chapter 10 then adopts a similar approach in returning to each of the neighbourhood in turn. It focuses on the important social, cultural and historical features of the areas identified by participants. Chapter 11 is the Conclusion.

3. The Research Approach

3.1 The Research Focus

Some of the distinctive characteristics of the programme of research were that:

- it was based on large-scale, predominantly qualitative research in six locations;

- its geographical focus was primarily at the neighbourhood level and it covered areas in England, Scotland and Wales;

- it involved the use of audio-visual techniques as a core component of the project; and

- it was undertaken over a three year period, with interviews undertaken on an iterative basis with some respondents in three annual waves.

The research was designed to examine the circumstances of households on (mostly) low incomes living in relatively deprived neighbourhoods talking about their lives and their priorities, what pressures they encounter and how they deal with them, their jobs and family responsibilities, their social relationships, how they engage with service agencies and how and whether they use neighbourhood facilities and amenities. It was not intended as an analysis of a particular aspect or dimension of poverty. Indeed, it is not a study of 'the poor' – a process which by defining the topic in such a way can contribute to the very process of 'othering' by implicitly emphasising the potential differences in behaviour or outlook between this group and the 'rest of us' (Flaherty, 2008).

In giving primacy to the views and experiences of respondents, the research adopted an 'agency-centred' approach (Lister, 2004) in which participants are treated as actors operating within constrained circumstances, rather than as inert victims of forces beyond their control. The aim was to analyse how participants faced up to financial pressures, how they have routinely interacted with family and friends and how they 'moved through' places, both within and outside the neighbourhood, and what was valuable to them about these places. It also explored how far systematic similarities and differences could be discerned between these neighbourhoods, according to the accounts given by a sample of residents in interviews.

3.2 The Qualitative Approach

The approach in the research project was designed to offer a different perspective from statistically derived narratives and dominant policy discourses regarding poor people and poor places. It was based on the rationale that it was important to capture the *experiences and voices* (Bennett with Roberts, 2004) of residents living in deprived neighbourhoods. As Alcock put it:

> *If our concern is to explore social dynamics, and in particular the decisions and actions which have shaped people's lives, we need to address questions of experience, attitude and motivation, which cannot be captured in quantitative surveys.*

(Alcock, 2004: 404)

The adoption of qualitative analysis over time, rather than as a snapshot, is still relatively rare (Molloy *et al*, 2002) with notable exceptions, (e.g. Macdonald, 2005) and has often been focused on a discrete policy or initiative, especially in the field of programmes to reduce worklessness (for example, Lewis, 2007; Corden and Nice, 2007). This research therefore represented an opportunity to develop a qualitative analysis of how poverty, neighbourhood disadvantage, household and area change, and local diversity and difference, are experienced. It attempted to capture some of the complexities of motivation, behaviour and reaction of the respondents in the six different locations selected for study. It also sought to examine why some individuals might actively attempt to change their circumstances (including where they live), while others would not.

A number of previous research studies have taken a qualitative approach to examining individual and household 'transitions' over time among those experiencing poverty. They have often been primarily concerned with respondents' links to the labour market and how they cope with risk events, in either a tactical or in a more strategic manner (for example, Chamberlayne *et al*, 2002; Graham *et al*, 2005). The focus in this project was more about 'place' than 'workplace', but the idea of transitions was a helpful way of capturing how changing material, locational and emotional circumstances are handled in a specified period. Millar (2007) makes the distinction between transitions, adaptations and trajectories, to describe different qualities to processes of personal and household change, and notes that 'consolidation' (or even, one might add, 'stasis') may also be an appropriate response to a life in flux. This offers an important corrective to the implicit assumptions that can run through both the research and the policy literature that the experience of 'deprivation' should automatically provoke 'action' (moving out, getting a new job, being more 'ambitious' etc) rather than 'adapting', 'reinforcing' or 'satisficing' instead. This is reflected in the emphasis given to continuity, as well as change, over time in our analysis (Chapters 4 and 5).

3.3   Case Study Selection

There is the perennial question of striking an appropriate balance between specificity and generalisability in case study neighbourhood research. We were interested to assess in this research programme how far certain factors that distinguished the six neighbourhoods articulated with the different perceptions, experiences and outlooks of the residents we interviewed over the three year period. Are certain selected 'objective' correlates of place reflected in distinctive world views about how locality affects the decisions, priorities and expectations of those who live there? If not, what are the disjunctures, similarities or neglected issues that might be revealed through depth interviews that escaped the original scoping of place differences in case study selection? And how might this read across to questions about neighbourhood-centred policies and interventions?

The research focus was therefore based on area selection – on identifying a few relatively deprived neighbourhoods according to widely accepted social and economic indices - not household selection. Six areas were selected (outlined in greater detail in Chapter 4):

- *Amlwch*: a small town on the northern tip of Anglesey, which has suffered rapid economic decline in recent years;

- *West Kensington*: an ethnically mixed area comprising two social housing estates in inner west London;

- *Oxgangs*: a social housing estate located next to one of the most affluent suburbs in Edinburgh;

- *West Marsh*: an area of predominantly private housing located close to the centre of Grimsby;

- *Wensley Fold*: an ethnically and tenure mixed area in Blackburn; and

- *Hillside*: a social housing area in Knowsley, Merseyside.

When wave 1 interviews were undertaken (2008), respondents were initially contacted and asked various brief questions about their household, age, ethnicity and length of residence, in order to ensure some spread of these characteristics in the eventual sample. But they were not stratified samples (further details of sample characteristics are provided in an accompanying Research Paper, see Batty et al, 2010d). Respondents were also not chosen according to household income, and whether that fell between a predetermined threshold to 'qualify' as living in poverty. They qualified as potential respondents because they lived in the case study area, not because they possessed a particular attribute. Indeed, as seen later, in one area (West Kensington) a small minority of respondents were relatively affluent, and the severity of household poverty varied between areas, though all six were relatively deprived according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation. This was one way of dealing with the potential problem of the 'ecological fallacy' in which the dominant characteristics of place are assumed to apply to all individuals or household living in them. This is also why many of the accounts of life in the neighbourhoods are contradictory or inconsistent. It makes for a messier narrative, but we were as interested to reflect differences of perception within areas as to point to broad areas of agreement.

The characteristics of places, not the residents living in them, were therefore sifted in order to select the case studies for the research. In the first wave of interviews, the six case studies were selected as three 'paired opposites' according to underpinning themes designed to shape and structure the preliminary analysis. Three basic criteria were used to select the neighbourhoods.

i) *Geographical spread.* Four of the case studies were based in England, one in Scotland and one in Wales. The sample also included a rural town (Amlwch), two neighbourhoods in larger towns (West Marsh and Wensley Fold) and three neighbourhoods in cities or within larger urban conurbations (West Kensington, Oxgangs and Hillside). The study thereby avoided the tendency for analysis of poverty to privilege concentrated forms of poverty within the spaces of the inner city and as such respond to Milbourne's (2010) call to move beyond narrow concerns with 'places of poverty' to engage with broader 'poverties of place'.

ii) *Thematic links.* Three key analytical and policy-related themes framed the analysis at the primary research stage: poverty, place and diversity; poverty, cohesion and connectivity; poverty and mobility. Two case studies were selected to represent contrasting facets of each theme to explore how the different experiences of households might vary according to neighbourhood context and to identify common features that seemed to transcend neighbourhood differences.

iii) *Impact of special policies and initiatives.* The case studies included some neighbourhoods that were currently undergoing, or had been the recent focus of, regeneration programmes and others which were, in relative terms, more 'policy-off'. Of the four English case studies, two were within New Deal for Communities (NDC) regeneration areas, which allowed links to be made between this qualitative analysis and the more quantitative tracking of change through longitudinal surveys being undertaken as part of the national evaluation of the NDC programme (Beatty et al, 2008). This made possible some comparison of how attempts to improve neighbourhoods through specific policy measures could affect the perceptions and aspirations of existing residents affected by these interventions (see Cole and Green, 2010).

The six neighbourhoods were initially selected for this research according to one of three themes identified as having important theoretical and analytical relevance to the discussion of policy development and neighbourhood impacts and change: population diversity; cohesion and connectivity; and residential mobility. These themes were then given statistical expression, as it were, through the development of specific indices to guide the selection of two areas at opposite ends of the spectrum on each characteristic. A review of the use of area (not specifically neighbourhood) typologies, points to a distinction between generic and bespoke classifications and those which are data-driven or theory-driven. On that basis, the selection of the case studies in this project was bespoke and initially theory-driven but then shaped by subsequent data analysis.

As stated, three themes were selected to organise the analysis and the case study selection. The first concerned the response of residents living on low incomes to issues of *'connectivity' and social cohesion*, the second contrasted places with *different degrees of social and cultural diversity*, and the third explored whether there were neighbourhood characteristics that might encourage or inhibit aspirations or intentions over *future residential mobility*. These themes were established *a priori* as potential points of contrast in place-based experiences, and guided by an acceptance that *commonalities* of perceptions or experiences across the six areas might be as strong as any differences between them. Two case studies were therefore selected to represent contrasting facets of each theme, to explore how the different experiences of households might vary according to local context, and to identify any common features that seemed to transcend neighbourhood differences.

The initial emphasis in two case studies (Hillside and Oxgangs) was on the nature of 'connectivity' between different social and economic groups: whether between lower income households and more affluent households *within* a neighbourhood or in the wider connections between low income areas and more affluent neighbourhoods elsewhere. The research was interested to explore the views of lower income residents themselves towards more affluent households, whether they lived close by or further afield. The research team wanted to assess whether living in a more mixed neighbourhood seemed to lead to the development of shared values, informal socialising and similarity of perceptions with more affluent households and, if so, whether this mitigated some of the exclusionary aspects of deprivation compared to the experiences of residents living in a more socially and economically homogenous neighbourhood (*see* Flint and Casey, 2008).

The distinctive element of the approach taken in a second case study pairing was the notion of diversity: how poverty might be experienced differently by distinct groups in a neighbourhood. Neighbourhoods can provide the focus for social organisation and identity and represent a repository of difference, with the nature of places reflecting internal cultural variations. Understanding the complex relationship between individual identities and the nature of places where they live was seen as a critical component in understanding the distinct experiences of poverty *within* and *between*

diverse groups. Two case studies were therefore selected to support this comparison (West Marsh and Wensley Fold), allowing the experiences of diverse groups in distinct places to be explored (members of minority ethnic communities resident in a multi-ethnic neighbourhood, as opposed to those where ethnicity was more sharply divided). This also facilitated the comparative analysis of the experiences of people with shared identities living in different kinds of neighbourhood, and enabled an assessment to be made whether greater diversity in the locality frustrated, or stimulated, the development of closer social and support networks (*see* CRESR Research Team, 2009: Chapter 4 for a fuller account of these findings).

The distinctive element of the research approach taken to the third case study pairing (Amlwch and West Kensington) was how residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods responded to their situation in terms of their attitudes and intentions over future residential mobility. A household's decision to move (or to decline to move) often stems from a highly complex blend of financial, emotional, tactical, instinctive, and cultural motives. The qualitative and iterative research approach adopted in this project provided an opportunity for respondents to reflect back on their own patterns of mobility, to assess whether initial intentions were realised, thwarted or discarded, and to consider how changing individual experiences of poverty, and changing perceptions of their neighbourhood, might reshape their aspirations to move or to stay put. The research was also an opportunity to explore the different salience of material, emotional, cultural, place-related or life stage factors behind households' mobility decisions (see CRESR Research Team, 2009: Chapter 5 for a fuller account).

The six case studies were also selected on different points of a continuum in terms of their relative *geographical isolation*. It was felt that decisions about mobility, for example, might be affected if the opportunities to gain employment required a relatively long distance move. The research was set up to explore whether the 'sense of place' was less evident in those ostensibly more 'porous' neighbourhoods more closely linked to other communities of a similar social economic and ethnic composition than in more isolated self-contained settlements, and whether different degrees of isolation and connectivity had a marked effect on the outlooks and aspirations of residents.

A variety of methods was then used to sift statistically through local authorities that had relevant characteristics in accordance with the three themes and the extent of geographical isolation, and then smaller areas were chosen as neighbourhoods within the local authorities. The process is described in detail in Appendix 1 of this report.

In terms of the 'cohesion and connectivity' theme, a number of physical and social dimensions of disconnection and exclusion were examined, and the Hillside area, which was part of a larger housing estate in North Huyton in Knowsley, was selected to exemplify 'poverty in the midst of wider social and economic deprivation'. Oxgangs, Edinburgh, was selected to represent 'poverty in the midst of affluence'. In terms of the 'place diversity' theme an 'index of difference' was used to select a relatively ethnically homogenous area (West Marsh, Grimsby) and a neighbourhood with a relatively large white community and a minority ethnic community which were not, as far as could be established beforehand, territorially separated (Wensley Fold, Blackburn). In terms of the third theme, covering mobility, a contrast was sought between a relatively 'accessible' urban area with higher rates of population churn (West Kensington, London) and a town in a semi-rural setting, with low rates of residential turnover (Amlwch, Anglesey). In terms of geographical isolation, Amlwch was the most isolated settlement. West Marsh is fairly close to the town centre of Grimsby but a considerable distance from larger towns or cities. Hillside is in the

outer ring of the Liverpool conurbation. The town centre of Blackburn is quite accessible from Wensley Fold, and Oxgangs and West Kensington are both suburbs within large and prosperous cities. Further details about the neighbourhoods are provided in Chapter 4.

Having initially selected the six neighbourhoods through quantitative analysis on the basis of three themes, the subsequent research programme was then designed to use intensive qualitative research with a sample of residents in each neighbourhood to assess how far the assumed place attributes affected their perceptions and experiences - or whether the patterning of individual responses bore little relationship to the attributes that had been presumed to be significant in the original selection of the case studies.

3.4   Research Methods

For the case studies three methods were used for primary data collection, though the balance between them varied in different areas:

- preliminary and in-depth face-to-face interviews with participants;

- solicited participants' diaries and photo-novella exercises; and

- participatory art projects.

These methods were selected to provide a different 'grain' of research information to build up a narrative of change over the study period. In addition, researchers spoke to a variety of stakeholders in each case study area, such as community activists and housing officers and regeneration managers.

In-depth Interviews

A survey company was engaged to carry out a short preliminary household interview. This acted as a recruitment method to enlist people to take part in the in-depth interviews and collect basic contextual details about the individual as well as contact information.[2] Initially, it was planned to undertake a longitudinal analysis according to a strict 'before' and 'after' model, separated by a two year gap in order to assess the impact of intervening events on experiences of poverty, perceptions of neighbourhood change and the propensity to move out of the area or stay put. However, this was replaced by a reiterative 'life history' approach. It was felt that this approach was more naturalistic than artificially imposing a 'before'/'after' timeline that might be difficult for respondents to observe in practice when interviewed.

The interviews (with an adult member of the household, identified in the initial contact survey, and sometimes accompanied by their partner or children for all or part of the time) covered a wide range of issues about experiences of poverty and perception of the neighbourhood, how it has changed over time and ways of 'getting by' on limited household budgets. The majority of interviews were undertaken at the respondent's home, but arrangements were also made to undertake them in a private room in a nearby community facility, if that was preferred. The interviews were undertaken on a relatively open-ended basis, according to an agreed basic topic guide. The guide contained core questions relevant to all six neighbourhoods, with a few additional

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[2] A longer survey that would have provided additional substantive quantitative data was piloted in one case study area but proved to be an unsuccessful recruitment method.

questions relating to one of the three analytical themes. Interviews lasted between twenty and ninety minutes, but were normally around forty minutes. Respondents received a modest payment for taking part. All the in-depth interviews were undertaken by experienced members of the CRESR research team.

In wave one, thirty in-depth semi-structured interviews were undertaken in each of the six case study neighbourhoods between November 2007 and April 2008. The second wave of interviews was undertaken with a sub-sample of ninety two respondents from the original one hundred and eighty respondents in the first wave. The composition of the sub-sample was partly determined by the wastage rate in follow-up from wave 1 and the willingness of respondents to take part. Thereafter an attempt was made to provide a broad spread of characteristics from the remaining sample in each neighbourhood.

The original intention had been to seek a conventional before-after contrast between two periods of interviewing but the team increasingly doubted whether the responses would observe such neatness in the allocation of different points in time, especially as they were shaped by a research timetable rather than any life-changing events for the participants themselves. We decided to pursue an iterative process in successive interviews, following the process described by Walker and Leisering:

> *Exciting possibilities arise from mixed designs that involve repeated interviews in which respondents are invited to look backwards and forwards in time. Data collection is recursive. Information is collected on intentions and expectations which are compared in subsequent interviews with actual events, behaviours and outcomes.*

> (Walker and Leisering, 1998: 28)

The wave 2 interviews explored in greater depth a series of themes that had arisen as important in wave 1: the nature and extent of social networks, the salience of the neighbourhood as a focus for activity, experiences and perception of work and worklessness, identity and self-esteem, and perceptions of neighbourhood change. The follow-up interviews provide an opportunity to revisit some of the biographical detail in more depth, as well as picking up on any changes in household or neighbourhood circumstances in the intervening period. Two of the themes examined in the first wave were also reprised but followed up across all the neighbourhoods rather than in the original pairings: the extent of social diversity in the locality, and patterns and perceptions of residential mobility. The second wave of interviews was undertaken between March and July 2009. Given that the British economy entered recession in the period between the two waves of interviews, the opportunity was also taken to explore the initial impacts of, and responses to, the credit crunch and ensuing economic downturn (Batty and Cole, 2009).

For the third wave the decision was taken to undertake a more in-depth follow- up of a smaller sample from each of the six neighbourhoods. We were seeking a different grain of information more directly concerned with the biographies of the respondents and accounts of their everyday experiences of living in the case study area. In all, forty two biographical interviews were undertaken in wave three, providing a more comprehensive, detailed and in-depth account of how change had been experienced, not just within the three year period of the research but reaching back to childhood memories and looking ahead to the future. The biographies, it was felt, would provide a counterpoint to the thematic emphasis of the first two waves. This focus also provided the study team within an opportunity to explore, in greater depth, both change and continuity over time in people's lives and the role of place within life transitions.

Respondents were selected on the basis of the material gleaned from the first two waves of interview with them. In short, they were chosen because they were, in the context of the research, people whose experiences, in the opinion of the research team, illuminated key elements of the relationship between experiences of poverty and place. Inevitably, this process was based on subjective judgment but we are not making claims about the typicality of these experiences – we were seeking a more in-depth focus at this stage. Three such biographies are presented in Chapter 9 (see also Green and Hickman, 2010).

Full analysis of the 314 interview transcripts from the three waves of interviews was completed through the use of computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (Nvivo 8) according to a common coding framework. The interviews examined underlying narratives about how people experience poverty differently, their attitudes to residence, their social networks, their views on the extent of 'community' in their locality, and the implications for intended and actual paths of residential mobility.

Residents' Diaries and Photo-novella Exercises

The research team also made use of solicited residents' diaries; and a photo novella exercise. Resident diaries were used in wave one only, in three of the six case studies, to complement the insights from the one-to-one interviews. Residents were asked to keep a diary for a period of a week, and were given a disposable camera to record in visual form their lives in their neighbourhood. Participants were given some guidance as to what was required of them: they were asked to take photos of anything – people, places, activities, events – in the local area that was of importance to them. The disposable cameras were collected at the same time as the diaries and when the films were developed a member of the research team conducted a follow-up face-to-face interview with the participant photographer to explore their rationale for taking the photographs they had taken. As part of this process, participants were asked to write a caption for each photo, which explained what the photo represented to them. In all, thirteen residents took part in the exercise.

One potential advantage of the diary-interview method was that it made it more possible to capture diarists' own priorities than relying on their responses to pre-given questions in an interview schedule. The very tangibility of the photographs also anchored discussion about respondents' likes and dislikes about the area. It could also help as a means of understanding what is 'taken for granted' about an area or a respondent's own personal situation. The difficulty the team encountered concerned the effective integration of this material successfully with the written outputs or the more structured visual material.

Participatory Arts Projects

In addition to the formal research undertaken by the team, a creative practitioner (Andrew Robinson) was employed to add a participatory arts element to the study. It was felt that this approach would provide insights into the issues being explored by the study team that could not be garnered from more traditional one-to-one research interviews. It was also intended to provide a point of triangulation, allowing the research team to compare and contrast emerging understandings with the narratives of residents portrayed in the art work they were involved in generating. Furthermore, it provided a means of engaging with those population groups traditionally under-represented in research interviews, such as younger people, and thereby extend the reach of the study. The approach was also designed to make the study more

inclusive and participatory, with residents being provided with greater opportunity to shape and influence the study process. Finally the team thought that the inclusion of visual material and participants' commentary would enliven the research outputs, making them more accessible to local audiences and provoke immediate feedback to a greater extent than a written report. A wide selection of audio and visual outputs is available from the project's website.[3]

In all six case study areas participants were encouraged at different stages to become creatively engaged in the generation of audio and visual material that captures the impressions, opinions and perspectives of groups of local residents. Local residents became involved, in different ways, in a creative engagement, recording their own perspective and reading of life in their local neighbourhood. The creative practitioner in the research team (Andrew Robinson) invited members of the community to participate in a production process that provided a theme, purpose and structure for the management of the material (photographs, audio etc.) they had collected. The creative practitioner provided the necessary equipment and the related technical, as well as artistic, training and guidance. This approach was therefore adopted as an additional means of engaging with people and capturing insights and experiences that would not be recognised or understood by more traditional research techniques.

A range of visual material was prepared with residents in Hillside including a slide show, montages, interviews, and written accounts by residents. These processes were particularly successful in engaging with younger people on the estate. An exhibition of some of the outputs was staged at the *Hillywood Centre* in Hillside. A 90 minute film was produced with the involvement of residents in Amlwch about the history of their town and about current problems they face, especially in housing and employment. This was shown in the Community Hall and attracted considerable local interest, with over 90 people attending, and then taking part in a discussion about the past, present and future of Amlwch after each showing. A series of short films were produced with residents from West Kensington on the form of walking tours around the area, with participants pointing out sites of personal significance and value. Finally a series of short films were compiled looking at the contrasting experiences of renewal and regeneration in Hillside and Wensley Fold, and the more modest renewal activities in West Marsh.

In the following chapter we provide a brief profile of each of the six case study areas, and then explore the accounts of research participants about how the neighbourhoods had changed while they have been living there.

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[3] http://research.shu.ac.uk/cresr/living-through-change/index.html

4

4. Change: Economic Legacies, Neighbourhood Narratives

4.1 Introduction

The case study areas were described earlier as 'relatively deprived' but the selection was not made to provide cases of more 'extreme' forms of area deprivation, as conventionally measured. The first part of the chapter therefore touches on 'compositional' factors in terms of some of the statistical indicators of difference and 'contextual' factors in terms of economic changes in and outside the neighbourhoods. The second part examines 'collective' accounts of the neighbourhoods by examining similarities in shared histories of change over time. Further background detail on the neighbourhoods is provided in a Research Paper produced by the team and available on the research website (see Batty *et al*, 2010d).

The research project was an opportunity to explore the perspectives and actions of residents in different contexts, including the degree of severity of measured deprivation locally. Table 4.1 (below) shows the positioning of the areas in their relative national indices of deprivation. As we will see later, there is no self-evident correlation between the position of the neighbourhood on these indices and the dominant narratives presented by participants in the research. The relative strength of the narrative of loss in Amlwch compared to Wensley Fold is a case in point.

Lupton and Power (2002) have suggested that it might be useful to think about places as having certain 'intrinsic' or hard-to-change characteristics, such as their location, economic structure, and housing stock. Some (but not all) of these can be changed, but usually over a prolonged period of time. These 'intrinsic' characteristics are strongly linked to population composition and dynamics. People with low skills and earning capacity move into areas of lower quality, lower cost housing, for example, or in cities with growing economies, areas of low cost private housing close to city centres become gentrified. Thus, to a certain extent, one may be able to 'read off' population composition and dynamics from intrinsic characteristics.

Figure 4.1: Case Study Locations in the UK

Oxgangs,
Edinburgh

Amlwch,
Anglesey

Wensley Fold,
Blackburn

West Marsh,
Grimsby

Hillside,
Knowsley

West
Kensington,
London

0   143.0
miles
Scale: 1:4,604,000
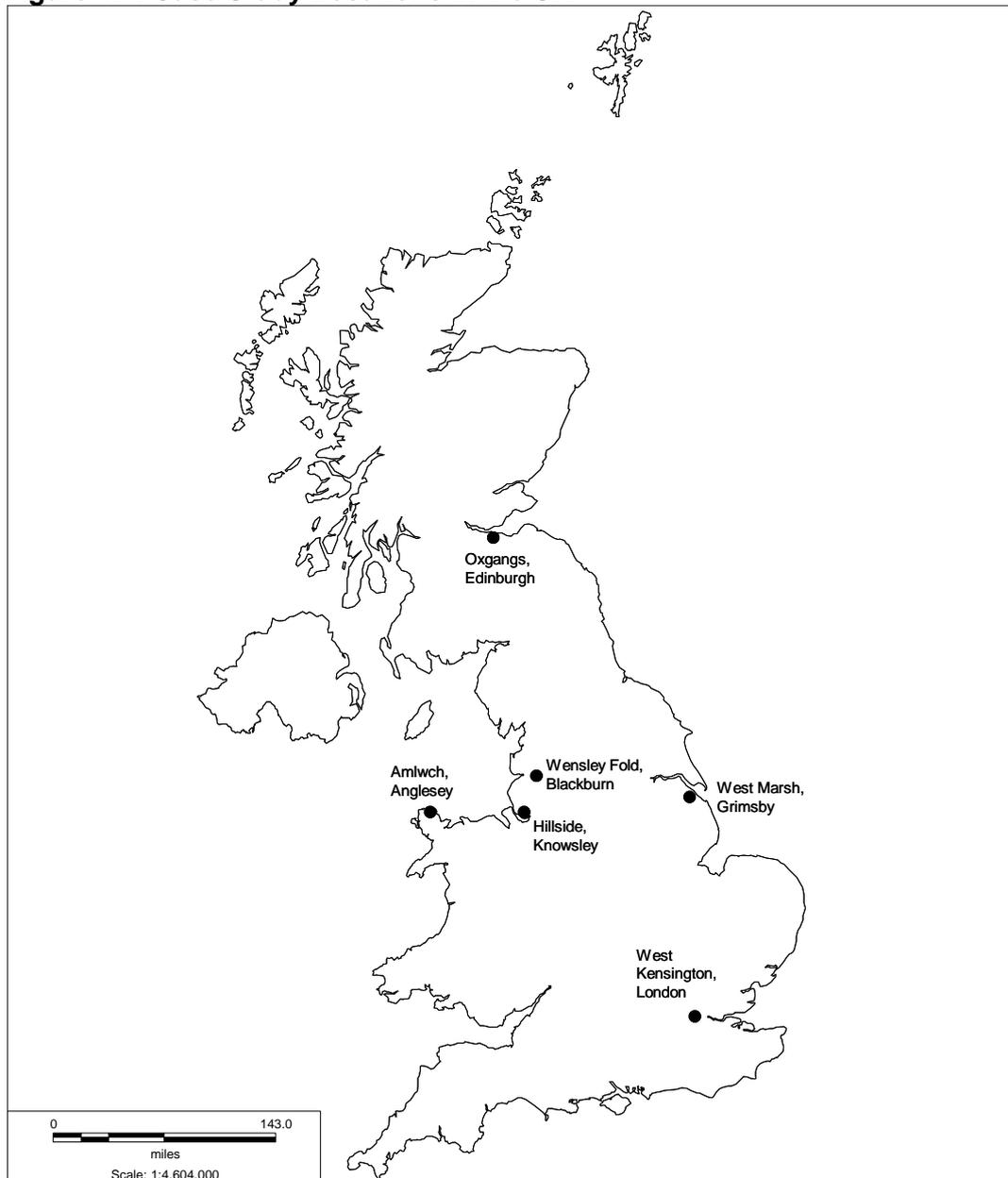
Source: OS OpenData

The combination of place and people also gives rise to 'acquired' characteristics which are more 'fluid' and prone to change. These, Lupton and Power suggest, include physical/environmental characteristics, social interactive characteristics, political and institutional characteristics, or economic characteristics. A comparative statistical appraisal or an historical analysis of neighbourhoods can provide insights into the more fixed characteristics of the areas, but qualitative research based on the experiences and perceptions of residents is also needed to reach into the more permeable aspects of neighbourhood change. This is the focus of the second part of the chapter.

Table 4.1: The case study areas on their respective national indices of multiple deprivation

	Overall Rank	Overall Decile	Income Decile	Employment Decile	Health Decile
Wensley Fold	628 [a]	1	1	1	1
West Marsh	2,247 [a]	1	1	2	2
Hillside	1,443 [a]	1	1	1	1
West Kensington	4,281 [a]	2	1	2	2
Oxgangs	1,335 [b]	3	2	2	3
Amlwch	432 [c]	3	3	3	3

Sources: English Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007; Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2009; and Welsh Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2008.

(a) out of 32,428 LSOA's; (b) out of 6,505 data zones; (c) out of 1,896 LSOA's. Lower rank and decile implies greater deprivation

Some of the main deprivation indices for the six areas are shown in Table 4.1. Looking at other deprivation indices, there are marked differences between the areas in terms of *barriers to housing and services*, which is one proxy measure for accessibility. While Oxgangs, Amlwch and West Kensington are poorly ranked (first and second decile), Hillside, West Marsh and Wensley Fold are favourably ranked (in the eighth, ninth and tenth decile respectively). In terms of *physical environment:* Hillside stands out as the most favourable locality of the six (in the third decile), which might surprise some of the residents (see later in this chapter), whilst all others are ranked in the first decile. (There is no comparable measure included in the Scottish IMD.) On the c*rime* measure Wensley Fold and West Marsh are the least favourably ranked localities of the six (first decile), followed by Hillside and Oxgangs (second) and then Amlwch and West Kensington (third). In terms of e*thnicity* - West Kensington is the most diverse; Wensley Fold has a mixed Asian / White population, and the other four are predominantly White areas. All the localities have significant proportions of people in receipt of benefits. Most notable is Hillside, where 28 per cent of working age residents were in receipt of JSA, IB or SDA in August 2009 (see Cole and Green, 2010 for a fuller discussion of neighbourhood differences).

4.2   Amlwch, Anglesey

Amlwch is a small town located on the northern tip of the Isle of Anglesey (Ynys Môn). It is the fourth biggest settlement on the island and has a population of 1,400. It is relatively isolated geographically and the nearest towns to it are Llangefni (13 miles away) and Holyhead (20 miles). Amlwch comprises three distinct neighbourhoods, including Amlwch Port, which was once a thriving source of trade, Amlwch town itself, where most shops and services are based, and Craig-y-don, a small local authority housing estate located between Amlwch and Amlwch Port. The residential areas contain a mixture of property types, although most of the stock consists of houses of traditional construction built in the late nineteenth century and in the inter-war period of the last century.

The two enduring elements of Amlwch's history are copper and the sea. Amlwch developed as a town in the eighteenth century with the advent of large scale copper mining. Over 2000 miners were living in Amlwch by 1800, when it was the largest copper mine in the world. The location of the seam was in Parys Mountain, which still dominates the skyline to the south of the town, and its unusual quasi- lunar

landscape has attracted considerable heritage and tourist interest over the years. The growth of copper mining in the nineteenth century led to the development of what had been a small harbour in Amlwch Bay into a larger port capable of accommodating ships to export the copper. The resources from the mine were then used in local chemicals plants, producing Alum (aluminium sulphate) and sulphuric acid in the mid nineteenth century, and providing materials for local fertiliser factories from 1860 onwards. Copper mining steadily declined from its zenith in the nineteenth century, though there have been recent plans to revive it as a commercial proposition. It remains a possibility for the future.

In terms of its location by the sea, Amlwch Port was a centre of commercial fishing before the general decline of the industry from the mid 1970s. Commercial fishing is now confined to whelk and lobster fishing. On the site of the old shipyard at Amlwch Port, a floating oil receiving station was developed in 1974, with oil then being pumped through pipes to the Shell Stanlow oil refinery eighty miles away, but the decline in this usage of crude oil tankers badly affected demand and the site was closed in 1990. The exploitation of natural resources at Amlwch may yet have a future, however. In 2008, Anglesey County Council gave planning permission for the redevelopment of the site as a liquid gas unloading and re-gasification plant owned by a US company Canatxx. Canatxx had hoped to start work on the site in 2009 and start operating in 2012, thereby creating 60 new local jobs. The plans for the plant are currently stalled, but negotiations are continuing.

Amlwch manufacturing industry has suffered in the past few years as the advantages of its location by the sea and close to copper deposits waned. The relative inaccessibility of the town has made it difficult to attract new industry, despite the development of under-occupied industrial parks on the edge of the town. The largest company to have invested in Amlwch recent years is Rehau, which employs around 150 people and invested £3million in the plant in 2007/8, although some staff were made redundant in 2008.

Given the fragility of the local employment base, it is not surprising that the majority of local people travel outside the town for work – especially to the Wylfa nuclear power station near Cemaes. The key to Amlwch's (and indeed Anglesey's) economic future lies in the recently approved plan to commission a new nuclear reactor plant (Wylfa B) from the partnership Horizon Nuclear Power by 2020. This should create around 3,000 jobs during the employment phase and up to 800 permanent jobs (predominantly skilled labour), rising to 1,000 during maintenance periods. They would not be entirely new jobs however, as it is likely that many currently working on Wylfa A will be redeployed on the new plant

Amlwch has tried to develop a tourist heritage interest, building on the annual Copperfest, and to open up the port to extend its function. Amlwch is a relatively deprived area, and there has been some limited regeneration activity through the Welsh Assembly Government's *Communities First* programme. The Amlwch Skills 16+ Project aimed to tackle the issues of young people who have low levels of self-esteem and in turn aid them with their personal development and career objectives. The programme aimed to give individuals a base level of skills so that they could then engage into further or higher education opportunities through FE colleges, attending full time or linked to work based schemes.

Overall, Amlwch is marked by long standing problems of economic vulnerability and isolation and heavy dependence on a single industry, and has witnessed a steady exodus of young people from the town over the past twenty to thirty years. Many residents speak Welsh and it is the first language for some. In acknowledgment of this, residents were asked which language they would like to be interviewed in. Most

did not have a preference, but two of the in-depth interviews undertaken by the research team were conducted in Welsh.

4.3   Hillside, Knowsley

The case study neighbourhood in North Huyton, Knowsley, Merseyside, is known for planning purposes as Hillside and Primalt, but the area as a whole is generally known by residents as Hillside, and this is the term used in this report. Hillside is bounded by the M57, a dual carriageway (Seth Powell Way) and a park (Alt Park) and is one of the more isolated areas in the wider North Huyton neighbourhood. The neighbourhoods of Hillside and Primalt make up one-third of North Huyton NDC intervention area (the other areas are Finch House, Fincham, Woolfall North and Woolfall South). These two neighbourhoods, and the wider NDC area, form a part of the collection of inter-war and post-war municipal housing estates that were developed in and around North Huyton as 'overspill' from the City of Liverpool 'slum clearance' programmes and the expansion of the Liverpool Docks in the 1930s. It was common for several generations of the same family to have lived in the same area.

The housing estate was one of many developed after the second world war on the fringe of the Merseyside conurbation, as many families were relocated from slum clearance programmes in Liverpool city centre. This was concomitant with the development of engineering and manufacturing firms such as Marconi's nearby. Hillside declined in the economic recessions of the 1970s and 1980s, which led locally to a reduction in job opportunities and a decline in the level of economic activity of its residents. Lack of investment in the estate's housing stock and housing allocation policies that tended to lead to concentrations of households in severe need in the area were also factors in its decline. By the early 2000s a range of problems were manifest including:

- housing market collapse, characterised by high void levels (with over 300 empty properties in the North Huyton estate), abandonment and low take-up of right-to-buy;

- a high number of 'blighted' properties which fell below the Decent Homes Standard introduced in 2002 (400 in the NDC area - 56% with no central heating, and 76% no double glazing);

- increasing problems associated with antisocial behaviour (ASB) and crime, including vandalism and arson attacks on empty properties. Drug use and drug dealing were also becoming more prevalent;

- poor standards of housing management and a lack of investment that prevailed for a long periods before stock was transferred to Knowsley Housing Trust in 2002. Some parts of the estate had apparently become 'almost impossible to let';

- inadequate choice in type and tenure of housing (with a concentration of 2 and 3 bedroom social rented properties); and

- increasing isolation of some existing communities as a result of poorly implemented traffic-calming measures (North Huyton New Deal for Communities Delivery Plan, 2001).

The decline in community facilities, including local shops, was a marked feature of changes in the estate. During the course of the research project, the closure of the local post office was seen by residents participating in our research as a particularly

bitter blow. Although there are shops in neighbouring localities (approximately 10 minutes walk) they are rarely used by Hillsiders, who were sometimes reluctant to 'cross boundaries'. Beechwood Primary School, one of three primary schools in the North Huyton area, has also recently closed down. One community facility - the Hillywood Centre - which provides a space for various community activities, especially youth work, has continued through support from the NDC. In July 2010 work began on a new community facility in Hillside to accommodate the Hillywood Centre and support other community groups and activities and this will be formally opened in summer 2011.

Regeneration plans for the North Huyton estate have been managed by a local partnership of Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (KMBC); Knowsley Housing Trust (KHT); and North Huyton New Deal for Communities (which terminated in March 2011). The transfer of council housing stock to Knowsley Housing Trust in 2002 provided access to additional resources, and led to the production of a Masterplan which proposed a remodelling of the neighbourhood, extensive demolition (much of it in Hillside), and new mixed-tenure housing development predominantly consisting of housing for sale. North Huyton was also subsequently declared a Mixed Communities Initiative demonstration area. Tenure diversity was thus placed at the heart of the Partnership's plans for the area.

During the period when the masterplan was being prepared, demolition of properties, many of them void and declared structurally unstable, continued in various streets in the estate. While this cleared 'blighted' properties, it also reinforced the sense of physical isolation in certain parts of the estate with many unused open spaces that had yet to be developed for any purpose. A prolonged period of consultation and revision to the original masterplan led to the production of an agreed plan by January 2006 and the commission of a consortium of three developers (Keepmoat plc, Gleeson plc and Lowry Homes) rebranded as *Revive*. Overall, the masterplan proposed that, across the whole NDC area, 1,200 homes should be demolished (of which 700 had already been cleared) and replaced by 1,523 new properties. Of these, 85 per cent (1,292 units) were to be homes for private sale, 12 per cent (181 units) for social renting and 3 per cent (50 units) for low cost home ownership.

During this period of flux, many households continued to move out of Hillside, but other stayed put until the option of a new property in the neighbourhood was made available to them. In some cases this took several years. The impact of the recession and the housing market downturn affected the development plan. The development of 400 properties in the Hillside part of the estate was suspended in late 2008, as a result of the recession and the consequent difficulties faced by some of the *Revive* developers. It recommenced in early 2010, though the delay caused considerable disquiet, both in terms of delays in rehousing and in terms of the 'hollowed-out' visual and social aspect of the neighbourhood. A number of new build private properties were recently transferred to KHT for social rent in order to rehouse some of the existing Hillside community. Low cost home ownership units were proving to be very difficult to sell to the existing local community. Low wages, poor credit status and lack of savings amongst the target customers made gaining even a relatively small mortgage out of reach for the majority of local residents.

4.4   Oxgangs, Edinburgh

Oxgangs is a residential suburb of Edinburgh, located in the south-west of the City and falls within the Ward of Colinton/Fairmilehead. Its name derives from 'oxgang' or 'oxengait', meaning the extent of land that an ox could plough in a year, that being thirteen acres. The neighbourhood is served by a variety of shops, amenities and public facilities. It has two small shopping areas at each end of the area known to

the locals as the 'top' and 'bottom' shops. The top shops (Oxgangs Broadway) are the larger and feature a small convenient store known as 'Denis's', after the owner of the shop. Other shops in the top area include a newsagent, a hairdresser, and three takeaways. There is also a post office and a pharmacy. The local library is a popular and well resourced hub of the community, and is regularly used for meetings and classes as well as for its wide range of books and IT facilities. Oxgangs has three primary schools, as well as a nearby high school which is reported to have a very good reputation locally and further afield. Two neighbouring primary schools situated on Oxgangs Green (Comiston and Hunters Tryst) were recently merged and renamed Pentland Primary. Local churches in the area include: Church of Scotland, Scottish Episcopal Church, a Roman Catholic Church and a recently built Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Oxgangs was developed in its present form in the early 1950s to provide predominantly council housing for skilled workers in the city and to attract incomers to an economically buoyant area. It also provided housing for people displaced by redevelopment in other parts of the city. A variety of housing types were constructed: low rise blocks of flats; semi-detached houses; bungalows; and, most striking, high-rise flats. Completed in the early 1960s, Oxgangs' three high rise flats (Caerketton, Allermuir and Capelaw) were known locally as the 'village in the sky', and were all-electric with under-floor heating, inside toilets, communal laundry facilities, lifts and balconies providing views of the Pentland Hills, the Forth and the City. Each block consisted of 60 flats and 20 two-storey maisonettes. The *Oxgangs and Comiston Residents Association,* formed in 1963, provided organised activities and events to help foster social relations and assist those moving into Oxgangs to settle. It also provided the means for ongoing dialogue between residents and the local authority.

While the community was flourishing, serious defects were emerging fairly quickly after the development was completed. As early as 1962, residents complained to the local authority about cracks in the plasterwork and dampness in some properties. Various efforts were made to rectify these problems over the next three decades. While solutions could be found for the houses and low-rise blocks, the high-rise flats suffered from inherent structural problems that could not be suitably rectified. During the 1970s and 1980s, Oxgangs remained a popular residential location and a significant proportion of Council housing was bought by tenants under the Right-to-Buy scheme.

The biggest change to the fabric of Oxgangs was the decision to demolish the high-rise flats in 2003 to make way for redevelopment and regeneration. Capelaw Court was razed in April 2005, followed by Caerketton and Allermuir in November 2006. Where possible, tenants were housed in empty properties within Oxgangs and given a right to return to the new development. However, many tenants moved away from the area. The High Rise Tenants Association played an active role in shaping the redevelopment plan. Work began in 2006 on a new mixed tenure scheme of low-rise flats and houses. The new homes provide a range of dwelling types, including provision for elderly people and people with disabilities. The scheme was responsive to a local desire for 'low rise' housing, balanced against the practical requirement to achieve relatively high dwelling densities to meet high housing demand and make it financially viable. Phase one of the scheme (91 units) was completed at the end of 2007, and has accommodated former tenants of the high rise block who were given the right of return and priority allocation. Phase two (initiated August 2007) included 85 residential units along with a community centre and some commercial units. Phase 3a began in 2010 (34 residential units) and Phase 3b will begin once further land has been acquired. In 2009/10 a major refurbishment programme of council housing in Oxgangs was undertaken, providing new kitchens and bathrooms in existing properties, as well as other improvements to fixtures and fittings.

4.5   Wensley Fold, Blackburn

Wensley Fold is a neighbourhood of Blackburn, a Lancashire town with a population of some 100,000 in 2001, and the administrative centre of the unitary authority of Blackburn and Darwen (population 137,000 in 2001). The neighbourhood is located immediately west of Blackburn town centre. It is bounded to the north by the A677 Preston New Road, to the south by a mixed use retail and industrial area and to the west by a large park. The area has a population of approximately 3,000, occupies a hillside situation and is characterised by rows of parallel terraced houses organised in a compressed grid pattern. Recently, the area has been subject to redevelopment, as part of the Pennine Lancashire Housing Market Renewal programme, with a number of terraces being demolished and replaced by new-build terrace properties, with more space between each row allowing for gardens and back yards to be developed. The area has a local shopping centre, with a variety of local shops including some specialising in South Asian produce. There are also a number of major supermarket stores on the edge of the area and the town centre is within walking distance. Local community resources include a community centre that runs various training, educational and social activities targeted at the whole population, as well as places of worship and parks.

Wensley Fold has an important symbolic role in Blackburn's economic history as it was the site of the earliest powered spinning mill in the town, developed in 1778. Hand weavers were displaced by power looms in the trade upturn of the 1840s and growth was further stimulated by the arrival of the first railway line into the town in 1846. In the 1840s, the Wensley Fold mill alone had a workforce of around 1,400. The town itself had witnessed a six fold increase in its population between 1821 and 1911, when it reached a peak of 133,000. By 1911 textile trades formed more than half of the workforce in Blackburn, with a predominance of women in the industry. There was some diversification of the town's economic base in the inter-war and post-war era, through engineering and manufacturing companies moving into sites on the outskirts of the town. The largest local private employer today is BAE systems at Balderstone, Blackburn. The two other major employers are the local authority and the recently built Blackburn Royal Hospital.

As with other textile towns in the area, Blackburn became the focus for Asian migration from the late 1960s onwards. The census records that the numbers of Asian or east Asian birth in the town grew from 652 in 1961 to 5,355 in 1971 to 15,237 in 1981 and 19,700 by 1991. The largest proportions of immigrants to the town in this period were rural Indian Gujarati Muslims and rural Pakistani Punjabi Muslims (Robinson, 1986). Many settled close to the town centre. Gujarati Hindus and Punjabi Sikh families tended to settle in the Preston New Road areas in the northern and eastern parts of Wensley Fold. The largest ethnic group, Gujarati Sunni Muslims, tended to move into the Brookhouse area in the north east of Blackburn, Gujarati Surtis in the Daisyfield and Audley Range areas in the east and Pakistani Sunnis on Brookhouse, Audley Range, Queens Park and Greenbank (to the east of the town centre).

Most of the original settlers from south Asia worked in the textile industry (in 1977 this sector accounted for 54 per cent of the adult workforce from immigrant communities, compared to only 10.3 per cent of the town's workforce as a whole). In the past thirty years, the unemployment rate has been considerably higher among the Asian communities in Blackburn than for the population as whole (Beattie, 2007: p327). The quality of dwellings in those neighbourhoods in Blackburn with higher proportions of council housing began to be improved from an ongoing programme of refurbishment once the stock was transferred to a housing association, Twin Valley Homes, in 2001. Improvements in neighbourhoods with higher levels of private housing, like Wensley Fold, have unfolded over a longer time frame.

A major turning point in the process of regeneration in Blackburn was the local authority's success in the City Challenge competition of 1992, which was followed in 1999 by the Single Regeneration Budget programme, which lasted for eight years and eventually brought in £160 million of public and private sector investment. In addition to the development of new industrial sites, two housing areas, BankTop/Wensley Fold and Shadsworth, were earmarked for renewal, upgrading and enhancement.

Most of the initial investment in Wensley Fold was directed towards group repair programmes and improvements to the external fabric of the properties to ensure basic wind and weather proofing. A range of complementary initiatives was also introduced, such as a community safety programme, a home zone and additional youth provision. The voluntary acquisition of the properties took place over several years. Back-to-back properties were demolished and replaced with larger properties with gardens to front and back, which also reduced the density of the built environment. A masterplanning exercise carried out between 2003 and 2004 revealed a high level of local support among both the Asian and white communities for the development of larger properties with gardens nested within the neighbourhood.

The new development of larger properties using designs and materials sympathetic to the existing dwellings was subsequently supported by the Elevate East Lancashire since renamed Pennine Lancashire Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder. The development of larger properties was seen as a particular need for the south Asian households in order to extend the range of properties on offer and to reduce overcrowding. The social composition of the first group of households proved to be more ethnically mixed than had been anticipated.

There was some growth in speculative activity from private landlords in Wensley Fold once it was earmarked for HMR funding, although the neighbourhood has not experienced unduly high rates of turnover, or other problems such as antisocial behaviour or poor lettability of social rented stock. The programme placed emphasis on retaining shop frontages and residential units above the shops in the main street, as well as investment in the local primary school, a community centre, a health centre and an all weather pitch. A lot of the land in back alleys running between the terraced properties was adopted as gardens or designated parking spaces. The refurbishment of the private housing in the north of the Wensley Fold/Bank Top area was also accompanied by major redevelopment in an adjacent social housing estate owned by Twin Valley Homes, with a reconfiguration of maisonettes and flats and removal of garages to provide three and four bedroom houses with gardens instead.

Wensley Fold is now an area with a private rented sector that has stabilised, and very strong demand for both the rented and open sale properties in the new development. The local primary school is one of the most popular in the town, and the regeneration of the area is widely seen as a success.

4.6   West Kensington, London

The West Kensington case study area is located in west London, in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. The area is located within walking distance of Earls Court Exhibition Centre and a number of London Underground stations including West Kensington, West Brompton, and Earls Court. The area is surrounded by several high status neighbourhoods including Chelsea, Baron's Court and Kensington. West Kensington falls within the area covered by the North Fulham New Deal for Communities programme. The West Kensington estate comprises approximately 1,000 units and was built in the early 1970s. It is a mixed

development comprising five tower blocks, low rise flats, maisonettes and some terraced houses. The Gibbs Green estate comprises some 160 flats and maisonettes, built in the late 1950s/ early 1960s. The properties are set out in six four storey blocks and one eight storey block, which is due to be replaced by low rise housing and a communal hall under redevelopment proposals.

The neighbourhood is centred on the intersection between North End and Lillie Roads, where most of the area's numerous shops, pubs and cafes are located. The area also has a bustling (semi-permanent) market which is located on North End Road. The West Kensington and Gibbs Green estates are located in the north of the neighbourhood on the eastern side of North End Road. Reflecting the diversity of the wider West Kensington area, the neighbourhood is a mixed income area and contains many households with above average incomes. In some parts of the area, property prices are very high, with some selling recently for more than £1.5 million.

Until the last quarter of the 19th Century West Kensington was a middle class suburb on the edge of metropolitan London and in demand, not least due to its proximity to the prestigious St Paul's school in Hammersmith. Its status was eclipsed by the development of the garden suburb of Bedford Park in Chiswick and the release of 400 acres of land by the West Kensington estates company (part of Kensington House gardens) in 1886 for building three storey town houses. The market on North End Road had originally emerged in 1880 and in his study of 1902 Charles Booth noted that, when the market was flourishing and at its peak, it stretched from Fulham Broadway right up to Hammersmith, but the introduction of new regulations for street markets in 1927 enabled the local council to restrict the market to south of Lillee Road. The market has remained a bulwark against wholesale redevelopment ever since. While much of the area around it has gentrified, the market has changed little (Forshaw and Bergstrom 1983).

In terms of the housing stock, by the 1930s the nineteenth century properties were already judged sub-standard, and they were also heavily damaged during the war. The Council considered developing the area for new housing in the immediate post war period. In 1955 a compulsory purchase order for the Gibbs Green site was confirmed and work on the new development commenced in 1958 and the estate was formally opened in 1961. The scheme comprised eight blocks of dwellings of which three were four storeys high, four were five storeys high and one was an eight storey building.   In the external area car parking spaces were provided, along with a children's playground, a 'kickabout space' for older children and some 'sitting out' places and flower beds.

The West Kensington estate was developed between October 1970 and 1974 by Gleesons, as a £4 million mixed development of 626 dwellings comprising 160 houses, 78 maisonettes and 388 flats. The buildings were constructed in a zigzag pattern in an attempt to afford greater privacy – some were then let at social rents and some at market rents. The period of construction coincided with the shortage of bricks in the early 1970s as a result of the property boom. Great play was made of the use of semi-industrialised construction combined with traditional cladding, as a way of saving money and completing the programme. It soon led to problems. An investigation was made as early as 1977 into problems with the blocks, worsening conditions with the brickwork and the absence of a damp proof course. A repair and improvement programme of £5.25m was therefore implemented in November 1980, less than ten years after it was completed. Two hundred families had then to be evacuated from the high rise blocks during the three year period to undertake the programme.

In 1990 concierge schemes were introduced for the two eleven storey blocks in West Kensington – Churchward House and Fairburn House. A Safer Communities project

was launched in the 1990s and the estate was brought within the boundaries of the North Fulham New Deal for Communities programme from 2000 until the present time. The West Kensington and Gibbs Green estates have recently undergone refurbishment under the 'Decent Homes' programme involving improvements to kitchens and bathrooms and common parts, and this programme will run through until January 2011.

The area has recently been the focus of a controversial plan for a an ambitious redevelopment of the wider area, including the nearby Earls Court complex, owned by the developers Capital and Council (Capco), once the 2012 Olympics has finished. The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham LB expressed interest in the plan, including the phased redevelopment of the West Kensington/Gibbs Green estates. The local authority has undertaken some initial consultation with residents about the scheme, which could involve a new international conference centre, hotels, new transport interchanges, offices and 8,000 units of high value private housing. The redevelopment has been promoted in furtherance of the local authority's objective of 'offering mixed and balanced communities'. This had led to a public campaign, and a petition expressing concerns that households would be displaced, and anxious about reassurances given by the council that alternative housing would be offered on a 'like-for-like' basis (*Fulham and Hammersmith Chronicle* 19 February 2010). The recently formed West Kensington and Gibbs Green Residents' Committee has convened a series of public meetings and is currently considering pressing for a transfer of the stock to a community-run company, The redevelopment proposal, and the residents' alternative plan, has now became a major issue in local and national media.

4.7   West Marsh, Grimsby

West Marsh is an area adjacent to the north western part of the town centre of Grimsby, the largest town in North East Lincolnshire, which has a population of around 90,000. West Marsh is located immediately adjacent to the town centre and is close to the A180 the main arterial route westwards out of the town. Its northern and eastern boundaries are formed by Alexandra Dock, to the west is the Pyewipe industrial estate and to the south the railway line and the main thoroughfare of Cromwell Road. It is divided north-south by the River Freshney and east-west by Boulevard Avenue.

The area is a mix of residential and small business developments, a business and retail park and considerable green space. On the banks of the River Freshney are the extensive Littlecoates allotments site, and the Duke of York Park, which has recently been refurbished. The area is predominantly private rented and owner-occupied, and largely composed of street fronting rendered terraced housing built to a grid pattern in the period between 1875 and 1913, with a few more recent infill developments.

Grimsby originally developed as a port in the 12th century at the point where the River Haven flows into the Humber. By the 15th century, the Haven began to silt up and the town declined. The economic renaissance of the area lay in the twin development of the fish docks and the connection to the rail services by the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire railway company. The Royal Dock, at the time the most modern commercial fish dock in England, was opened in 1852. The passing of the West Marsh Act of 1856 enabled the acquisition of 105 acres of land in the West Marsh area for the further development of the railway system and three fish docks between 1857 and 1878. The Union Dock and Alexandra Dock on the edge of West Marsh were opened in 1879 and 1880 respectively, with modern facilities for exporting hundreds of wagon loads of coal arriving from the West

Yorkshire coalfields that was then sorted in the West Marsh sidings adjacent to the new dock complex (Drury, 1987).

The population of Grimsby grew rapidly from 4,000 in 1841 to 11,000 in 1861 and 35,000 by 1901. The population of the town reached 92,000 in the mid 1930s, when a third large dock was opened, and the population has stabilised around that figure since then. By the 1950s Grimsby was the largest fishing port in the world but trade declined sharply thereafter, especially following the 'Cod Wars' of the late 1960s and early 1970s. However, Grimsby and Immingham remains by some margin the UK's largest port by tonnage, though overall activity has declined steadily in recent years (DfT, 2010)

In the post war period the decline of the fishing, timber and coal exporting industries were only partly compensated by the development of the frozen food processing industry and ancillary engineering and manufacturing industries. The shift from fishing to food processing altered the character of employment as well - from the distinctive occupational culture of trawlermen to the more female dominated shift work patterns involved in the food processing sector. A new post-war industrial estate was developed at Pyewipe (in the Littlecoates area) and a Dunlop factory opened in 1955, Courtaulds in 1957 for the production of fibres and yarn, followed by a titanium works and other chemical companies such as CIBA. All have now closed. The recently constructed 110 acre Europarc to the north of the industrial estate has witnessed a rapid turnover of occupants and is currently the site for a range of smaller businesses involved in packaging, warehousing and fabric manufacturing.

Residential development in West Marsh mainly took place between 1875 and 1913 as terraces were constructed by local builders according to basic grid patterns. There were scattered demolition and infill redevelopments in the 1960s and 1970s but there has been no systematic investment plan to improve the poor quality properties and reduce the proportion of vacant dwellings. The local authority's recent priority has been to confront the similarly poor housing conditions in the East Marsh area close to what was once the town's main shopping street, Freeman Street. It is likely to be quite some time before the Neighbourhood Investment Plans prepared for the West Marsh and West Marsh Macaulay neighbourhoods (North East Lincolnshire Council, 2007) are delivered.

There are three primary schools in the area, Littlecoates, South Parade and Macaulay, and two secondary schools, Whitgift and Hereford Technology on the fringes of the area. There is no post-16 education provision nearby. There are three local churches: Haven Methodist, the Christadelphians and St Hugh's Anglican school. West Marsh was the location of the Grimsby General Hospital from 1877, until the new Princess of Wales hospital was built to the east of the town centre and opened in 1983.

At the heart of West Marsh, bordering the River Freshney is the Duke of York gardens, opened eponymously in 1894. (Mickleburgh, 2008). They have recently been the subject of substantial refurbishment, including the provision of new play equipment, supported by an active local group, the Friends of the Freshney, set up in 2004. Other social activities are organised by the West Marsh Community Centre (set up in 1999), St Hugh's Community Centre and the Macaulay Area Action Group. A Forward West Marsh group was set up in 2007 to identify priorities from the area's share of the £9.2 million Neighbourhood Renewal Funding received from 2006 to 2008 and which represented one of the few cases of regeneration funding in the area over the past thirty years. Considerable resources have now been devoted to improvements to the West Marsh community centre, including a new garden area, crazy golf and five a side football arena, and an annual West Marsh fun day. Other activities at the Centre include musical theatre classes (a group called Stage

Stompers) and computer courses. Many of these activities are dependent on the energy and enthusiasm of a small group of individuals, several of whom have now returned to the West Marsh they first lived in as children and young adults some twenty or thirty years later.

4.8   Residents' Narratives of Change

Much recent neighbourhood policy, research and evaluation has focused on assessing recent change, and perceptions of these changes, over relatively short time periods.   Many accounts of neighbourhood change are provided through evaluations of particular urban policies and area-based programmes and these understandably tend to have truncated timescales consistent with the period in which the project was undertaken (see for example, the evaluation of the New Deal for Communities Programme, Batty *et al*, 2010a, 2010b; Beatty *et al*, 2009). This tends to lead to relatively ahistorical accounts of the process of neighbourhood change, and this matters because it can miss how far these longer term changes have helped to shape the outlooks and actions of residents. Certainly many participants in this research project often placed change in a far longer historical context and identified previous periods of transformation in their area (*see also* Robertson *et al*, 2008; Charlesworth, 2000, Rogaly and Taylor, 2009). Key historical economic trends, such as the decline of industries or specific developments, or the loss of train and bus stations or the building of a new road, were identified as the root cause of more contemporary dynamics of change.

Furthermore, an account of the interweaving of personal and place-based histories can also help to illuminate differences between residents' perceptions in deprived neighbourhoods. The weight of history will bear down on people to a different extent depending on their own mobility history, the degree to which the place they live in has experienced high or low residential turnover, and whether this has been a relatively imperceptible and continuous process, or is associated with specific periods of in- and out-migration. It should be noted that a consistent finding of previous research is that population change, shifting social dynamics and an increasingly transient population are common themes within narratives of neighbourhood change and often perceived decline (Robertson *et al*, 2008; Hall, 2007; Mumford and Power, 2003; Watt, 2006). These themes are also predominant in our own findings.

In the next two sections, the subjective perceptions of such changes and the values invested in them by participants are assessed (see Bashir and Flint, 2010 for a fuller account of residents' experiences and perceptions of neighbourhood change in the case study neighbourhoods). Of course, in interview people do not make a firm distinction between how the place they live in has changed and contemporaneous changes in their own lives: one interacts with the other.   One can nevertheless discern two distinct narratives of change here: a narrative of loss and decline and a narrative of gain. There is also a narrative of persistence, of 'endurance', of 'carrying on' and this is considered in the following chapter. The narratives are also often characterised by each of these elements being present simultaneously and, at times, individuals' accounts can be contradictory (see also Watt, 2006; Hall, 2007).

4.9   Narratives of Loss

For many residents in each of the case studies, a comparatively long historical timeframe was used to articulate a narrative of 'loss' in the material conditions, social status and social conditions of the neighbourhoods. This echoed the findings of Paul

Watt's research (2006) about narratives of decline being linked to a remembered past characterised by communal solidarity based on interaction, reciprocity and an equality in housing and income conditions, even though these conditions were often ones of poverty (see also Robertson *et al*, 2008). These narratives were also linked to a loss of stability, ontological security and predictability, as developed by a number of recent sociological accounts of 'liquid modernity' or the 'vertigo' of 'late modernity' (Bauman, 2000; Young, 2007; Giddens, 1984) in which individuals' sense of place (geographic and social) is challenged by the scale and pace of economic, social and cultural change.

The Local Economy

The earlier part of this chapter highlighted the scale and nature of economic change across the six neighbourhoods, with many areas experiencing the long-term decline of key sources of employment. This was reflected in the accounts of interviewees for whom the local economy was seen a key driver of change. In some cases, this was located within a longer-term historical decline in specific sectors of industry and the particular dependence of some neighbourhoods on a small number of predominant firms. In Amlwch, for example, the successive closure of local firms or the ending of construction projects had a major impact. In West Marsh, participants identified the loss of key local employers, especially in the food processing sector, whilst residents in Wensley Fold noted the decline of production work as Khaliq (aged 30-34), for example, pointed out:

> *The work situation has become a lot worse. There isn't any work, they've closed down the factories, they've replaced them with other buildings.*

What has been 'lost' according to such accounts was the *distinctiveness* of the economic foundations for these neighbourhoods, as employment opportunities that replaced them were more heterogeneous, and anonymous, with reduced pay, conditions and security, in sectors such as warehousing or basic level service industry.

While the recession had already led to some job losses among respondents and other members of their household at the time of our interviews, there was widespread foreboding of worse to come down the line (Batty and Cole, 2010). Some talked of their personal experiences in the struggle to keep in the labour market or to continue to make a living (for example, amongst taxi drivers who reported a marked decrease in trade). The experiences and perceptions of the respondents provided some valuable insights into the nature of labour market conditions but in ways that also said something about the meanings invested in, or attached to, particular places. Many accounts were given of the difficulties in securing work, gaining work locally and getting anything better than short-term jobs (Crisp 2010; Batty and Cole 2010), epitomised in the remark by Hashim Mirza (aged 35-44) from Wensley Fold, whose husband was unemployed when we first interviewed her:

> *The recession has hit Blackburn in a really bad way because the factories that they had here, they've all closed down, a lot of them have been demolished and they're actually built new houses there instead. By getting rid of the factories they've closed down our means of earning a living and putting food on the table.*

Hashim Mirza also described finding it '*very, very hard*' to manage financially as he was using his benefits to support his own household and to send money back to family in Pakistan. It was also evident how the negative impact of job loss could

affect the well-being of other household members. This was apparent in the case of Safah (16-24) from Wensley Fold who was looking after young children full-time at the time of interview and described the effect of her husband's inability to find work on household life as follows:

> *That's the biggest problem, he's not working, he's on Jobseekers Allowance at the moment there's no jobs in Blackburn whatsoever now, it's really hard to find a job. Yeah we are [struggling] financially mainly cos it's like hard, we've got our two year olds and then we've got bills on top of that…he'll be at home 24/7, he's stressed 'cos of the fact that he can't find a job and I'm stressed cos there's not much income coming in and there's a lot of tension with the job side.*

Alongside these personal accounts of difficulties, perceptions of economic decline were expressed through inter-generational concern for the lack of opportunities for young people. Winnie (aged 45-64) from Hillside, for example, noted the declining availability of work for young people:

> *… they apply for Tesco and things like that but there's no production work getting done anywhere round here. I think Marconi was one of the last people to go from Edge Lane. Years ago, there was a factory on every corner and gradually over the years we've seen everything from printers, Meccano, all them were along there and all over the years … Marconi was the last one, and when that went it's just dead along that road now.*

In Amlwch especially, decreasing local employment opportunities for young people were directly linked to the wider social decline of the town:

> *For the young people here, without [work]…they'll have to go into England maybe to find work or whatever.*

> (Harold, 65+, Amlwch)

It is important to remember in all this that the general view was that the employment situation would get considerably bleaker and that the impact of the recession on most jobs had been relatively limited (Batty and Cole 2010). There were, however, some countervailing views. Following a discussion of factory closures in Grimsby, for example, one resident in full-time employment went on to assert that *'there is work if you're really prepared to look for it, there is if you really want work'* (Harold, 35-44, West Marsh). Similarly, Morgan (30-34) from West Marsh, who was working full-time as a factory operative, maintained that *'there's work round here, it's just if you can be bothered to do it'*. Explicit in these claims was a sense that work could be secured if those out of work were willing to invest the time and effort in looking for it. Such claims, though, fell short of asserting that work was readily available. Moreover, these were atypical of the majority of respondents who thought that local employment opportunities were limited.

The significance of these findings extends beyond establishing the local labour market context that faces residents. In most of the neighbourhoods there was a profound sense of loss attached to the perceived decline of important sources of work. Such accounts often transcended individual experiences of job loss or difficulties in finding to work to convey a more generalised sense of living in an area deeply affected by economic change and decline (Stenning, 2003). It is also interesting to note that these narratives of decline were often framed in terms of the loss of a few dominant local employers or industries. This suggests that neighbourhood identity is often intimately linked to the fortunes of large-scale,

Fordist-style workplaces. There was a lack of such narratives in Oxgangs, and especially West Kensington, which are located in more diverse labour markets.

It is noteworthy that these narratives were framed largely in terms of the loss of large-scale employers, particularly manufacturers that would have provided male, manual work. There was little countervailing discussion of new employment opportunities, particularly in the service sector, in which some female participants had found employment and was sometimes identified as a source of self-esteem (see Chapter 8). This suggests that perceptions of areas are intimately linked to the fortunes of key sources of male employment, and the pay and status associated with different jobs in these industries, rather than the growing service sector in which women are more likely to find work. Neighbourhood identity is, therefore, linked to gendered perceptions of long-term economic change.

Neighbourhood Facilities and Infrastructure

The strength of neighbourhood facilities and infrastructure was a further determinant of residents' sense of neighbourhood change. This was in part because it provided a visual representation of the decline of the area, as new sites for shopping and leisure by-passed the neighbourhood. But it was also due to its impact in limiting opportunities for social interaction.

In British urban policy, a key element in the selection of neighbourhoods as candidates for area-based regeneration programmes in the past thirty years has been the emphasis on "compositional" indicators, most notably measures of personal deprivation. While one of the components of the Index of Multiple Deprivation refers to 'barriers to housing and services', the physical attributes of a neighbourhood, whether its layout, design or the quality of its infrastructure, have often been neglected in this selection process, despite the fact that a relatively high proportion of the additional resources are often devoted to place and infrastructure, as in the New Deal for Communities programme (Batty *et al*, 2010).

There is a considerable literature that suggests that the physical attributes of an area have a major impact on residents' quality of life (Goodchild, 2008), especially in terms of its effect on social interaction. Practitioners and academics have sought ways to make neighbourhoods better places to live in by creating social spaces that maximise social interaction between residents, in the belief that this will enhance their quality of life (Carmona *et al,* 2003; Jacobs, 1961). Ramon Oldenburg, for example, argued that the "social malaise" that he felt existed in the United States in the 1980s stemmed from the increasing reluctance of American residents to interact outside the work place and home, in social arenas that he called *third places,* such as cafés, shops, pubs, leisure centres, and libraries (Oldenberg and Brissett, 1982; Oldenburg, 2007). Oldenburg and Brissett (1982 p271) defined a *third place* as follows:

> *A third place is a public setting accessible to its inhabitants and appropriated by them as their own. The dominant activity is not "special" in the eyes of its inhabitants, it is a taken-for-granted part of their social existence. It is not a place outsiders find necessarily interesting or notable. It is a forum of association which is beneficial only to the degree that it is well-integrated into daily life. Not even to its inhabitants is the third place a particularly intriguing or exciting locale. It is simply there, providing opportunities for experiences and relationships that are otherwise unavailable.*

Much of the debate about third places originally concerned the closure of shops and post offices in rural areas, but more recently the impact in suburban and inner urban

areas has been noted as well, and has been intensified by the economic downturn (IPPR, 2009). At the national level, research has revealed that on average 39 pubs close in Britain every week (BBPA, 2009) while data collected by Experian (Wallop, 2009) has shown a dramatic reduction in the numbers of shops in this country. It is likely that these trends will continue, if not intensify, in the foreseeable future. The particular physicality of third places means that their loss is not simply compensated by the growth of new forms of social interaction, such as the internet.

Third places may take many forms - including cafés, restaurants, leisure centres, swimming pools, libraries, parks, parks, public spaces, churches and mosques. Social interaction in third places in our case study areas occurred in a range of arenas, such as the library and local shopping centre in Oxgangs, and the lunch club, bowling, and gardening clubs in Amlwch. Across the six localities much of the social interaction that residents valued occurred in third places, and the decline in such amenities engendered a real sense of loss among our participants. While the early direct effects of the recession had been relatively moderate for many respondents in terms of their household income or even jobs, many claimed that it had an impact on *place*, and on 'their' place at that. The closure of key facilities, like youth clubs, or play parks for children or the decline of key community events, such as carnivals or street parties, and less people in public houses, were perceived as symbolising deterioration in the social vibrancy of communities. Furthermore, the symbolic and functional importance of these places as social places was recognised by many participants, such as Adrianna (35-44) in Amlwch:

> *We used to have a cinema, and now it's just flats and flats and flats getting built everywhere…There are very few shops in Amlwch so I have to leave to buy clothes and things like that. There used to be five butchers and a lot of other little shops for different things, bakers, a veg shop but they've been shut down and replaced by Chinese restaurants, Indian restaurants. I don't know how they survive in such a small place. It's sad that there are no more little shops and cafes because there aren't enough places to socialise now ... In the 1970s the Chapel on this street closed and was turned into a warehouse, now the Welsh Chapel on Salem Street is closing. The streets are the heart of Amlwch and they're being ruined by big flat developments. The old Chapel on this road is now being turned into a block of flats and it's just not attractive for people living here, it's not going to be a community space anymore and that's a shame.*

In Amlwch, there were few opportunities for people to meet in pubs, cafes or corner shops. The local schools emerged as the only site of local service provision where people were regularly making interpersonal connections within the neighbourhood.

In addition to performing a 'practical' function as a medium for social interaction, third places also appeared to have a symbolic role within the case study areas: they were seen by residents as a marker of the 'health' and 'vibrancy' of their neighbourhoods. And their removal was perceived as being a very tangible indicator and symbol of decline, especially in terms of shop closures (see also Wood and Vamplew, 1999). This was particularly the case in three areas – West Marsh, Amlwch and Hillside. The response by Callum (45-64) from West Marsh about why he felt the area had changed for the worse was echoed by several others from each of these three areas (Hickman, 2010):

Got no post office now, no paper shop, we've got, we used to have a chippy at the bottom of the road, there used to be … at traffic lights, there used to be paper shop down here, post office down on Gilbey Road, post office and another shop but now ... and there's nowhere open, you can't get a paper. Next day, it's not open. The day it's open you go and there's nowt on the shelves. In fact I even went the other night to get some beer and he didn't have none, so I walked to … on the way back he told me in the morning he was getting beer in the afternoon and it's a weekend. I went in after … shelf, it's there, at least you've summat on your shelf … I'm not gonna bother coming back no more cos you've never got nowt in here anyway.

In line with the findings of other studies (Flint, 2006; Matthews *et al*, 2000), one 'third place' emerged as being of particular importance to residents: local shops. Across all six neighbourhoods, shops fulfilled an important role as a vehicle for promoting social interaction between residents, particularly of the 'pure sociability' type. In addition to fulfilling an important role in people's social lives, shopping fulfilled another important social function, as a 'leisure' activity for many residents and, particularly for those who were not working, it was an important way of occupying their time.

The closure of shops or the changing nature of shops was an important symbolic indicator of neighbourhood change. In Hillside, Oxgangs and West Marsh, the loss of shops was linked to a wider sense of economic and social decline. Many residents identified changes in retail provision as having a significant impact on their lives through reducing access to affordable essential goods. For some, it was the lack of quality goods, rather than their cost, that was the key issue.

In Amlwch, the rapid turnover in shop ownership was perceived as an indicator of the wider economic fragility of the town, as Lorna (30-34), for example, noted:

[Shops] constantly changing, opening and closing, opening and closing, I suppose it's the same in most small towns.

Residents identified the closure of specialist food and goods shops in the last three years and their replacement with charity shops and cafes and restaurants and supermarkets*,* articulating a concern about the appropriateness and sustainability of these shops against the backdrop of economic decline. In contrast, the increasing stability of local shops and enhanced range of provision noted in Wensley Fold symbolised a sense of regained vibrancy and renewal.

Other social places, such as cafés, community centres, leisure, local clubs, and pubs also fulfilled a less central, but still important, role as places of social interaction. Gendered differences in references to these different places were marked. Traditional local 'male spaces' for interaction – pubs and clubs - had already closed down, or were threatened with closure. Shops were mentioned by more female participants as a site for social interaction, and here the process of decline was generally slower, although the closure of local shops in Hillside had prompted intense local concern, running in parallel to the demolition of many of the houses in the area (Hickman, 2010). This sense of loss was far less in evidence in West Kensington, for example, where neighbourhood boundaries were more porous and where residents expected to move out of their area for jobs, socialising and leisure pursuits. The thriving and long-standing street market on North End Road provided a telling indicator of the economic buoyancy of the wider area and the greater 'connectedness' of West Kensington to its immediate hinterland than in the other neighbourhoods.

In Hillside, residents attributed much of their dissatisfaction with the neighbourhood to a decline in sociability caused by the large scale demolition and restructuring programme, as Carrie (45-64) graphically expressed it:

> *It's just unbearable. It's like the black hole of Calcutta of a night when the winter comes. It's horrible. There's no-one living round me and it's just an awful depressing thing to go home to. I hate even being in there now and I loved my home when my children were growing up. I never ever thought I'd ever say that.*

One important finding from this study is that, contrary to broken windows theory (Wilson and Kelling, 1982; Skogan, 1990) and studies of residential mobility, the majority of residents did not translate negative views of aspects of neighbourhood change into a desire to leave their neighbourhood. Many participants were extremely concerned about physical incivilities like empty properties, vandalism, litter and dog fouling, along with insecurities about the changing populations and social conditions of neighbourhoods. However, a key element of the power and significance of these phenomena for residents was precisely that mobility was not an option (either due to financial constraints or a strong orientation to remain in the neighbourhood). 'Loss' did not prompt 'exit'. This appeared to be a defining feature of these narratives of change - such change, whether positive or negative, is experienced within the context of the need to remain in the area and a sense of disempowerment in the ability of residents to alter or influence these forces of change.

There were also differences in the strength of these narratives of loss, as one might expect, on the basis of age and length of residence. Older residents felt a stronger sense of 'belonging' that was at threat of being undermined by cultural, economic or demographic changes, in which loss was expressed temporally (as 'nostalgia') while more recent residents had a more 'conditional' view about the neighbourhood based on its perceived functionality and where moving out was held as a potential option if neighbourhood deficiencies increased. This was an important marker of social division in the neighbourhoods, not least in the views among older residents that some incomers (such as economic in-migrants) did not share their own 'commitment' to place.

4.10   Narratives of Gain

It would be wrong to characterise all the stories about neighbourhood and personal change as an uphill struggle against insurmountable challenges. How about those who had managed to throw off the shackles of their financial, personal or residential situation and prospered, in relative terms? There were relatively few instances of such accounts in the interviews. This is for a number of reasons. First, many participants did not bring a finely honed comparative framework to an assessment of either their own social status or the status of their neighbourhood (see Batty and Flint, 2010). They were not carrying around in their heads, as it were, a continuously updated league table of their own and others' performance. Furthermore, such accounts about what they had achieved were historical in personal terms rather than directly comparative to other social groups in origin. Housing figured strongly in such assessments. Several participants in Oxgangs, for example, referred to the area positively as being one of the best or better places to live compared to other social housing estates in the city (Flint and Casey, 2010). The housing refurbishments in Wensley Fold were also viewed very positively, though this was more in terms of the quality (and size) of the dwellings than about positioning oneself favourably in the local housing market. In both Oxgangs and Wensley Fold, some residents viewed living in these neighbourhoods as a symbol of positive progress in their own lives.

In Hillside there were a few personal stories of improvement as participants had moved into the newly constructed properties on the estate as part of the renewal programme. But Hillside itself, or the wider North Huyton estate in which it was located, was generally seen as 'the same as everywhere else' in terms of neighbourhood status.

Residents in West Kensington felt a strong sense of achievement in just having gained a foothold in the London housing market – a 'gain' they would not now relinquish lightly. In Amlwch, fine grain distinctions were made between the three residential areas of the town, with an implicit hierarchy of status of Amlwch Town then Craig y Don then the port – again guided as much by historical patterns as contemporary realties. In West Marsh , many participants suggested that they had 'ended up' in the area, not least because it was affordable, rather than exercised positive choice to live there, though some respondents did have family and friends living nearby, and saw this as a reason to stay put. The housing 'gains', it should be noted, were largely expressed by participants in terms of locational advantage (near to parents, or a reasonable school) cost or 'quality' and not in terms of price, value or capital appreciation (see also Allen, 2008).

In terms of income, while many participants said that their financial prospects had improved, this was hedged with caution – financial insecurity was a fact of life and so any improvements, it was felt, might be transitory. There was 'getting by' and there was 'winning the lottery' and not much else between these two positions. 'Sustainable affluence' did not seem to appear as a realistic prospect. Participants recounted a number of small victories in the way they managed limited budgets, stretched to a luxury (such as a holiday elsewhere) when times were good, or helped out other family members or occasionally friends. But these were rarely transformative events. Penelope's is one such story.

Penelope was 23 years old, single and had lived in Oxgangs for ten years. She left school with no qualifications and had several jobs, such as working in a chip shop and cleaning. She became a drug user at the age of 18 but she is now clean. She was unemployed for three years, filling her time with volunteering for a local support organisation and giving talks about drug and smoking use. Accessing training and volunteering was a positive experience which led on to work opportunities.

> *I like it [work], it's good. It's a lot better than being unemployed because I'm in a routine.*

She has been working as a care assistant (30 hours per week) since October 2008 and claimed working tax benefit to "*help me pay for the rent: if I never got that, my rent would be all my wages*". She was currently awaiting a move into a new flat through a right to return scheme as part of a redevelopment programme. Penelope felt that working had helped her gain more social skills and broadened her social circle:

> *I would say I'm more sociable now than what I've ever been just because people at work, people that I met on the course that I've done, we've all sort of stayed in contact and it's good. Even the work that I'm at now, I got invited to go out ... this weekend for one of the lasses that's getting married.*

Although Penelope had been working for seven months at the time of interview, she was just getting used to budgeting but struggled with new demands on her budget. She said she tried to save each month, but still had to borrow from time to time.

> *I'm getting used to budgeting but I would say I borrowed more the last time I spoke to you because I was unemployed, I never had as much money and I never had a wee bit to put aside, whereas now I have a wee bit.*

These kind of modest, incremental gains were typical of the more positive biographies of participants in the research. Of course we need to recognise that the research may have failed to capture some of these instances, if those who did become significantly more financially successful then left the neighbourhood for higher status areas.

In terms of neighbourhood infrastructure, the most positive changes noted by participants were in Wensley Fold, where there was still an array of general and specialist stores, two pubs, local places of worship, a community centre, two parks within easy reach and local schools. The neighbourhood was rich in the physical, institutional and human resources and environments that underpin active community ties. This fact was reflected in the everyday activities of participants, which were frequently rooted in the neighbourhood (see Chapter 6). This was particularly the case among South Asian participants, but was also apparent in the routines of White British participants, even when they had otherwise more dispersed everyday lives, leaving the neighbourhood to shop, socialise and visit families.

In Wensley Fold, many residents also suggested that a sense of community was being re-established, rather than diminishing, in the new housing developments. The generally positive views of neighbourhood change countered some of the emphasis on decline perceived in the other areas. Residents like Martha (35-44) identified enhanced levels of cohesion and social interaction:

> *I think it is more a community than it was when I moved back, it was still pretty new, the new housing. A lot of the houses were still being sold, people hadn't moved into them … there's that kind of second and third families moving into these new houses, so in that sense it's more established as a community … a lot of people feel like they've established roots I think here. There's not as many people in and out, people are not doing moonlight flits.*

Accounts like Martha's also highlight the importance of time in determining cohesion in neighbourhoods, both in terms of migration and ethnic diversity and in the phasing of major housing clearance and redevelopment. Residents in Hillside, and to a lesser extent Oxgangs, which were in the midst of major restructuring, focused on the disruption to social networks, even when physical housing renewal was regarded positively. In Hillside, the more negative views about the redevelopment were hardly helped by the long delays both to rehousing existing residents and the new development for owner-occupation.

The provision of new facilities, such as play areas, could indicate a more positive future for a neighbourhood, although the residents' responses to this could be complex. For example, although a new children's play area was welcomed in West Marsh, the use of security lights reinforced generalised fears of crime. In some neighbourhoods the vandalism to, or deterioration of, recently provided play areas or youth shelters indicated to residents the fragility of the possibility of renewal.

In addition to large-scale housing and environmental restructuring, more modest regeneration initiatives were also viewed positively by residents, including the provision of new bathrooms and kitchens in their homes, improvements to public spaces including parks and youth shelters (West Kensington) and enhanced street cleaning (Amlwch). The gain or loss of key facilities could also have a significant impact. A West Marsh resident stressed the importance of the new Children's Centre in providing practical help and activities for parents, and traffic calming

measures in Wensley Fold were identified by a number of residents as having increased the safety and the friendliness of the neighbourhood.

It is important to note that, just as residents' perceptions of neighbourhood change differed widely, the actual impact of these changes on individuals' personal circumstances and daily lives varied considerably. Some residents did not identify any impacts. Even some residents who were living in those neighbourhoods which had been subject to substantial demolition activity were uncertain about the extent of impacts on their area.

Unsurprisingly, the most significant impacts of neighbourhood change were identified by residents in those neighbourhoods subject to substantial physical transformation: Hillside, Oxgangs and Wensley Fold. Possible future regeneration plans were also a major issue in West Kensington. One resident of Wensley Fold suggested that the redevelopment of the neighbourhood had a positive impact on the wider external image of the area and residents' self-esteem. Likewise, some Oxgangs and Hillside residents argued that the significance of new housing development provided a sense of progress for the neighbourhood.

Just as the narratives of loss were often expressed in terms of the changing physical fabric of the neighbourhoods, improvements to housing and neighbourhood facilities were usually taken as positive steps forward. Improvements to housing for home owners in terms of uplifting property values, for example, did not necessarily translate into a sense of gaining personal advantage, still less a desire to 'get on' by 'getting out'. If staying put was the default option, such improvements simply made life more palatable. Clear gains in one's personal circumstances, on the other hand, were treated in a much more circumspect manner. Insecurity was felt to be never too far away.

4.11   Conclusion

This chapter has explored some of the historical developments that shaped the six neighbourhoods. The economic vulnerability and marginality of all the areas is a constant, though it finds expression in different ways, reflecting different historical and cultural influences. Amlwch and West Marsh, for example, still bear most clearly the imprint of former occupational communities (around mining and fishing). While recognition of the abiding history of Amlwch seems to have been a constant feature of local life, in West Marsh (where there has been more out-migration over time), only recently has a group of local historians started to put together accounts of how the area has changed in the lifetime of current residents (Mickleburgh, 2008). The industrial heritage and the limited subsequent economic diversification in Wensley Fold shares some similarities with these two areas, although the influx of south Asian households over the past thirty or forty years has helped to revitalise the neighbourhood realm to a much greater extent, aided by sympathetic redevelopment and regeneration. The economic opportunities for residents in Oxgangs and West Kensington are stronger than in the other case studies, partly for simple locational reasons (being within two economically successful and relatively affluent cities) , but housing market pressures are also more evident and the uncertain prospects for social housing tenants a greater cause for concern in these neighbourhoods. The attempted regeneration of Hillside, after a long period of decline, had stalled, and compounded the sense of isolation for those who have remained in the area, increasingly bereft of local amenities.

In terms of subjective perceptions of change at the neighbourhood level, the findings suggest that any policy narrative assuming that these neighbourhoods are unremittingly negative would be an oversimplification. Rather, a sense of

neighbourhood decline or desire to leave were often countered by, or coincided with, high levels of social and emotional connections to a neighbourhood, satisfaction with the locality and a sense of area improvement in which narratives of decline and gain coincided. While economic insecurity was a constant theme, this was generally not seen as something that could be remedied by moving elsewhere.

The multiple timeframes through which residents contextualised change, the different spatial scales on which they viewed change and the differentiation in responses to change amongst people in the same neighbourhood create challenges for attempts to capture a 'community' view on change. It also reveals limitations in any research procedures that do not allow sufficiently for inconsistency or nuance.

Residents see neighbourhood change through a prism in which historical trends, economic and social histories, housing market pressures, migration patterns and various policy initiatives come together (or collide). This is evident in the generally positive perception of neighbourhood change in Wensley Fold, where it was the opinion of many residents that social cohesion and interaction were increasing. This was different to the narrative of community decline more commonly articulated in the other neighbourhoods and in previous research studies.

A key finding of the research was the historical, social and emotional connection that residents had to their existing neighbourhood. The majority of residents saw their future life opportunities being intimately linked to their neighbourhood. Longer term residents, as one would expect, had a strong sense of continuity about belonging to their area. Living in 'their' area was a constant, in the midst of the economic, demographic and cultural changes that affected their neighbourhood and that they felt largely powerless to influence, despite the significant impact of these factors on their lives. We examine this sense of continuity, and how it affected the assessment by research participants of their own circumstances, in the following chapter.

5. Continuity: Endurance and 'Immobility'

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined how the six neighbourhoods have changed, and the consequence for participants and their neighbours of economic processes in and outside the geographical boundaries of 'their' areas. Yet in the midst of such accounts what also came across were reflections and experiences that were more about stolidity than flux, and more about the relentless nature of the challenges households faced, especially in financial terms, than their unique or sporadic nature. Their perceived ability to 'stay the course' in dealing with such challenges often meant 'making the best' of both resources one had (and getting additional support if necessary) and the place one lived in, rather than living in expectation of securing a dramatic change through either moving elsewhere or getting a new job. Respondents could then draw a sense of achievement about their competence in 'keeping going' and not being defeated by circumstances that were seen more as one's personal responsibility than the product of 'external' economic or social forces. While the generic fortunes of their neighbourhood ebbed and flowed, what emerged from accounts of participants' personal circumstances was a sense of constancy, of 'keeping going'; whatever might be happening around them. This chapter explores these aspects of 'getting by' in the face of such ongoing pressures.

5.2 Narratives of Endurance

The research interviews sought to identify what actions had been taken by individuals to deal with some of the constraints they faced, even when the economic downturn was in its relatively early stages, and to explore the interplay of personal, social and financial factors in their narratives. Many of the accounts in the interviews conveyed a sense of the 'adaptive flexibility' that has been seen an essential component of getting by on a low income, and living in a relatively deprived community (see Hooper *et al*, 2007; Orr *et al*, 2006). The response of these participants to economic pressure was significantly shaped by both the structure of the local economy and their access to neighbourhood social resources – resources that might help to insulate them from some of the negative consequences of the downturn that is likely to continue longer in these areas than in more prosperous neighbourhoods (IPPR, 2009).

For our purposes, the term 'endurance' ('the ability to withstand prolonged strain') is used to convey the way individuals and households managed to negotiate adverse economic conditions rather than be overcome by them. At the risk of splitting hairs, we think this is a more accurate term to convey the process they were engaged in rather than the term 'resilience', which has gained currency of late (Davidson, 2008). Resilience has connotations of 'bouncing back' from adversity, of overcoming risk or being restored to 'good health'. This did not capture most of the narratives participants gave us, especially about their financial circumstances, Endurance conveys more of a sense of a dogged and constant battle rather than a 'break

through' on one hand, or an occasional and episodic brush with adversity, on the other . Those who were 'getting by' in this way did not seek to subvert or challenge the social or economic constraints they confronted (see Dolan, 2007; Pahl *et al*, 2007). Instead, they were undertaking a continuous tactical regime of managing, juggling or coping.

Many of the responses in the second and third wave interviews about the economic downturn referred to historical patterns of long-term economic hardship and decline, with previous downturns leaving their own legacy. Any change in national economic fortunes from 'boom' to 'bust', or from 'growth' to 'recession' was not recognised, because the 'boom' had passed many people by in the first place. For a respondent like Lloyd, a pensioner from Amlwch, for example, the period of sustained national economic growth in the 1990s and 2000s was something of a mirage. In relative terms, the specific period denoted by the term 'recession' meant little and, when asked why it had had relatively little effect on the community so far, Lloyd simply noted: *"There's not much wealth here anyway".* Betty (35-44), from Oxgangs, expressed similar sentiments:

> *Yeah, we always have a credit crunch anyway, we've had it every year for every day of our lives since we've been married or whatever so it's no different for us, if you're a low-income worker. So it's no different from every other day.*

Those without savings had no 'buffer zone' to tide them through difficult periods when they were between jobs, or when unexpected demands on the household budget appeared. The risks of being forced to borrow at high rates from 'loan sharks' were recognised, often from bitter experience. Nevertheless, several respondents anticipated that there might be no other alternative in the future.

In view of the financial problems they faced, and the worsening economic position more widely, many participants also talked about 'putting up with' poor working conditions and circumstances. The tenacity to remain in the labour market whatever the negative consequences came across in many accounts. Low wages, for example, were cited as an issue by both respondents who were in work and those looking for a job, who expressed difficulties in finding work that paid an adequate wage. Potential childcare costs constituted an additional pressure, in view of the low wages on offer. Long hours were regularly mentioned as a negative element of paid employment. Alfie, (45-64), from West Marsh, for example, explained how his job working on the docks involved working irregular hours depending on the availability of work. At certain times of the year, this could entail very long shifts:

> *I work stupid o'clocks, I can go in at 6 in the morning and get home 8 at night sometimes… there's times at the minute with us being in this mini recession, we haven't got a lot on but as soon as Easter kicks in we go mental. As I say sometimes I don't get home in summer... been 11 o'clock at night hasn't it?*

Yet the general tenor of remarks like Alfie's was that it was something you had to get through, not that there would be opportunities to grasp elsewhere that would not have such costs and difficulties. For some self-employed people, the need to work long hours was directly associated with the decline in business experienced with the onset of recession. Sajid (30-34), a taxi driver from Wensley Fold, explained how he used to work eight hours a day but had been forced to increase his hours to compensate for the decrease in custom. His experience illustrated how low wages and irregular custom had forced him to work long hours to the detriment of the quality of family life.

> *Well, like I said, prior to that I was doing eight hour shifts therefore I can spend a lot of time with my wife and children but now I struggle to even pick my daughter up and drop her off at school. I have someone to do that for me. The only time I do spend with my children are probably on a Sunday. I have Sunday off because if I had a day off on a weekday they'd be busy with school and mosque so I wouldn't see them anyway…*

Unsocial hours had also been a feature of the working life of Malcolm (16-24) in West Marsh, initially as a machine operative and then as a supervisor at a local supermarket. He was fully aware of the costs and benefits involved, and, unusually among the responses, had put a time limit of how far he could put up with these circumstances.

> *Sometimes you don't get much sleep but I never really get much sleep anyway so it's just getting used to it. Some nights I have two, three hours, four hours, but I can get about five most. I would go off nights but money wise as well…I'm on about £10.80 an hour and on days it's about £6 summat, so it's quite a big (fall)… everything comes down to money, anything you do in life.*

> *Interviewer: How much longer could you see yourself doing nights for?*

> *Probably another year, I couldn't do it any longer cos I'm not suited on nights. They always say you can't work longer than 10 years on nights, knocks about five years off your life apparently.*

Many respondents also mentioned insecurity as a feature of their working lives, alongside negative experiences of the actual forms and conditions of work. This manifested itself both in terms of irregular work secured through private employment agencies as well as experiences of cycling between employment and periods of worklessness. Individuals who had used agencies expressed frustrations about the unpredictability of work secured through this route (Crisp, 2010a). The erratic and unpredictable nature of work offered was a source of intense dissatisfaction, and insecurity was also apparent in experiences of periods of employment interspersed with spells of worklessness. Many respondents described difficulties they or their spouse or partner had encountered in finding stable, long-term work. These accounts corroborate claims made in other studies about the inability of low-paid, low-skilled work to lift individuals above the poverty threshold or to enhance health and well-being (see Charlesworth, 2000; McDowell, 2003; Smith, 2005).

Reliance on family members for additional financial support was often crucial as a way of getting through the tougher times, as illustrated in the case of Carl (25-29) from Amlwch who was unemployed at the time of the second interview. At the first interview, he had been living with parents but he then moved to rented accommodation. He had worked in various locations but missed his family so came back to his home neighbourhood. As local jobs were low paid he had been commuting a considerable distance, but said he didn't mind as "*you get used to it*". At this time he had considerable debts which he was trying to pay off. When asked how he got by, he explained:

> *I don't know, it's just I've got good friends, and a good family who will always help me out.*

Carl said he had little faith in the benefits system as a result of his own experience and although he was unemployed he did not claim housing benefit, and his debt was mounting. Carl had made some effort to clear his debt and had cut down on going

out. He said he had not had a holiday for over five years. To make ends meet, Carl was working cash in hand.

> *You've got to adopt a positive attitude … just by being proactive and trying to sort it out. By getting a job, by applying for jobs … just getting out of the house and just feel that you are working anyway.*

By the time of the second interview, Carl's debts had escalated; he had suffered a breakdown and was in receipt of Incapacity Benefit. He owed in the region of £5,000 and despite the constant help from his friends, he could not manage to keep going. He reluctantly accepted help from his father:

> *It was pretty grim, I didn't want to borrow it … he's given it me basically. I'd like to pay him back but I'm just not in a position to at the moment.*

By the wave three interview, Carl was working two days a week on therapeutic work practice which enabled him to earn extra money that he was using to reduce his rent arrears, and these had come down from £1,600 to £1,000 in this period. Carl's main priority was to reduce his debt by making sacrifices.

> *I wouldn't go out for a meal ... I wouldn't buy a new phone…*

Carl had now lost his financial support network of friends. He said they were no longer in work, or were working shorter hours than before and found themselves with less cash:

> *I think everybody's belts had to tighten up recently, wouldn't bother my friends for money at the moment … they're struggling, even if they've got a good job … even their jobs aren't secure at the moment.*

What came across from many of the interviews was the 'rubber band' nature of recurrent poverty, in which gains and successes were followed by defeats and setbacks. Participants talked about managing their financial circumstances as if they were all walking tightropes that could start wobbling at any time – if family support was not available, if temporary contracts came to an end, if training did not lead on to employment and so forth (see Shon, 2007; Watt,. 2006). Participants wanted to remain within the neighbourhoods where they currently lived (and indeed, many envisaged a future for their children in the neighbourhood) and few entertained the idea of 'getting on' by 'getting out'. They were making the most of what was available to them locally, and they were often enmeshed in a web of social support and obligation that they could not, or would not want to, leave. As an aside, this emphasis on staying put does not fit well with the current policy emphasis on residential and labour market flexibility.

5.3   Endurance and Residential Mobility

Many participants talked, liked Wilma (35-44) in Oxgangs, about the day-to-day struggle of just keeping going.

> *I wouldn't say I'm happy. I get by, but some weeks it is a struggle, if I pay the bills and things like that. I pay the bills but it can be a struggle.*

Given this, why were more people not seeking to break out of the existence of struggle by seeking opportunities elsewhere, in more prosperous areas and in stronger labour markets? It is perhaps tempting to conclude from some of the government's recent policy pronouncements about the need to 'free up' social

housing tenants and induce the workless to find jobs elsewhere that mobility is the 'default option' for households in other tenures, or for households with access to more resources. This is not the case. Residential mobility in all of our case studies was not especially high.   The turnover rates for the areas with comparable data were: 13.2 per cent for West Marsh between July 2007 and July 2008, 12.6 per cent for West Kensington, 9.7 per cent for Blackburn, (Wensley Fold), 6.5 per cent for Knowsley (Hillside) and the lowest turnover rate was in Amlwch (4.2 per cent). The figure for England and Wales as a whole for the same period was 7.9 per cent. Some of those areas, such as Hillside and Amlwch, which had low mobility rates were places where the development of informal networks was most notable and where the values of reciprocity and voluntarism redolent of the 'Big Society' were prominent. We examine this tension between the policy values of fostering a sense of community through continuity, and the policy prods to be more mobile, in the accompanying policy-related research report to this publication (Batty et al, 2011).

Many residents were historically, culturally and socially embedded within their neighbourhoods: their memories, families and networks were located there and they viewed their futures as being played out there. Research participants in all six areas said they did not want to move home, because they liked where they lived. For some respondents, their current level of satisfaction was compared favourably with their previous housing experiences (Hickman, 2010). For example, Alice (35-44) from Amlwch, who had moved to the area from Wigan, and before that Manchester, enjoyed the tranquillity and "quietness" of her life, compared to where she lived before.

> *I've put a lot of work in it, I've paid a lot of money for it. I won't move for anyone. I love the area. I'm happy. I'm settled … Yeah I love it, my husband loves it, he wouldn't go back to Manchester... It's quieter [in Amlwch].*

Residents who said they did not want to move were aware of problems in their neighbourhoods, but felt that these problems were an 'everyday' feature of life so that their area was 'no worse than anywhere else'. This was partly influenced by a concern that they would be 'exposed' if they moved to another place, as in Sandra's case.

> *If I'm honest, (I stay put) because I know this area and I know a lot of people in this area. I've seen a lot of people walking in this area at a night time ….. more than in another area … just say I'm walking along the road and I see somebody: I more or less know them or they know Leon (the respondent's partner). Do you know what I mean? People know each other. Whereas, if I'm somewhere else I feel more at risk because I don't know the people.*

> (Sandra, 25-29, West Kensington)

For some respondents who did not wish to move, their desire to stay in the current neighbourhood was more about their reluctance to move to places that they did not know than any satisfaction with their current neighbourhood *per se*. The importance of residents 'knowing' their area and being 'comfortable' in it was recognised by Kearns and Parkinson (2001) in terms of the desirability of 'predictable' encounters within the neighbourhood. For these households at least, familiarity bred some contentment.

For another group of participants, their reluctance to move was described in less 'positive' terms. They had chosen not to move even though they wanted to do so, because they could not face the upheaval of moving and establishing a new life in a

new neighbourhood (Hickman, 2010). Not unexpectedly, older residents were more likely to feel this way, as in the case of Paul and Norma.

> *I'm stuck in my ways, maybe. If I was younger maybe I'd take the chance. But I'm coming up to 55 now and getting too old to move.*

(Paul, 45-64, Amlwch)

> *… you get to a certain stage and you think: 'no, too many bothers with the upheaval'. I think it's an age thing.*

(Norma, 45-64, Oxgangs)

Others were reluctant to move because of the stresses involved in moving house. Endurance was seen as preferable to upheaval, uncertainty and exposure. Continuity of place, as well as continuity over time, had intrinsic values that would not be cast aside lightly.

When discussing the reasons for staying in one's home, the tenacity of place was evident. This was partly due to various perceived constraints. By far the most important factor was the (perceived) scarcity of high quality affordable housing, both in participants' own neighbourhoods and elsewhere. As one might expect, this was particularly evident in West Kensington, where nearly half of the research participants said that they would like to move from their neighbourhood but could not do so. This was either due to the lack of financial resources to buy a property or the inability to secure affordable rental housing in the area(s) they wanted to move to. For some respondents, 'escaping' from their area was simply seen as a 'pipe dream' (Hickman, 2010).

There were clear tenure differences in these responses. For many households in social housing, having secured a tenancy, often after a long wait, they were not minded to join another queue for something elsewhere. The shortage of local social housing was also a potential source of social division. Robert's views towards access to social housing in Amlwch, for example, echoed other critiques of the life styles of households seen as gaining advantage through being dependent on benefits (see Chapter 7).

> *If we had a higher income we won't have to live here. It's as simple as that ... If you're a single mother, sixteen years of age, you'll get a council house. If you're a working family like us two, we're not as much priority, the government will penalise us ... We're paying our rates and paying our taxes and everything else. It doesn't feel that the government's giving us any chance or trying to help us. I feel that I pay my taxes. They help people that take advantage of the system.*

(Robert, 25-29, Amlwch)

The difficulty of securing high quality affordable housing in each case study area was also recognised by those respondents who were happy with where they lived and described themselves as being "lucky" to have secured their property (see also Mee, 2007). The value of continuity was expressed here in terms of the virtues of patience, of queuing for a home. Some participants, notably social housing tenants, said they had not wanted to move to their current property and had only done so because they felt that they had 'no choice'. However, a small number of residents who had originally not wanted to move to their neighbourhood said that they had now 'come to terms' with the move. This was the case, for example, for Martha (35-44)

from Wensley Fold, who had changed her view between the first and second round of interviews:

> *The last thing I wanted to do was come back here. It was the very last thing I wanted to do. And I think the last time I was interviewed … I had quite a strong feeling: 'I'm here but I don't particularly want to be here'. Now I've come to terms with the fact that I'm here… I thought I'd get in and within twelve months I'd want to move on.*

Among those who felt effectively 'trapped' in their homes because of the lack of alternative options, some were frustrated or angry, but most adopted a phlegmatic approach to what was seen as 'one of life's challenges'. The restricted geography of housing options was accepted.

> *I suppose you make problems for yourself. I don't know. I don't really think I face any problems, apart from wanting to move. But I can't move because the council has stupid things on moving. But I think to myself: I don't face many problems.*

> (Sandra, 25-29, West Kensington)

The apparent equanimity of many involuntarily immobile residents may be partly attributable to the fact that most were hopeful that they would eventually be able to secure the move they wanted, as long as they waited long enough (Hickman, 2010). This is part of a more general orientation that 'you've just got to get on with it' because something better might be 'round the next corner'. In the words of Gary (35-44) from West Kensington: *"I think you just get used to the struggle, don't you? You just keep on plodding along month by month"*.

Potential labour market opportunities were a relatively unimportant driver of residential mobility, and it was felt success in finding a new job could be based more on good fortune than on any rigorous assessment of the employment opportunities in the local labour market (Hickman, 2010). These findings are in line with those of Cole *et al* (2007) who found that less than ten per cent of residents who left an NDC area between 2002 and 2004 cited 'another job' as a reason for moving. Some research participants did note, however, that employment had affected their previous mobility decisions. Several said that they had moved to their current neighbourhood because it was close to where they worked, although this was often linked to other factors as well, such as being close to one's family, the prospects for future equity growth and the relative affordability of housing.

Three groups of issues emerged as key 'push' and 'pull' drivers: factors relating to the social, cultural and physical characteristics of place; factors relating to family and friends; and factors relating to the home. These findings are in line with other studies in the field (Fletcher *et al,* 2008; Cole *et al,* 2007). In terms of place factors, for many residents the physical attractiveness of an area was important. While interpretations of attractiveness varied, two attributes of the physical environment were identified as especially desirable: the presence of green spaces; and the presence of water (whether a river or the sea). Leon from West Kensington was an example:

My girlfriend is always talking about wanting to live more Richmond, where there's a bit more greenery. A bit more fields. A bit more space. And I think that generally changes people's attitudes. I mean here it's just concrete everywhere…. there are a lot of parks around but it's not on your doorstep. It's not as if can you open your window onto them… so going out to the park is actually going out to the park.

(Leon, 25-29, West Kensington)

A number of residents also expressed a preference for living in a rural area, because, as George from Amlwch put it, *"you drop down and mellow out".*

For some respondents, the location of their neighbourhood was also important. For residents in Oxgangs, West Kensington, Wensley Fold and West Marsh, the location of their neighbourhood close to the town/ city centre was seen as a very positive attribute and a significant 'pull' factor. This reason was particularly prominent in Wensley Fold where a number of residents highlighted the advantages of living close to the town centre of Blackburn. In Amlwch, the location of the town was important in another way: for many residents, especially those who had moved to the area fairly recently, the relative geographic isolation of the town and its perceived poor transport links were a major 'push' factor. However, for those residents who had lived in the town all their lives its isolation was seen as 'normal', and something that they were 'used to' as they had always lived there.

One of the most important 'place' related push-pull factors in the neighbourhoods was the perceived level of safety and security (see also Cole *et al,* 2007). Many residents expressed apprehension about the perceived anti-social-behaviour of gangs, especially in West Marsh (Hickman, 2010). The presence of drug dealers and their clients also emerged as a significant push factor in our case studies. In terms of narratives of decline, the perceived deterioration and emptying out of the neighbourhood was sometimes linked to a perception of rising crime levels. A number of participants, especially in Amlwch and Hillside, noted this apparent trend.

In some cases the perceived low level of anti-social behaviour was a pull factor that attracted participants to move into their current neighbourhood. For example, a couple in West Marsh, Michaela and Gregory, were happy to be living in the area after experiencing anti-social-behaviour when they had lived in two other parts of Grimsby where, as Michaela described it: *"I couldn't sleep at night. Every night I was looking at the car, looking round the side of the house".* In fact, the accounts of several participants in West Marsh referred to cases where they were escaping from something elsewhere, often with some urgency, rather than 'choosing' the area for any specific set of reasons. The relatively large private rented sector in the area provided the opportunities for immediate access for these households.

The accounts given about mobility actions and decisions varied in the extent to which the commitment to stay put (in the neighbourhood) was paramount, but generally speaking the mix of local informal networks, limited employment opportunities, and difficulties in accessing the housing market predisposed households to talk more in terms of staying put and getting by rather than 'getting out' in order to 'get on'. This was especially true in the more 'traditional' communities of Amlwch, Hillside, Oxgangs and Wensley Fold. It was less true in West Kensington, where a more instrumental view of neighbourhood functionality prevailed, and West Marsh, which experienced relatively high rates of residential turnover and where many participants said they had ended up, rather than made a positive choice to move.

5.4 Endurance and Self-Respect

A dominant theme in many accounts about 'getting by' in the neighbourhood was the importance of *gaining self-respect* or the respect of others through attempting to change one's circumstances or manage on a low income (see Edge and Rogers, 2005; Dolan, 2007). This was not just about attempts to overcome material hardship, but embraced a wider range of activities to combat social stigma or (re) gain 'respect' and a sense of self (Pickering, 2001). Of course, the material and non-material benefits of certain actions could be closely linked – getting a job may bring with it increased respect and sense of self-esteem, as well as more money. Others took pride in talking about the skills required to make ends meet.

Respondents talked in terms of their activities as an *ongoing process*, in which their own role was quite unremarkable, rather than as an exceptional case of 'beating the odds' or as demonstrating some elusive positive trait, in the way that the quality of 'resilience' is sometimes treated in the literature (Rutter, 1987). This chimes with the findings of a previous study which refers to instances of resilience as 'tales of the unexpected', of doing better than might be predicted and of demonstrating competence in everyday situations, but according to their respondents' own definition of 'success' rather than some externally imposed measure (Canvin *et al*, 2009: 243). It is 'ordinary magic' (Masten, 2001) rather than remarkable heroism that informed their narratives – but this continuing conjuring act could nonetheless be draining. One respondent said that she would like not to have to "struggle so much", for example. It was not hard to find a lurking anxiety about the *provisional* nature of their position or a sense that it might be a long tunnel to go down before there was light.

Many respondents in the second wave of interviews, for example, talked about how costs of basic consumer goods had increased, and spoke about how they had 'traded down' when shopping, to substitute brand for own-label goods, and to dispense with the 'luxuries'. Many households were already undertaking inventive strategies to make ends meet before the direct effects of the recession were felt.

What makes some people, and some communities, more able to withstand the pressures of continuing economic hardship? What came across from many of the accounts was less about any unique personal attributes that might somehow be captured and then nurtured by policy. It was more useful to see endurance as a *process* of meeting successive challenges, historically grounded within traditional values of working class communities in which some people were able to make incremental gains that extended the opportunities open to them despite the relentlessness of the financial challenges they faced. For many households in each of the six neighbourhoods, the imminent effects of the measures to reduce the public sector deficit in terms of withdrawal of public services or job losses could be a potential 'last straw', and their reliance on a combination of informal and formal means of social support would be severely tested.

How did these narratives of endurance affect a sense of self-esteem? Previous studies of low income households have often highlighted the sense of despair and hopelessness amongst individuals facing constant financial crisis or precariousness leading to low self-esteem and self-value (Hooper *et al*, 2007; Orr *et al*, 2006). Some commentators have likened this experience to a form of social death (Bauman, 1998) or being reduced to living in the 'endless present' (Charlesworth, 2000). However, our research findings indicate that low incomes and economic constraints were rarely experienced as a form of all-encompassing external repression weighing down on individuals (see Batty and Flint, 2010). Rather, individuals conceptualised continual spaces, even if these were constrained, for manoeuvre in shaping their daily lives. The agency and lived strategies, a sense of the possible and achievable, and managing in different ways was also evident in the constant struggle and often

intensive planning in household budgeting (Flint, 2010). This approach refuses to admit to the impossibility of living on the resources available, but rather seeks to develop new methods of management and self-restraint to make ends meet. As Martha (35-44) from Wensley Fold put it:

> *This is probably the worst off I've ever been but that's okay. I feel okay about it because I've got my head round it, I know what I've got to do, I know how long it's going to take and I'm prepared to do it because it's my only route to salvation.*

Income status was often only one element in how individuals viewed and assessed their situation, and in other cases the ability to juggle resources and make sacrifices to preserve ones' independence was a source of satisfaction. This framing of budgeting on low incomes as being achievable could therefore be a source of self-esteem and generated a sense of small victories hard gained. Individuals could identify a pride and self-esteem arising from their increasing efficiency in managing their domestic economy:

> *Loan sharks, all things, all done that and now I've sort of pulled myself out of all that so it's like don't live beyond your means now, that's the only way I can... [In the past I would say] 'I like them blinds or I like them curtains, I'm getting them', where now I can still say I wouldn't mind getting them but it might take me three months to save.*

> (Phoebe, 45-64, Hillside)

While there were relatively few instances of resilience in terms of people 'bouncing back' from the depths of despair or 'thriving' under constant pressure, equally there was relatively little evidence that such individuals saw themselves as 'damaged' or being 'condemned' to hardship. They did not articulate a moral worth, uniqueness or reflexivity to what they commonly reported as attempts to 'get by' and 'make do'. Rather, in their view, *'that is just the way life is'.*

This sense of a 'natural order' also applied to those individuals who did recognise that the parameters of their financial circumstances meant that many attempts at budgeting or saving were likely to be futile, and were therefore less inclined to be overtly self-critical of their own domestic economy.

5.5   Conclusion

The narratives of endurance that figured in many of the interviews revealed the relentless nature of many of the challenges, especially financial ones, that faced the participants. However the fact that such pressures were continuous did not lead participants on to a discussion or analysis about wider structural causes or global or national economic changes, even while their consequences were being discussed *('it's always recession here')*. Nor did this tend to lead to a desire to 'escape' to what were perceived as more prosperous areas. The majority wanted to remain where they were for a mixture of social, practical and emotional reasons, and the perceived risks of departing from the familiar were exemplified by occasional references to those who had 'come back' to what they knew, after a spell away for educational or employment reasons.

The potential availability of job or training opportunities elsewhere did not, then, figure as an important trigger for mobility. Many people saw their home as a base from which they would then extend the geographical frame of reference in seeking work, rather than contemplate uprooting and moving in order possibly to enhance

their employment prospects. Too much would be placed at risk. The implications of these findings for the coalition government's emphasis on residential and labour market flexibility and mobility is considered further in the accompanying policy report produced by the research team (Batty et al, 2011).

The implacability of the personal situations for the research participants led to them being viewed as 'how things are' (see Allen, 2005), although a 'struggle' was readily acknowledged. Actions were regarded as 'things you've got to do' because 'you've got to work for it'. Although there is a sense of compulsion and necessity here, and therefore a lack of choice, these findings suggest a more complex and non-linear relationship between low-incomes and self-esteem and self-value in these accounts than has sometimes been suggested in previous research studies that have identified the resilience of individuals and their continual striving to improve their circumstances. However, what has not be so readily recognised is the importance of these actions to individuals' sense of esteem and the sense in which far from being viewed as remarkable 'coping strategies', these narratives of endurance often view their circumstances and actions as ordinary, mundane and routine. If individuals failed to meet the demands of this ongoing struggle, this led them once again to focus on their personal failings rather than the wider structural factors behind their relative poverty.

If the narratives of loss and gain in the previous chapter were most often expressed about in terms of neighbourhood conditions and housing circumstances, the narratives of endurance considered here were applied more to personal financial and social circumstances and self-image. Self-esteem and self-respect were mercurial qualities which stemmed from an individualist emphasis on the need to 'get by'. If failures were seen as resulting from personal deficiencies rather than compelling structural social or economic factors, the flip side of this was the satisfaction that could be taken in hard won victories. These chapters have considered how the passage of *time* informed different narratives of change. In the following chapter we explore differences in the use of *space* across the six neighbourhoods and the varying significance of the immediate locality in framing people's experiences and expectations.

6. Spatial Routines and the Salience of Neighbourhood

6.1 Introduction

Over the past ten to fifteen years, policy debates have increasingly portrayed deprived neighbourhoods as spaces of difference, where internally cohesive and segregated communities nurture dispositions and behaviours that deviate from wider social and cultural norms (Flint and Robinson, 2008). The chapter examines the different 'action-spaces' of the research participants and the extent to which they were circumscribed by their neighbourhood. It describes the biographies of daily life of people in the six neighbourhoods and the factors shaping their spatial routines.

Efforts to comprehend area effects associated with living in deprived places can fall into a 'locality trap', focusing entirely on neighbourhood conditions and taking little account of differences in the significance of the neighbourhood to the daily lives of those who live there (for a critique of the 'locality trap' see Kwan *et al*, 2003 and 2004; see Hastings *et al*, 2005 for a useful account of the importance and variation of service delivery). The findings of this research show that people in all six localities were pursuing complex and individualised spatial routines that frequently extended beyond their residential neighbourhood. This finding adds weight to accounts (such as Macintyre *et al*, 2008) that have challenged the 'container fallacy' that people living in low income neighbourhoods will tend to lead tightly bounded local spatial routines. Much research into 'getting by' has tended to be a-spatial in emphasis, focusing on household budgeting practices, informal economies and reciprocal patterns of care (see Cooper *et al*, 2007; Orr *et al*, 2006). Yet one of the ways in which people might seek to overcome or compensate for the penalties of place (poor service provision, inadequate social resources, limited economic opportunity) is to extend geographically the routines of everyday life (for a fuller discussion, see Robinson, 2010). The variable nature of these routines is explored in the following section.

6.2 The Spatial Routines of Daily Life

The spatial routines of daily life revealed in the six neighbourhoods were complex and individualised. In the vast majority of cases, these routines were characterised by process of engagement, interaction and exchange that extended beyond the local neighbourhood on a regular and frequent (often daily) basis. This is a simple but important observation. The question then arises whether those with more extended geographies 'get by' more easily than others with more restricted routines.

The finding that spatial routines of people frequently extended beyond the residential neighbourhood was consistent across the six localities and for different age groups, in a range of household situations, fulfilling different roles and responsibilities and involved in a variety of daily activities. Various benefits were associated with these extended routines.

Employment was an important influence on mobility patterns within the daily lives of participants. People in employment exhibited the most frequent and regular patterns of mobility beyond the residential neighbourhood, but the specifics of these routines varied widely. The pattern of spatial routines associated with work was also heavily gendered. Most of the male participants had geographies of work that extended beyond the neighbourhood, usually involving a relatively short drive or bus ride but occasionally requiring regular long distance journeys. Others noted that they could not access work in other areas because the transport costs were prohibitive. Travel to work patterns reflected pragmatic concerns about the cost and time involved in getting a job in labour markets dominated by low paid work (Gore *et al*, 2007; Green and White, 2007).

Women - particularly women with children - were far more likely to work closer to home, but in most cases this work was not located within the neighbourhood. The work-related spatial routines of women with children were frequently restricted by parenting responsibilities and the need to fit around the school day (Robinson, 2010). Work often constrained the geographies of individuals who worked close to home, leaving them with little free time in which to pursue activities, associations or exchanges that might take them beyond the neighbourhood.

Participants often came into contact with and developed associations with people from beyond the local neighbourhood through (voluntary and paid) work. In some cases, the dispersed nature of work-related personal networks undermined the development of stronger ties, as the distance involved was seen as an 'unsupportable cost'. In other cases, friendships were reported to have developed with work colleagues. Callum (45-64) in West Marsh, for example, reported spending his time "chilling out" after working twelve hour shifts for three days:

> *Well I'm a shift worker, I work out in the countryside at [name of employer]. So basically three days a week, I work Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, me time's taken up from 6 in the morning till 8 o'clock when I get home. Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday just chilling out waiting to go back to your 12 hour slog like, you know, bit of shopping, visit parents.*

Callum reported knowing few people where he was living, other than immediate neighbours to say 'hello' to. However, he had developed a close friendship with work colleagues, who would come around for a chat and a drink on an evening and who had been helping him with DIY around the house. This example suggests the need to reflect on whether there is anything specifically additional or uniquely positive about social interaction with those within the neighbourhood rather than other forms of social networking and support.

Many participants ventured beyond the residential neighbourhood on a regular basis to take up education or training opportunities. This was a common pattern in the daily routines of young people, many of whom were still living in the parental home. In the majority of cases, these routines were characterised by multiple journeys each week to attend college or university. However, it should not be assumed that just because people were moving through and spending time in different places they would inevitably interact and bond with people they encountered. Young people in Hillside, for example, frequently travelled outside their local neighbourhood and attended college in St Helens, but they tended to travel with, and then socialise with, just other people from Hillside. In contrast, the involvement of individuals in clubs and teams was more likely to result in more meaningful and sustained engagement with others.

Shopping was the most common trigger of mobility beyond the residential neighbourhood. The majority of participants reported travelling to a supermarket or

superstore outside their residential area on a regular (typically weekly) basis. These movements were prompted by the limitations (in terms of range or cost of available goods) or the absence of local shopping opportunities. The distance travelled varied. Participants in Amlwch, for example, reported travelling twenty miles to Bangor to do their weekly food shop, because there was more choice and cheaper produce. In Hillside, the closure of retail outlets providing basic daily necessities (including the pharmacy and post office) forced respondents to travel considerable distances to access these goods. Most participants in West Marsh, Wensley Fold, Oxgangs and West Kensington, in contrast, had ready access to shopping opportunities close to home and were able to walk or drive a short distance to do their food shopping.

In a small number of cases, online supermarket shopping reduced the need for people to venture out and use public space and facilities, within or beyond the local neighbourhood. Three key factors were relevant here. First, in some cases shopping online was presented as easier and cheaper option than travelling to the supermarket in person, particularly if they were reliant on a taxi to transport the shopping home. Second, it saved time for people juggling multiple responsibilities, such as working, looking after children and caring for relatives. Third, it opened up new possibilities and choices for people with mobility problems who found it difficult to venture further afield on a regular basis. Holly (45-64) in West Marsh, for example, reported doing all her shopping online. She is retired from work and has mobility difficulties:

> I sit down once a week, I compare [web]sites, Asda, Tesco's, Sainsbury's. I can see which one will do the cheapest. So far I've saved £7 from Asda, I haven't done the Sainsbury's yet, but £7 is £7 when you're of pensionable age, it's quite a lot of money. It's a bit extra in the electricity pot [laughs].

Involvement in leisure activities, including swimming, visiting the cinema, various keep fit activities and sports (such as football, fishing, pool and darts), extended the spatial routines of some participants beyond the residential neighbourhood on a regular basis. Variable geographies were associated with these routines. Typically, people wanted to access facilities not available within the residential neighbourhood. For example, participants with young children in Wensley Fold travelled the short distance to the *Waves Leisure Centre* in Blackburn town centre. Retired individuals in Wensley Fold also used leisure facilities regularly. For example, Maureen a retired woman living on her own, talked about how she met up with a friend at the leisure centre on a set day every week, as well as attending a Tai Chi class once a week.

In Amlwch, Hillside and Oxgangs spatial routines had been extended by involvement in football, fishing, boxing, pool and darts clubs or teams. Clubs or teams were sometimes located outside the residential neighbourhood and such leisure activities emerged as one of the drivers of extended routines of daily life most likely to result in more meaningful and sustained engagement with people from other places. For example, Peggy, a retired single woman in West Marsh, talked about making friends with people living across North East Lincolnshire since she joined a rambling club. Typically, the spatial routines associated with leisure activities were less regular or frequent than routines associated with work, education and shopping.

We noted earlier how the decline in these public venues - whether shops, clubs or pubs – was strongly associated in the perceptions of participants with the decline of sociability at the local level (see Kynaston, 2009 for a historical account of the prevalence and importance of public houses and local shops to neighbourhood sociability and financial coping strategies). But this tendency was not all-consuming. For example, in three of the areas - Hillside, West Marsh and Oxgangs - community centres played a prominent role in the daily activities of different groups of residents.

The Hillywood Centre in Hillside, for example, was well used by younger people on the estate (described by one participant as '*our second home*') and a large number of trips and holidays were organised from the Centre for children during the school break. This example powerfully illustrates how a resource located within a neighbourhood may be directly linked to the provision of opportunities for socialising in, and experiencing, other localities and settings. Some of the beneficiaries had also remained involved and now helped out in running activities from the Centre. In a similar vein, participants in West Marsh and Oxgangs valued the community centres in their areas, although in West Marsh it seemed to be a less established part of communal life. Again, play schemes that were run during school holidays were particularly appreciated, offering a lifeline for working parents during the six week break (Hickman, 2010, provides illustrative cases).

Some participants ventured beyond the neighbourhood to access and utilise public services and goods, such as health care (GP, hospital and dentist), housing offices, Jobcentre Plus, libraries and Post Offices. The geography of flows associated with service access varied according to a series of place-specific factors (availability and accessibility of services) and individual dispositions (attitudes and preferences). In many cases, these spatial routines were a direct response to the lack of resources in the local neighbourhood. The decimation of the infrastructure in Hillside, described earlier, was a stark example of this driver of extended routines. A lack of shops selling affordable goods was also reported in West Marsh and Amlwch.

Some groups in the community were more likely to use 'third places' (see also Campbell and Lee, 1982, Nassar and Julian, 1995; Skjaeveland *et al*, 1996). For example, residents who spent most of their day at home because they were unemployed, in poor health, retired or had childcare responsibilities, made greater use of these places and more of their social interactions occurred there. Not unexpectedly, residents with young children, including those who spent a significant amount of time away from the neighbourhood through work, were particularly likely to visit third places, especially community centres and parks. The influence of life cycle stage on the location and type of activity was mentioned by a number of participants. Those residents who were in work were less likely to use third places, and were less aware about what was available. However, some participants who spent most of their time within the neighbourhood were also unaware of local facilities and activities.

Many of the drivers and motivations for using places beyond the neighbourhood were the result of forced requirement rather than choice. There were, however, examples of people preferring to utilise services that were not the nearest or apparently the most readily accessible. This was particularly true of health care services. A young woman in West Marsh, for example, travelled to Cleethorpes to visit the dentist, while there were examples of people travelling beyond the local area to see a GP. The reasons for these patterns of utilisation included a preference for the familiar, or dissatisfaction with, or difficulties accessing, local provision.

The strength and nature of social networks in the neighbourhoods is explored in more detail in Chapter 7. Here, we can just note that the spatial routines of association with family and friends emerged as an important mobilising force in the lives of many participants. Some participants had dense, closely knit networks of association; there were frequent examples of participants with multiple family members and friends living locally, and sometimes on the same street. Close geographical proximity of family ties was most apparent among participants in Wensley Fold and, in particular, among Pakistani residents. Within this sample there were examples of people living with, next door to, on the same street or within close walking distance of family members. Geographically proximate social and familial networks were also a characteristic of Hillside.

At some point, distance becomes an 'unsupportable cost' (Fisher, 1982) for people on low incomes. Face-to-face engagement with more dispersed members of a social network therefore became more intermittent, with contact maintained through telephone conversations, text and email contact. Nearby associates (whether family or not) therefore tended to be the source of practical forms of support, such as child care, while more distant family served as a source of advice and financial support.

6.3 Understanding Spatial Routines

The analysis of the factors behind the use of space in the six neighbourhoods only partly explains the complexity of and variability within these routines. These routines, or 'time-space biographies' of participants are the product of the complex inter-relationship between individuals and the nature of place, as a location, a social and material setting and a 'meaningful location' (Agnew, 1987). Understanding spatial routines therefore demands consideration of the places within which they are rooted, pass through and avoid, the incidents to which individuals are exposed, the resources at their disposal and dispositions prompting action (and inaction).

These different factors provide an organising framework for understanding the complex and highly individualised biographies of people living in deprived neighbourhoods. Critical to the application of this framework is the need to recognise that time-space biographies are rooted in the reciprocal relationship between people and places. This is expressed in Figure 6.1 below.

Figure 6.1: Factors influencing spatial routines
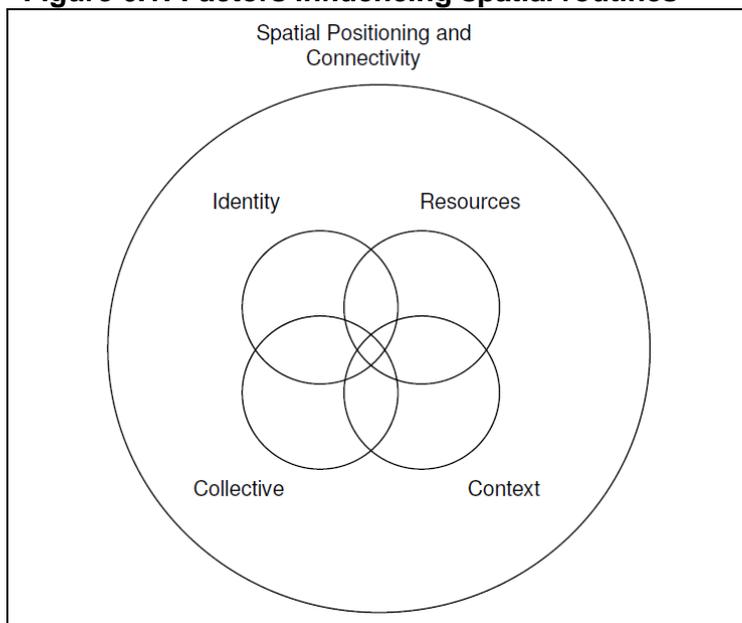
The first bundle of factors in Figure 6.1 relates to certain fundamental *dispositions*, rooted in an individual's social and cultural history and identity and reflected in their attitudes, preferences and aspirations. These dispositions, which may vary on the basis of class, gender, age, ethnicity and associated identities, are critical in shaping perceptions and interpretations of place and the recognition and utilisation of resources, which result in particular mobility choices. The case of Martha (35-44) in Wensley Fold, outlined earlier, usefully illustrates this point, when explaining why she spent so much of her time out and about beyond the neighbourhood:

I've kind of been a bit peed off with it, I've got bored with it, I've had to find other ways of living like going out to find things, it doesn't satisfy every need, what it satisfied is my most basic need which is for safety and security and for a home and for an area that is supportive enough for me to have that home there.

The sense of belonging elsewhere, on the basis of identity, was also mentioned in Martha's discussion of the voluntary work she did in Manchester and why should like to relocate there:

I do a lot of voluntary work in Manchester at the moment, on a Wednesday, doing [voluntary work for charity] and I started to socialise and make more friends over there and I just fancy living in Chorlton. To me it would be perfect to be able to go to a coffee shop and to a bookshop and meet interesting strangers that I can communicate with, cos it still saddens me, the idea of this lady who all we ever say to each other is 'hello, how are you?' So there's only so far you can go here and there is a closeness about the community that I live in that I'm excluded from because I'm White. So I have the awareness that it's a kind of a place where I'm slightly an outsider and I don't, because of my [illness] as well that's probably somewhere I sought out, because that's how I naturally felt.

The comment about 'interesting strangers' represents an intriguing reflection on the relationship between community, identity and the geography of routines. Whilst face-to-face relations within the neighbourhood are clearly important for some residents, for others there is a stronger affinity with an (imagined) community elsewhere. This ties in with claims that the links between place of residence and social ties are becoming ever weaker (Wellman, 1996). Extra-local activity becomes a way of realising 'imagined' forms of community. The quote also indicates that Chorlton is valued as much for the perception that it is full of amenities that Martha values and full of people she might become acquainted with. It is thus a point of reference and self- classification as much as a place of belonging.

In contrast, for other participants Wensley Fold provided both a territorial focus for a sense of identity and belonging, fostering ontological security in the face of exclusion and persecution, and gave access to important social resources. This was very much the case for the South Asian participants. For example, recent immigrants from Pakistan talked about the sense of identity that was to be gained by living in what was frequently referred to as an 'Asian' area. The existence of closely knit, locality based social networks associated with kinship and family ties were often central to connectivity within, and socio-cultural affiliation to the neighbourhood. Similar processes were evident in Hillside.

The second bundle in the diagram relates to the *resources* that an individual has at his or her disposal. Financial resources (capital, income, access to loan finance and debt) were vital to the capacity to sustain an extended geography of everyday life. Financial resources governed opportunities to travel to access work, amenities and facilities and to visit family and friends. Owning a car, for example, was beyond the financial reach of many participants, but it could extend spatial routines significantly. Phillip (45-64) and his partner Bunty, for example, lived together in a housing association flat in Oxgangs and have had a car for three years. Bunty could not drive, but commented that getting a car *"changed our life"*. Phillip travelled to work in Livingston, some 18 miles away, a job that he has secured since getting the car. The car also allowed them to shop at their preferred supermarket. They also regularly drove out into the countryside at the weekend to go walking and travel further afield to visit their children.

Cognitive resources - the knowledge and awareness of opportunities available in different places and how to access them - could also prove a critical determinant of spatial routines. Poor health and disability also constrained the spatial routines of some participants. For some residents, the decision not to use 'third places' was governed by the physical difficulty of getting to them because of infirmity, ill-health and disability, which was then compounded by the perceived failure of local agencies to provide them with assistance (see Hickman, 2010). For example, Francine, an elderly female resident in West Marsh, was reliant on her 94 year old friend to give her a lift to a local luncheon club:

> *Well, what kind of quality of life is there here now if you've no transport? Used to be a bus along (here)…it's gone, so what's the point of a pass with no bus? I couldn't even go to the Age Concern lunch without my friend taking me in the car. Now he's 94. He still drives. He doesn't know how long he'll be able to drive. He's got an extension of another year on his … he's just got that, but you don't know when you get that age.*

Social resources were also crucial. There were numerous instances across the case studies of spatial routines being dependent upon the support of a friend or family member giving a participant a lift to work, or to the supermarket to do the weekly shop or to meet friends and relatives. Extended spatial routines were also facilitated by the availability of social resources that released people from responsibilities that tied them to the locality. The most obvious example was family support in providing child care.

The availability of, and access to, these resources was inevitably conditional on an individual's circumstances, including role and responsibilities in the household, family and wider society, which in turn will be informed by class, gender, ethnicity, age and position in the life-cycle, education history, ethnicity and other aspects of individual and collective identities and status. This point is well illustrated by the relationship between the gendered nature of childcare in some households and associated consequences for the geographies of work.

The third bundle of factors relates to the *contextual components of place*, in terms of the opportunity structures in the local physical and social environment, including the availability of services, facilities and public goods. As the previous chapter indicated, Wensley Fold, Oxgangs and West Kensington were richer in local resources than Amlwch, Hillside or West Marsh, limiting the need for extended geographies of getting by.

The fourth bundle relates to the *collective* dimensions of place – the socio-cultural and historical features of place-based communities. Different places have different characters, reflecting variations in social and cultural norms, standards and practices. Place can also provide a territorial focus for the politics of identity. The same place could therefore provide some people with a sense of belonging and associated feelings of safety and security, while others might acquire a sense of unease and alienation; of difference and otherness. Bound into the distinctive social and cultural setting provided by their residential neighbourhood, some people might be less comfortable and more reluctant to move between and spend time in other places. For example, Tracey (25-29), a young mother living in Wensley Fold, expressed her concerns about contemplating the idea of relocating to elsewhere in the town:

I'd have no friends at all if I moved away cos I've only got one friend and she lives in [different neighbourhood in Blackburn] but I still see her every week cos she drives and comes over. All my family live in Blackburn so I'd have no family to go to. And same with schools, cos I went to the school that the children go to and so did [partner] and so did our mums, so we all know the teachers and you feel comfortable where you know you are and that's how I feel living here. I feel comfortable living here and with what's around me, so I'd lose everything if I moved away, I'd have nothing left.

Interviewer: Would you say you feel a sense of loyalty to the area?

No I don't feel loyal in any way at all, I just feel more comfortable because I know where I'm going. I know every nook and cranny around here and I know more or less, well a lot of people round here, so I just feel comfortable.

In contrast to some experiences such as Martha's, familiarity with the local environment, facilities and amenities, the existence of established social networks and nearness to friends and relatives all served to bind people's spatial routines more tightly within their local neighbourhood.

6.4   Conclusion

Place matters, and the social contours of each neighbourhood were partly shaped by the physical infrastructure of the areas, especially the scale, nature and location of communal spaces to facilitate social interaction. The hollowing out of some areas, notably Amlwch, Hillside and West Marsh, was therefore associated with the attenuation of social networks and acts of sociability. The extent to which the neighbourhood remains the focus of the daily lives and social interactions of residents varied. The narratives of loss described in the Chapter 4 showed how the contraction of 'third places' in some of the areas carried with it a powerful emotional and symbolic message for participants, as they lost opportunities for 'casual' social interaction. However, while the opportunities for localised social interaction had diminished, especially in Amlwch, Hillside and West Marsh, some residents in each of these places spent their time avoiding opportunities for such regular contact with others, in order to keep 'themselves to themselves'. For them, the decline in neighbourhood facilities had not thwarted any need for a higher level of sociability.

The data provided an insight into spatial routines (see Robinson, 2010 for further discussion) but the question remains whether these routines are a significant determinant of experiences of getting by in low income neighbourhoods. Intuitively, it seems obvious that extended spatial routines will serve to provide people with access to a wider range of opportunities and resources and, thereby, have a positive impact on well-being. However, some important caveats need to be made to this assumption.

First, the balance of opportunities within and beyond different neighbourhoods varies markedly, according to the specific features of the local geography of resource availability and the quality of these resources. For example, in Amlwch, extended spatial routines stretching beyond the town (typically facilitated by car ownership) appeared to many participants to reflect the deficit in opportunities and resources available in the town, rather than the richness or quality of resources available in Bangor or Llandudno. Participants in Amlwch were overcoming some basic disadvantages associated with the place where they lived through extended spatial routines. In contrast, in Wensley Fold, extended spatial routines stretching beyond the town were important to the lives of a few participants. The consequences of more constrained spatial routines are likely to be far greater in some places

(Amlwch, West Marsh, Hillside), than in others (Wensley Fold, Oxgangs, West Kensington). In West Kensington in particular the neighbourhood was seen as a base to access jobs, amenities, schools elsewhere in West London and its 'convenience' (to go elsewhere) was seen by many participants as its defining place characteristic.

Second, the relevance and appropriateness of available resources within the residential neighbourhood, and the gains secured through extended spatial routines, will be highly individualised and reflect personal preferences and requirements. Spatial routines are more than a matter of rational choice and analysis and personal preferences are informed by individual dispositions, which are in turn shaped by the role and responsibilities of the individual, their class, gender, ethnicity, cultural experiences, personal history and so on. The result can be a range of different attitudes and outlooks among participants living in the same area toward locally-based resources and opportunities, the perceived benefits of extending spatial routines, and the ability and willingness to extend them.

There is no neat categorisation possible here, but some shared outlooks appeared to exist across the case studies that bound some groups more tightly into their local neighbourhood. These included: the relatively narrow spatial horizons of many younger people; the sense of community and belonging and the opportunity to access associated resources reported by some minority ethnic participants in West Kensington and Wensley Fold; and the gendered nature of roles and responsibilities in some households, which constrained the spatial routines of women, who typically assumed primary responsibility for child care.

The variety of everyday spatial routines in the six areas reveals the problems in seeking to focus explanation and attention on a geographically bounded entity. At the same time the research findings do not support some of the more breathless claims about the 'death of distance', in which distance has been transplanted by networks. Whatever purchase such notions might have on the lives of middle class professionals, they do not seem to translate into the daily routines of the vast majority of our research participants. The extension of routines outside neighbourhoods was usually fairly limited and geographically circumscribed, involving visits to 'town' and back, for example (even where 'town might be 20 miles away). There were few cases of national or international routines, with the exception of South Asian respondents In Wensley Fold visiting and receiving family from Pakistan.

With some exceptions (such as Martha, described earlier), neighbourhoods were largely used *practically* to access goods and services) rather than *symbolically,* such as Savage *et al* (2005) found in their study of Manchester, where middle class residents felt like they 'belonged' to their area because of its cosmopolitan associations, but actually spent large amounts of time working and socialising outside its boundaries. This 'practical' rather than 'aesthetic' orientation to the locality underlines once more the crucial importance of having at least a minimum level of services and amenities close by, and why the loss of such amenities often carries with it a larger message about long-term decline.

7. Contrast: Social Dynamics in the Neighbourhoods

7.1 Introduction

There are competing views about the nature of social networks and the role of the family in relatively deprived neighbourhoods. The first derives from the traditional close-knit working class communities described by Bott (1957) and Wilmott and Young (1957), with dense and overlapping social ties (albeit sharply gender segregated) which are mutually reinforced by relationships at home, in the workplace and in shared leisure pursuits. Systems of social and economic support and the informal regulation of deviant behaviours helped many people through times of hardship and anxiety. This version was invoked in some of the narratives of loss described in Chapter 4, and there is evidence to support the view that positive social ties remain an important element of many working class communities (Mooney, 2009).

A second formulation describes communities as 'shrinking under pressure' (Lupton, 2003) in which high residential turnover, fear of anti-social behaviour and crime undermine social relationships and force a turn 'inward' to the family (Olagnero, 2005). A third version, linked to this, is that trends such as the decline of 'binding fields' (religion, trade unions etc), technological change, and the growing proportion of women in the labour market have interacted to create a growing 'privatisation' of social relationships, with individuals becoming increasing selective about with whom and where they socialise (Blokland, 2003), As a result, it is suggested, social relationships become more stretched spatially and socially and where they exist in the neighbourhood they are characterised more by 'bonds' (see below) than by more public forms of familiarity with a larger number of neighbours.

The fourth version is perhaps best summarised by the 'broken Britain' motif, which serves as a generic description of disengagement, social fragmentation, poor socialisation, anti-social behaviour and family dysfunctionality (e.g. Conservative Party, 2010; Cameron, 2010). In this version, deprived neighbourhoods are viewed as problematised spaces of difference, where segregated communities nurture dispositions and behaviours that deviate from social and cultural norms, and where internal conflicts and divisions in splintered and volatile communities are rife.

We wanted to assess how these competing versions of poorer neighbourhoods connected with the views and actions of research participants in the six areas, and how far the neighbourhood itself was the locus for support or conflict, and what might account for any differences between the social dynamics of the areas. Previous evidence suggests that low income neighbourhoods can be home to sets of relationships that constitute a resource pool from which people can draw support and that help them to 'get by' in the face of disadvantage and inequality. Furthermore, personal geographies of support can extend beyond the confines of the residential neighbourhood. People may also retreat from engaging with their neighbours. This can be a matter of personal choice (for example, to maintain 'privacy') or it might be driven by necessity (for example, due to anxiety about crime and anti-social behaviour). The difference is important, not least if the characteristics of the

neighbourhood are a key factor in forcing this retreat from the social realm. Neighbourhood can also be home to social divisions, in which the fault lines between 'them' and 'us' are drawn in different ways in different places. The evolution of the social composition of the neighbourhood over time is crucial here.

This chapter examines the availability and nature of placed-based relationships and the benefits that accrue to local residents engaged in local networks. It also explores how more dispersed social networks are created and maintained and the resources and support that they can provide. The approach informing this analysis draws heavily on Blokland's (2003) '*grid of social relations*', which provides a useful framework for thinking about how the content and outcomes of relationships can be conceptualised. The approach involves dividing social relations into three categories - bonds, attachments and transactions – that capture different elements of what are largely, if not always, positive social relationships between family, friends or neighbours.

Bonds are affective relationships with high emotional content. For this reason, all relations between friends and family fall into this category. It would not make sense, for example, to have friends with whom there is little emotional connection whilst even family members that are estranged are likely to have a relationship based with affective content, however negative this may be. Neighbours can forge bonds between one another when neighbouring crosses the line into friendship. Bonds are characterised by high levels of social interaction, often in private settings, and significant emotional and practical support that extends beyond the routine or perfunctory.

Attachments refer to relationships based on affinity with others ('we're all in the same boat') or where individuals hold a personal, often abstract, view on the value of being good neighbour. This translates into a willingness to help others in need or to engage in the exchange of goods and services. Attachments can involve a reasonably high degree of sociability such as conversing at length in public spaces but rarely extends to social activities or regular visits to private homes.

By contrast, *transactions* involve relationships that have a more instrumental purpose, such as a mutual agreement to keep an eye on a neighbour's house when they go on holiday. Transactions have little emotional content and are distinguished by a desire to limit interactions to a convivial level that, unlike bonds and attachments, do not stretch to significant levels of sociability.

The different character of social relations between family friends and neighbours is summarised in the grid presented in Figure 7.1 below.

Figure 7.1: A Typology of Social Relations

	Family and Friends	Neighbours	
	Bonds	**Attachments**	**Transactions**
Emotional content	High affective content e.g. 'a shoulder to cry on'.	Value-based relationships where importance is placed on being a 'good neighbour'. Includes 'latent neighbouring' i.e. willingness to help others in time of need.	No significant emotional content or values attached to relationships.
Social content	Frequent reciprocal visits to homes or engagement in social activities.	Some degree of sociability in public space but rarely extends to extensive or regular social activities.	Consciously bounded to convivial greetings with little inclination for more extended forms of sociability. Maintaining respectful distance considered important.
Financial Outcomes	Direct financial support or in-kind provision of goods and services.	Very rare, limited to occasional loans to neighbours in need. Exchange of goods and services more a symbolic expression of good neighbouring than response to financial need.	None
Practical Outcomes	Regular and extensive practical support e.g. childcare.	High level of practical if also intermittent support e.g. keeping an eye on children.	Willingness to provide small, often reciprocal acts of practical assistance e.g. taking bins out, looking after parcels.

High emotional content *Low emotional content*
High social content *Low social content*
Regular/extensive outcomes *Limited/intermittent outcomes*

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7.2 The Role of Family

Some participants referred to large extended families when discussing family links and forms of support offered and received. More typically, participants talked about parents, children, siblings and grandparents, and these networks typically stretched beyond the area of residence, to other parts of the same town or city, often to other parts of the UK and, in some instances, to other countries.

Some participants had no family members living in the same town or city, and others mentioned that family members who lived nearby had died. However, the majority (two-thirds) of participants who talked about their family during interviews had family members living in the same town or city and many (one-third) had family members living in the same neighbourhood. In some cases, the result was dense, closely knit networks of association between family members, which engendered continuity of relations and numerous opportunities for mutual help and support.

The family relationships associated with generating and sharing resources were, in some cases, rooted in the neighbourhood, but ongoing place-based relationships and attendant practices were not critical to this. Rather, productive family relations were rooted in an emotional commitment to kin, which engendered a willingness to support a family member, sometimes at significant cost or inconvenience to the provider. This willingness did not always extend to all family members. Indeed, participants often talked about providing assistance to and receiving help from particular family members, while having little or nothing to do with others, who they were 'not close to', had lost contact with, had fallen out with or who were 'busy' with their own lives. Some participants also expressed a reluctance to ask for or seek help from their family and talked about wanting to maintain their independence and privacy. However, where support was forthcoming, it often involved a significant commitment.

The importance of family networks was a constant factor across all six areas. Family members were providing three key forms of sustenance that were revealed to be helping participants to cope and 'get by': transfer payments, the provision of services, and emotional support, advice and comradeship. These are considered in turn.

Transfer Payments

If income is defined broadly as all that comes into a household, in the form of money, goods or in-kind assistance, family members were found to represent an important source of household income. The most significant form of income received by participants from family members might be termed *transfer payments*. These included gifts, subsidies and informal loans. Some participants reported not needing the financial help of family or friends, others reported having no one to ask, while some baulked at the idea of asking a relative for money. For many respondents, however, family members were an important source of financial assistance, helping them to cover a shortfall between income and expenditure or to pay for a special treat, such as a holiday.

Many younger participants looked to a mother or father for financial help in times of need, such as Danni (16-24) in Oxgangs who sought financial support from a parent on an ad-hoc basis, whenever money was tight. Participants appeared far more willing to turn to a family member than a friend for financial help. Several respondents defined the relationship in just this way - that helping each other is 'what family is there for'.

Many of the parents interviewed appeared to accept that they had an ongoing duty of care for their children, which did not stop just because they had grown up, left home and, in some cases, now had a family of their own. Harold (65+) in Amlwch philosophically remarked, *"it's the bank of mum and dad"*, when reflecting on the financial support that he and his wife provided to their daughters. In some cases, parents had loaned or given large sums of money as gifts to their children.

Financial help and assistance was not always provided in the form of cash loans or gifts. For example, Connie (30-35) in West Marsh, a lone parent with two children, talked about being helped out financially by her mother. She explained that she had to cut back on various 'luxury items' as a result of a reduction in household income following her divorce from her husband. However, rather than giving her cash directly, Connie's mother regularly helped cover the cost of the weekly supermarket shop and was also paying for the whole family to go on holiday. Stuart (30-34) and his partner in West Marsh also talked about getting help in kind from a parent, in this

case with the cost of a birthday party for his children, as well as more substantial financial help in the past with housing costs.

Support and assistance from family members, in the form of transfer payments, was an important source of income for participants across the case studies. There were no obvious place-based variations in access to this particular form of support. This appears to reflect the fact that distance did not represent an 'unsustainable cost' - in stark contrast to the other forms of help, assistance and income provided by relatives, where access was typically reliant on people living in close proximity to family members.

Provision of Services

Family members were often involved in the *provision of services* that people would otherwise have to pay for or do without. Examples referred to by older participants included help around the house and transport (e.g. a lift to the shops). Joe (45-64) in Oxgangs talked about how family members help him with DIY jobs around the house and with the gardening, jobs that he struggles with himself because of health problems. Vera (65+), also in Oxgangs, reported having health problems that made it difficult for her to manage her home and explained how her daughter-in-law helped her around the house, following problems with the home-help she received from social services. Isobel (65+) in West Marsh also talked about how her children and their families regularly called on her and her husband and helped out with the maintenance of the house and with shopping.

Among younger participants, particularly women, regular and intermittent help with child care was an important form of support provided by family members, and in some cases, they were part of a complex tapestry of childcare that participants put together in order to be able to work. Some participants said they preferred informal childcare because of concerns about formal provision (child-minder or nursery), including safety, suitability and cost. Informal childcare provided by relatives was also seen as a more flexible option that people could rely on at short notice, and that would be available when formal provision was closed. Sandra (25-29) in West Kensington, for example, reported putting her daughter in nursery while she was working during the week, but relying on family or her daughter's father for childcare when she worked on Saturdays.

Participants who were grandparents frequently reported spending much of their free time looking after grandchildren. Winnie (45-64) in Hillside, for example, reported often looking after her five grandchildren on an evening, when her son was out at work, while their other grandmother looked after them during the day when their mother was out at work. Safa Mirza (16-24), who lived in Wensley Fold, talked about how important it was to her to live close to her sister because they were mutually reliant on each other's help to get by on a day-to-day basis. This included looking after each other's children so they could do various chores or could go out – a frequently reported benefit of the informal childcare provided by family members was that it allowed parents the space to enjoy some time together or to maintain a social life.

Advice and Emotional Support

The sharing of sustenance between family members often also extended to include *advice, emotional support and comradeship*, which could prove important to well-

being and quality of life. Donald (35-44) in West Marsh described a dense, locally based family network that provided him with comradeship and emotional support:

> *At the minute I'm not talking to me dad [laughs]. If I'm honest I see my Uncle more than anybody I do, and he lives down [street name] Grimsby, which is walking distance again. Either that or I just get on the old pedal and go out on the bike….if I've got nothing to do, I'm bored out my head, I can either go to visit me mam, me cousin, I've got choices, even me ex sister in law I still go round there and we're still mates, me and her, we used to fight like cat and dog, we never got on at all but now we're like that [indicating closeness] so like I say I've got a pool match tonight, next week, I can go to me ex sister in law's, have a quick cup of tea and that and then go to the club 'cos it's like round the corner from the club. There's still that connection between me and her you see so…*

Zara (30-34), in Oxgangs, also described a locally focused network of family contact and support, but her description illustrates how different family members, by virtue of their relationship with an individual, the resources at their disposal and geographical proximity, can play different roles and provide different forms of support and assistance. Zara's mother's former partner, who lived in the neighbourhood, was a source of emotional support, while her brother, who lived in an adjacent neighbourhood, provided practical and financial support and her father, who lived elsewhere in the city, was a source of support through regular contact on the phone.

These forms of help represented an important source of income, in addition to wages and welfare payments that helped participants cope (emotionally, practically and financially) on an intermittent or ongoing basis. This fact was reflected in the importance that some participants placed on living close to other family members. This was particularly true among people who were facing a particular upheaval, challenge or change in their life. For example, a number of participants talked about relocating to be close to their parents upon having a baby or upon losing a job and then struggling financially. For similar reasons, several participants in each area explained that they were reluctant to relocate to another area because they wanted to remain close to family.

Stephanie (16-24) in West Kensington, for example, explained that she could not leave the area because of the support she received from her family and her responsibility for looking after her grandmother. This sense of duty was also invoked by others, to explain the commitment they made to looking after an elderly or sick relative, often at great sacrifice to themselves, and viewed as a personal responsibility. Such responsibilities served to tie some participants to the neighbourhood, despite a preference to relocate. Kenneth (45-64), for example, talked about being tied to West Kensington, despite his preference to move elsewhere, because of his responsibility for looking after his father. There were also examples of people moving to be close to family members, in order to provide support and assistance. Kathleen (65+), for example, reported that her son had moved back to Grimsby from the South East of England, to assist with the care of her husband following a mental illness.

In addition, the need to live close to family and friends was frequently cited as the key important factor informing the decision to move house. Khalid's experience applied to many others across the six areas:

Well, basically (we moved back to Blackburn from Bedford because) I was born here. I was from a big family and had the opportunity of living with a lot of people around me. And my children didn't have the opportunity that I had in that family orientated respect. So I wanted to give them the same opportunity that I had basically. I wanted them to play with their cousins and uncles and aunties and get spoilt from them. So we came back for the family and for my wife as well for support…. in the family respect, yes (life is better)… in the sense that where before I used to do things with my friends I do more things with my brothers and sisters. And we go to each other's houses. And I've got the potential to do that. I can always get involved in weddings and functions. And I found it very difficult before. I had to make a special effort to come up here because I was living 200 miles away.

(Khalid Ahmad, 30-34, Wensley Fold)

Several participants reported that they had moved back 'home' to where they had grown up. This was particularly apparent in Amlwch and Wensley Fold. Carl (25-29), for example, said he had moved back to Amlwch after a spell living and working in Bangor because '*it's a bit lonely out there'.*

In a similar vein, Nelson (35-44) from West Kensington had returned to the area because he missed his family, and the support they provided. Significantly, he believed that with this support he would be able to find work, something he had not been able to do when living in another part of the country. When asked why he returned he said:

Missing home innit. Miss being in my own town. Miss this place, just missed home, had enough of going, getting no help or surviving by myself and not having family to lean on now and then, it does make a difference.

Interviewer: So you've got people around you here that can offer you support?

Support yeah, that's what I need, a little guidance really. Yeah, I just wanted to come back home, sort my life out, start working, stop signing on the dole and that… My mum had cancer like so that was another reason.

Nelson's experience was typical of many others, as his family was an essential part of his life and were an important resource for him: he saw them on a regular basis and they provided him with much needed emotional financial and practical support. In addition to acting as a pull factor for some respondents, 'family' also had the effect of constraining mobility for those - like Cordell (30-34) from West Kensington - who felt that they could not leave their neighbourhood because they provided support, in a number of different forms, to family members who lived there. When asked if she would like to move, she replied:

Yeah, definitely. That's more in the future, to be honest. I wouldn't mind if it was right now but, like I said, there's my brother and sister, they still need me. And I'm the next female figure, so they still need me… you have to sacrifice certain things.

In a similar vein, Elijah (35-44) from Oxgangs explained that the only reason he was going to stay in the area was:

... because my mum lives up the road and I've got to look after her. Otherwise I would go completely somewhere else in the world. But I have to stay here. That's the only reason why I put down for Oxgangs to get housing in Oxgangs is because I have to look after my mum. So it's nothing to do with me personally wanting to stay in the area.

And Arthur (45-64), who was looking after his mother in Wensley Fold, said:

I've got to look after her and try and be there most of the time but sometimes I feel like I want to just escape, get out of the house and just go. But when you've got responsibilities you can't just up and go.

However, it was also evident that support from families was very frequent, even when family members were not living nearby. More dispersed family networks often represented an 'unsupportable cost', rendering various forms of support inaccessible. Examples of such support and assistance would include practical help about the house (such as DIY tasks), help getting around (for example, lifts to the supermarket), help with childcare, providing a place to stay at a time of crisis, opportunities for socialising and comradeship and emergency assistance (for example, when unwell). Face-to-face engagement with more dispersed members of a family network was typically limited to intermittent visits, with contact maintained and support offered through telephone conversations, text and email contact.

7.3   The Role of Friends

Friends represented an important source of support and assistance for many participants. In some cases friendships facilitated the transfer of forms of sustenance – including financial help and child care - that proved critical in helping people to 'get by'. More commonly, friends proved an important source of emotional support, advice and comradeship, as well as a source of transactions, involving the exchange of small services and forms of assistance, particularly in times of crisis and emergency.

Friendship networks varied in form, content and geography. In part, these variations reflected the life history of participants. In some cases, relationships with neighbours had developed into bonds of friendship which provided enduring emotional and social support which went beyond mere sociability. In particular, longer term residents appeared most likely to report neighbouring relations that had evolved into friendships and an emotional bond that facilitated ongoing interaction and associated transactions. Such relations were evident in a small number of participants in each case study area, but were most readily apparent in Amlwch and Hillside (and, to a lesser extent, Wensley Fold and Oxgangs), where it was more common for participants to have lived in the area for many years, if not all their life. Close social bonds had often developed as a consequence of growing up together or sharing similar experiences, such as attending a particular school.

The intimacy of these bonds is evident in the way that some participants, such as May (65+) in Oxgangs, talked about the family-like quality of relationships:

We all was like a big family, we could go to one another if we needed anything or needed help and that.

In some case studies, redevelopment of the neighbourhood had served to fracture such friendship networks. This was particularly apparent in Hillside, where a number of participants or their friends or relatives had been relocated during a regeneration programme. Curt (16-24), a young single man, talked about missing his friends after

moving to a neighbouring area during the regeneration of Hillside. Demolition and new build activity in Wensley Fold and Oxgangs, on the other hand, had not been as extensive as the redevelopment programme in Hillside and were less disruptive to localised friendship networks. Nusrat Ali (35-44) in Wensley Fold, for example, reported that the house she was living in was demolished as part of a housing market renewal programme, but that she subsequently moved into a new property in the neighbourhood only a short walk away from where she had previous lived, allowing her to maintain the close ties she had with friends and relatives. Eleanor (35-44) in Oxgangs had been required to move when the block of flats she was living in were demolished. She and other residents were relocated to nearby properties, allowing her to maintain the friendships she had developed in the flats.

People with a history of residential mobility tended to have more dispersed friendship networks. Several participants in West Kensington, for example, had no strong ties to the area and described a friendship network extending across London and beyond, as a result of living in many different places. More geographically dispersed friendship networks were also informed by spatial routines of daily life that extended beyond the area of residence, for work or education. The workplace and sites of education and training (schools, colleges and universities) represented centres of interaction that brought people into close proximity. Contact did not inevitably lead to intimacy and close friendships, but against this backdrop some people did develop friendships that involved the exchanges of support and small services. The contacts made by people at work were typically with people from outside their neighbourhood and there was little evidence of any significant overlap between work and neighbourhood contacts. The resulting dispersed nature of work-related personal networks could serve to undermine the development of stronger ties out of work if the distance involved represented an unsupportable cost.

In some cases the mobility of friends extended the geographically bounded networks of participants who were less mobile. Callum (45-64), for example, had never moved outside Grimsby, but had an extensive network of friends in West Marsh, across the town and beyond. Social networking websites such as Facebook also helped him maintain friendships over greater distances and prevent the breakdown of ties, despite face-to-face meetings being infrequent or rare. In contrast, Isobel (65+), a retired women living in West Marsh with her husband, reported how distance had weakened friendship ties:

> *Believe it or not I haven't any friends. I have to say, we've lost them over the years, we always went out of town to [name of village]. We belonged to the darts team and dominos and things and we always socialised out of town and of course once the car went our social life went. My husband did occasionally go into the [name of pub] but that's been shut down for years so…*

In some instances, friends represented a source of income through transfer payments, including financial gifts and informal loans. This form of sustenance was typically underpinned by strong bonds and an emotional commitment between friends, nurtured over many years. More commonly, however, friends served as an important source of emotional support and comradeship, and this was particularly the case for women.

Shirley (45-64) in Oxgangs explained that she could turn to her friends, who lived in the same stairwell, whenever she was feeling down and needed someone to talk to. In this case, the friendship involved both a reliance on the emotional support provided as well and a reciprocal willingness to help each other out financially, when necessary. Another example of the benefits to flow from bonds of friendship discussed by women participants was the in-kind payments and gifts received from

friends. Lorna (30-34) in Amlwch, for example, talked about how her network of friends passed on children's clothes and toys, saving each other money in the process.

The men interviewed tended to talk about socialising and valuing comradeship when discussing the benefits of friendship. Connor (25-29) in West Kensington, for example, talked about having friends scattered across London who he spoke to on the telephone almost every day and if there was a problem would be, *"here in no time"*.

Living close to friends was a really important aspect of what residents wanted from the place where they lived:

> *I like (West Kensington) because … I have friends and lot of people that come from same country that I come from, so that you can have a chat and help if I need it sometimes.*
>
> (Tabasxamu Aba, aged 25-29, West Kensington)

> *Everything's close by. Everything we need shopping wise, family, friends. Everything is just close… That's it. That's the main thing (why I like living here).*
>
> (Aaliyah, 25-29, West Kensington)

And the need to be close to friends was a common reason for not wanting to leave the neighbourhood when participants were asked if they had ever thought of moving:

> *Probably not, no. All my mates are from round here and that … just the club, me family, me friends.*
>
> (Heath, 25-29, Hillside)

> *No, no, I don't want to move from here. I'll tell you why I don't want to move. If you move the likes of me now at my age and everything else like that, and you sort of put me in some place I'd be away from everywhere. You see, I …need me neighbours, I need me friends.*
>
> (Rufus, 65+, West Kensington)

The support from friends was something that would be lost if people moved out of the area, with no guarantee of being able to re-establish links in a new environment.

> *Some people have lived here for years and years and I've known them for years. And they're there if you needed them…. some of them, yeh. I could knock on somebody's door at three o'clock in the morning and they'd be fine about it… I can knock on my neighbour's door for a bit of milk. In the summer some of us sit out on the wall, and the children are playing. And we chat to each other. And you don't get that a lot in other estates. That is nice.*
>
> (Denietta, 35-44, Amlwch)

Friends also represented a source of practical support at a time of crisis or emergency, especially when they lived nearby. Sarah (45-64) in West Kensington, for example, reported having friends living in other parts of London and beyond, but relying on friends in the neighbourhood for practical help. In instances where the

bonds of friendship were particularly strong, the practical help provided in times of crisis or emergency sometimes went well beyond what might be described as 'neighbouring' and involved a substantial commitment of time and effort.

There were also examples of strong public spirit and positive disposition toward forging friendships and helping people. Kathleen (65+) in West Marsh for example became friends with a number of Polish migrant workers who she got to know and helped when they first arrived in the town and who since had helped her on various occasions:

> *Yeah I have some Polish friends and I also have a friend that used to live up near the school, round the corner, but we don't live in each other's pockets. In fact when I was in hospital my phone broke and my Polish friends went and bought me another phone and on this new phone it's got SOS so if I need anybody now I'm in trouble I press the side of my phone and it will ring Doncaster, my daughter and my friend round the corner and send a message 'I'm in an emergency I need help'.*

Various factors therefore informed the development and nature of friendship networks in these deprived neighbourhoods. Personal history (including residential mobility), individual attitudes, dispositions and preferences, current and previous situations and experiences (including involvement in work, education and training), as well as individual resources all emerged as factors informing both the structure and geography of friendship networks and their role as a source of support and assistance. The existence of closely knit, locally based friendship networks varied considerably between neighbourhoods.

Dense, closely knit networks were a feature of the Amlwch, Wensley Fold and Hillside case studies, reminiscent of the archetypal working class neighbourhood (Bott, 1957), with a concentration of people of the same or similar occupations living in the same neighbourhood, characterised by low population turnover and continuity of relations, resulting in a high degree of dense or close knit social networks. In Hillside, the redevelopment of the area had fractured some longstanding friendship networks, by forcing some local residents to relocate beyond the immediate area.

In Oxgangs, West Kensington and West Marsh there were also examples of people with close knit friendship networks rooted in the local area, but local ties were often weak and extended less often beyond the convivial into attachments that might be deemed friendships. The research attempted to unpick the reasons for these apparent differences. First, in West Marsh, residential mobility was a common theme in the housing pathways of younger participants, with many having moved into the neighbourhood in recent years. This reflected the relatively large private rented sector within the neighbourhood and its lubricating role in the wider housing market. It also reflected the limited financial resources that these young people had at their disposal, which meant that they 'ended up' in West Marsh, rather than having exercised a positive choice to live there.

Residential mobility inevitably serves to distance people from family members and friends, who might be left behind in the neighbourhood, town or city from where people have relocated. The result can be twofold. On the one hand, these new residents can be disposed to look beyond the neighbourhood for social contact. Meanwhile, longer-standing residents can experience a gradual depletion of neighbourhood acquaintances, as contacts die or move away and they struggle to nurture contacts with new residents. Indeed, some older residents in West Marsh, such as Sybil (65+), reported that the ability to forge bonds with other neighbours was being undermined by changes in the attitude towards neighbouring among younger residents:

I've always enjoyed living round here, I mean I've had loads of friends but some of them are dying and we're getting new neighbours and they're young 'uns and they don't want owt to do with elderly people. I've got one, two, three, there's about eight round my age.

A second and striking difference between West Marsh and the other areas was the lack of opportunities for the development of interactions in public space, to support the development of social networks from which friendships might emerge. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, there were few opportunities in West Marsh for people to meet in pubs, cafes or corner shops, community centres, parks and libraries. The local schools emerged as the only venue where people were regularly making interpersonal connections within the neighbourhood. Both West Marsh and Hillside appeared to have been emptied of the institutional and physical infrastructure that helps to support social connectivity. People who did go out to socialise frequently left their neighbourhood to do so.

Fear of crime and concern about personal safety, most apparent in West March, also limited social interaction in the neighbourhood. The impact of these factors on social networks was most acutely apparent in the experiences of the older people interviewed in the area, although there was some evidence of local social networks to counterbalance this.

Finally, the web of relations with family and friends was a crucial driver of residential (im)mobility in the areas, as many participants, like Faisal Hussain and Mulbery, felt a strong attachment to their place of residence.

I wouldn't move out. This is where my roots are. This is where I was born. I was born in Blackburn and this is… all my memories and stuff like that. This is where they are - on these very streets. And it's very hard to replace that…look, my roots lie in Blackburn. I was born and bred in Blackburn. Everything that's ever happened to me was around Blackburn or my area. To lose that would be like losing a part of me. And sometimes it's too much to lose; all the memories and the happiness that lies here. I wouldn't want to lose all that.

(Faisal Hussain, 16-24, Wensley Fold)

I just feel as if I belong. I wouldn't want to go anywhere else, not even a different street or somewhere to live. It's never entered my head: 'oh, we'll sell the house and go somewhere else'.

(Mulbery, 30-34, West Marsh)

The issues of 'belonging' and neighbourhood attachment in the six areas are explored in more depth in Cole and Green (2010).

7.4 The Role of Neighbours

Differences in relationships with neighbours in the six case studies can be explained by reference to the distinction between attachments and transactions made by Blokland (Blokland, 2003). Attachments are relationships underpinned by an explicit belief in the importance of neighbouring that manifests itself, for example, in a commitment to support others in times of need or through sociability beyond the mere exchange of pleasantries. Such attachments with neighbours were far more

evident than bonds. These were commonly expressed in terms of a personal conviction of the value and importance of maintaining good neighbourly relations. Reference was also frequently made to the importance of 'looking out for each other'; particularly among longer term residents, such as Nigel (30-34) in West Kensington:

> *I would look out for my neighbours yeah, if I see them in trouble I would look out for them that way ... you know certain people in the area that you grew up with and you just know the same people. It's probably been the same people here for twenty five years or so.*

An important facet of the content of attachment relations was the explicit willingness to help neighbours in times of need. This echoes Mann's (see Buonfino and Hilder, 2006: 14) distinction between 'manifest' neighbouring comprising observable interactions and exchanges of support and 'latent' neighbouring, in terms of help provided in response to a crisis or urgent need. This 'latent' element of neighbouring was often apparent in expressions of support or offers of help in case of problems or difficulties, as illustrated by Vera (65+) in Oxgangs:

> *Well I'd get in touch with the lassie up the stair, I'd phone her cos she's on the phone and I've got her phone number and she's got my phone number so … if she goes away for Christmas or New Year she always comes and tells me she's, 'give me a call at my mum's or my sister's if anything goes wrong with the house' just that week she's away.*

There were also examples of reciprocal support between neighbours:

> *My neighbour would lend me £10. I do that with her as well. I give it to her Monday, I give her the money. We know each other because we're all on benefits so we help each other.*

> (Aaliyah, 35-44, West Kensington)

It is worth noting, however, that the value attached to neighbouring was not always reciprocated by other residents. One middle-aged woman interviewed in West Marsh observed wryly, for example, that her own willingness to help was not necessarily an outlook shared by her neighbours. Whilst attachments might be developed without any expectation that they would be reciprocated, this is still accompanied by a sense of frustration at others' perceived lack of neighbourliness.

Expressions of attachment were realised in practical terms in a number of ways, including responding to immediate needs, acts of generosity and sociability beyond convivial relations. There were several examples where latent neighbouring became manifest in a time of need or crisis, as Robina (30-34) in West Kensington commented:

> *When we first moved in we had a problem with the lock and something like that and we did have people that will come and help you and if you're in an hour of need. Once I was out and my son came, I was working … and he was soaking from the rain and my neighbour did take him in so it's nice, there are some nice people here.*

Such examples of neighbourliness were often framed by reference to a belief in the importance of 'looking after people around you', suggesting that attachment neighbouring was rooted in a particular set of values, which appeared to be reaffirmed by the acts of neighbourliness. Spontaneous acts of generosity were also made without expectation of being returned. Joachim (16-24) in West Marsh had received gifts from neighbours:

The woman [next door] is a bit more quiet I think but the man is like a fisherman and sometimes he come in and bring some fish in …bring the haddock and wow, yeah now it's getting better. Now they bring sea bass, I really like sea bass. Cos at work we do all that kind of fish but it's really expensive to buy in the shop and I say 'oh it's really big one I can't believe it' really nice.

The value of such actions for people on the receiving end of such generosity is evident, but it is important to distinguish this kind of support from the cash or in-kind support discussed earlier. The provision of goods or services to friends and family often seemed to be a mechanism for getting by financially in the face of poverty. This did not seem to be the purpose of the acts of exchange outlined above, which were irregular and unconnected to financial need.

There were examples of mothers (but no fathers) in the sample who reported that neighbours were willing look after children for short periods to enable them to complete domestic tasks or run errands. However, these acts were distinguished from the sort of childcare provided by family by its intermittent nature. Neighbours would 'keep an eye' on children for short periods whilst family offered more extended and regular forms of care. This difference reflects the more bounded nature of relations that typically exist between neighbours. At the same time, these are clearly valued sources of help that contain symbolic value in the sense of fostering a sense of 'community spirit'. Neighbourly acts can thus underpin attachment to place, through reaffirming the kindness of other residents.

A final outcome of attachment neighbouring is forms of sociability that stop short of friendships. This can include visiting or inviting neighbours round or even relying on them for support, but with an accompanying sense of distance that is not commensurate with friendship (and as Kynaston (2009) has shown, this form of attachment neighbouring has an established historical pedigree). The particulars of such relationships are well illustrated by the case of Peggy (65+) in West Marsh, who reported having a 'wonderful neighbour' who, as she revealed, provided her with a lot of support when she fell seriously ill. Yet the strong attachments she felt towards her neighbour fell short of the emotive bonds which characterise friendship:

Everybody in the Avenue, I know I could rely on anyone if I was in need of anything but I'm most friendly with Pat next door. She's a really, really wonderful neighbour. This is going to sound awful because I'm ever so fond of her but she isn't my type of person as a friend. When I go on holiday she pulls curtains for me and before today when I've been going out she was saying 'what are you having for your dinner today?' I said 'well I haven't made up my mind yet' 'well don't think about it, I'm doing this and I'll bring you some …but I couldn't do with Pat as a friend… because we don't like the same kind of things.

One explanation of this distinction concerned their different interests and tastes, which was later expressed in terms of the perceived lack of good judgement when they went on a rare clothes shopping trip together. Attachments could, therefore, provide a whole range of valued support without developing into friendship.

Attitudes and practices towards neighbouring among residents sometimes took the form of 'transactions' that had low emotional content but involved a willingness to provide small acts of practical support or engage in convivial relations. Such relationships were often characterised by a desire to bound interactions within these parameters, as the following observations from Roger and Hattie illustrate:

> *I'm no really friendly with them but I'm no unfriendly. We talk and that's it, used to help quite a few of them with wee electric jobs or plumbing jobs, no for money.*

(Roger, 65+, Oxgangs)

> *I don't associate a lot with my neighbours; I'm not that type of person. I'm one of them if I get in a lift with them I say hello…I will talk as long as they talk, if they don't then I won't make conversations. The young girl next door, I'll hold the lift for her, I've just taken a parcel in for her, but that's it, 'hello here's the parcel' end of… I couldn't tell you who lives in the end two flats, I've no idea, I don't wanna know. I shut my door and as long as me and my dad are all right that's all I need to know basically.*

(Hettie, 45-64, West Kensington)

In each of these cases there was a willingness to provide practical support that could be quite extensive, but there was also concomitant desire to circumscribe the scope of sociability. Many participants appeared satisfied with such limited forms of social interactions with neighbours, but some, such as Nigel (30-34) in West Kensington, did express a longing for closer forms of association with their neighbours:

> *I don't talk to [my neighbours]. You get a Christmas card, that's it, and you maybe get the odd 'hello' or 'how are you' during the year but it's not like 'oh come in for a cup of tea, can I borrow some sugar, my door's open any time'. It ain't like it was in the 50s and 40s, it's nothing like that, even in the 70s it was starting to get like 'lock the door' when I was born I think. I don't think it's a community like, how a community should be I think.*

Such an account illustrates an important point about distinctions *within* the typologies presented here. Individuals engaged in similar levels of interactions with neighbours may well view the desirability of those ties very differently. The desire for more intimate forms of 'community' with neighbours perceived to exist in the past contrasted starkly with the conscious intent to bound the scope of relations expressed by others. Thus residents might *experience* similar forms of neighbouring but perceive them differently, as either a choice or a constraint.

Neighbouring rarely provided the most intense forms of emotional or financial support, but it offered a degree of practical and social support that, particularly in the form of attachments, helped engender a sense of belonging and attachment to place (see Robertson *et al*, 2008). In this respect, neighbouring appeared to contribute to broader sense of well-being, rather than constituting a direct source of sustenance to enable individuals to manage the daily challenges of getting by on a low income. The distinction being made here is that friends and family enabled people to manage emotional and financial difficulties often manifest at the household level, whilst neighbouring could be a means of navigating, circumventing or even negating some of the challenges faced by living in low income areas. This raises the possibility of distinct attitudes toward, and experiences of, neighbouring in poorer neighbourhoods compared to more affluent locations (see Atkinson and Flint, 2004).

Neighbouring can therefore take on a number of dimensions along the continuum of social relationships. Bonds were most evident in Oxgangs and Wensley Fold where neighbours had sometimes become friends who provided valued forms of emotional and social support. The capacity to form bonds often appeared related to the length and stability of residence in the neighbourhood. Attachment forms of neighbouring were observable across all the areas, with participants expressing a commitment to look out for others, provide practical support and to engage in social contact that

went beyond convivial relations. Latent support in the time of a crisis or moment of need underpinned these social relationships.

A small number of participants engaged in transactions with neighbours which comprised of limited practical support combined with carefully bounded forms of conviviality. The picture is however mixed. Many participants expressed the desire to maintain distance with at least some neighbours and adopted more ambivalent forms of neighbouring, where contact with proximate others was not always considered desirable. It is also important to note that problematic neighbours, linked to anti-social or inconsiderate behaviour, had a significant detrimental impact upon the quality of life of several residents in each of the case study neighbourhoods (see Bashir and Flint, 2010).

7.5   Ambivalence Towards Social Contact

There was ample evidence of positive attitudes towards neighbouring. However, there were a number of cases where participants were far more ambivalent about those living nearby and where there appeared to be little contact between immediate neighbours, other than a passing greeting or smile of recognition. Some respondents, especially the younger ones, appeared to have little inclination to get to know neighbours better. They wanted to keep their distance, saying that they did not pry into other people's business and wanted to maintain their own privacy. Such preferences were in sharp contrast to the desire for more intimate forms of association apparent in the accounts of many older residents (see also Robertson *et al*, 2008; Watt, 2006).

Few participants wanted to disassociate themselves completely from other residents but preferred to regulate contact through a selective approach to neighbouring. Good relations with neighbours were therefore often accompanied by a desire to avoid 'undesirable' residents. Ambivalent neighbouring was not necessarily about complete withdrawal from public social life but a form of selective association. The processes of dissociation also took on a spatial form as participants identified 'good' and 'bad' areas in their neighbourhood. This was particularly common in West Marsh and Hillside.

Constraints on the formation of social relationships that generated ambivalence could be characterised as either *defensive* or *voluntary. Defensive ambivalence* can be conceived as a response to a perceived threat in terms of crime or anti-social behaviour or the difficulties in getting to know neighbours because of high levels of residential turnover, whilst *voluntary ambivalence* stemmed from a disinclination to develop close social relations with neighbours. There were notable variations across case study areas. Participants in West Marsh were most likely to exhibit defensive forms of ambivalence in response to perceived levels of crime or anti-social behaviour, as well as feeling unsettled by the high turnover of residents in private rented accommodation. In the other five areas, there was more of a mix of defensive and voluntary factors constraining the formation of social relations. West Kensington stood out as the neighbourhood where many individuals expressed a preference for, or satisfaction with, low levels of interaction with others.

It was evident that perceptions or experiences of crime and anti-social behaviour played a major role in circumscribing the degree of contact with neighbours or other residents. Kathleen (65+) from West Marsh, for example, said:

Well a lot of people tell me now that they daren't go out at night after about 5 o'clock, not even to the local shops, they won't go, they'd go without sooner than go to the local shops after that time. I haven't encountered any more trouble since you was here but apparently there is still trouble on the street. But I keep these blinds shut nearly all the time so people don't know when I'm in or out and I don't involve myself in the neighbourhood at all, I go to town, do what I have to do and come back.

Minimising contact with other residents constituted a conscious attempt to reduce the likelihood of undesirable contact with other residents. It was a defensive response to the perceived unpredictability of life in the neighbourhood which could, in part, be managed by a retreat behind closed doors. Such a withdrawal from social space also manifested itself in a desire to keep children indoors. Whilst these examples relate to *perceived* external threats, there were several cases where actual *experiences* of crime contributed to the desire to minimise social interactions. Donald (35-44) in West Marsh for example, recounted how a past experience of violence following an attempt to help another resident locate a stolen bike prompted him to rethink his attitude to getting involved. A similar breakdown of trust was also evident in the case of a family who experienced a series of unpleasant incidents including witnessing the vandalism of neighbours' windows and having a car crash into their front door.

Whilst perceptions and experiences of crime and anti-social behaviour exerted a strong influence on propensities to limit social interactions through processes of *self-*exclusion, the actions of others also served to contribute to feelings of being excluded from neighbourhood life. Racism was identified by several participants as constraining the scope of their contact with neighbours. Their willingness to develop attachments with neighbours was constrained by the different forms of prejudice they encountered. Exclusion also took on non-racial forms. Monica (25-29) in West Marsh, for example, stopped interacting with particular neighbours who she suspected were *"spreading gossip"* about her.

Attitudes towards neighbouring appear to be closely associated with the perceived willingness of others to engage in positive relations. Ambivalence or selectivity in neighbouring could be a consequence of a sense of exclusion from a collective culture or shared identity that serves to limit the scope of social ties with others. Examples included the sense of exclusion felt by some participants in Amlwch as a result of being English and the cultural boundaries evident between South Asian and White British residents in Wensley Fold, which served to limit the extent of neighbourly relations. The result in Wensley Fold was a sense of surprise (among both White British and South Asian participants) when positive neighbourly relations straddled this perceived divide (Cole *et al*, 2009; Cole and Green, 2010). These findings are particularly striking as they offer a sense of enhanced social relations developing over time, rather than the more commonly expressed narratives of neighbouring decline expressed in the other case study localities and reported in previous studies (Hall, 2007; Watt, 2006; Robertson *et al*, 2008).

Voluntary ambivalence was evident also where bounded forms of interaction were expressed more in terms of an inclination or choice. Some participants described how they lacked the time or propensity to interact with others. Stacey (30-34) in West Marsh, for example, explained how she preferred the street she now lived on to the street she previously lived on in the same neighbourhood because the neighbours were less intrusive. There is an evident disinclination to develop the sort of ties with neighbours that might be characterised as attachments or bonds.

Whilst all neighbourhoods provided examples of individuals 'keeping themselves to themselves' or regulating relations with neighbours, this tendency was far more

pronounced in West Marsh. This is perhaps explained by high levels of 'defensive' neighbouring, as individuals construct social and spatial boundaries to maintain distance in response to series of external pressures based on perceptions of crime, and a sense of transience in a neighbourhood where they had often 'ended up', rather than made a positive choice to live. Here the social fabric of the community was under pressure and a retreat to a more privatised existence was a common reaction.

Social relationships in Wensley Fold were strongly mediated by ethnic identity and in Amlwch by nationality. In Oxgangs there was less evidence of selective withdrawal from social contacts (linked, in part, to the perception of the neighbourhood as having a positive social status within the city of Edinburgh). In Hillside, some of the long-standing social relationships had been curtailed as a result of the extensive redevelopment, and this had prompted concerns from some participants about a recent increase in 'unmanaged' (as opposed to informally regulated) anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhood.

West Kensington stood out as the neighbourhood where the disinclination to engage with neighbours was more voluntary, driven by a preference to limit contact with others. For example, Waseem (30-34) explained that he had little desire to get to know neighbours beyond the exchange of convivial greetings because he already had a broad network of friends and busy social life:

> *No I don't want to be going round for cups of tea and that kind of thing. The people I'm friends with are the people that I've chosen to be friends with. There might be some very nice people amongst my neighbours that I would like to be friends with but equally, I don't know, I think it's important to say hello and recognise each other but…there just doesn't seem to be enough time to socialise with the people I socialise with, family and friends as it is…and it's just trying to find time to do the laundry and keep the house tidy as well as everything else.*

This quote strikes at the heart of a presumption inherent within the current government's 'Big Society' agenda; that people will necessarily want to engage and volunteer. Time is clearly a barrier that limits Waseem from developing closer social ties. However, there is also a tangible sense that limiting the scope of interactions with neighbours is partly an individual preference or, at least, something that he is not wanting to prioritise. Though harder to explain than defensive neighbouring, it nonetheless provides an important reminder that there is not a universal preference about the desirability of close relationships with neighbours, any more than there was in the past.

7.6   Social Divisions

Perceived shifts in the populations of the neighbourhoods featured prominently in residents' accounts of change. This included a perception that 'incomers' and 'strangers' were changing the local social dynamics (and undermining local traditions and the local culture). This was especially true in Hillside and Amlwch, where narratives of loss were pervasive and this was linked to a generational effect and a sense of weakening social ties:

> *They've all grown up and most of those have left the village, you don't see the parents as much at the school gates and you know, everyone just drifts apart.*

(George, 45-64, Amlwch)

The accounts distinguishing between the 'established' and the 'outsiders' (Elias and Scotson, 1994; Watt, 2006) varied from one neighbourhood to another. The growing ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of some of the neighbourhoods, most prominently Wensley Fold, was a key indicator of profound change for many residents, and this included the impact of migration from Eastern Europe. Residents varied in their responses to these trends. Economic in-migrants were judged positively according to the ethic of 'working hard', but were criticised for not 'contributing' to the community, in a generally unspecified manner. In Wensley Fold, some residents suggested that the arrival of Eastern Europeans had helped the existing Asian community feel more established and had added to the vibrancy of the neighbourhood. However, racism was also identified by several participants in Wensley Fold as constraining the scope of their contact with neighbours.

In Oxgangs, the accounts of 'established' residents towards incomers varied. Several participants expressed negative attitudes towards those in-coming households who had been allocated social housing at the same time as 'local' people were being decanted from the high rise flats, as they were seen as competitors for a valued local resource – a new home. This did not extend to the most recent in-comers to the new developments: here, in-migration was viewed positively as 'adding life' to the area without having a negative impact on their own opportunities.

In West Marsh, any 'established' antipathy to 'others' also took a less specific form, with general reference to 'gangs', 'youths' and specific sub-areas. This view was perhaps influenced by the tendency of many older participants to withdraw from public space, especially after dark, and to have more limited neighbourly contacts anyway. There were some references in West Kensington to incivilities associated with younger people spending time outside the flats, but this was not linked to any specific ethnic grouping, nor was it accompanied by the same level of anxiety as in West Marsh.

However, one theme running through the narratives from participants transcended neighbourhood difference - the divide between the 'hard working' and the 'feckless' who were not in work and/or who were reliant on benefits. This was compounded by a sense of the unfairness of the existing benefits system (rather than any sense of unfairness or resentment towards other income differentials between groups in society). On the face of it, the persistence of these widely held views might challenge the notion that such narratives of individual explanations for poverty and stigmatisation are necessarily generated by powerful groups in society, although we were unable to establish the extent to which residents' narratives were generated as a response to perceived stigmatisation and whether these intra-class critiques of feckless others resulted from wider inter-class judgements. However, this evidence also highlighted the continuing dominance of notions of self-reliance and respect within the neighbourhoods.

Respondents evidently believed that a lack of demand for labour was a key factor in explaining the difficulties experienced in finding work (see Crisp *et al*, 2009 for a fuller account). This attitude engendered some sympathy for groups such as young people felt to be marginalised by economic change. However, this did not normally translate into widespread sympathy for those out of work. Some participants felt that work was available for those sufficiently motivated to find it. Those on benefit were 'getting away with it' at the expense of the efforts made by those with jobs. There was also a clear association made between worklessness and inappropriate behaviours. Discussions of worklessness were laced with moral judgements and a symbolism that extended beyond the mere categorisation of who is in or out of work. Employment status or orientations to work were important markers against which social distinctions could be constructed.

Malcolm (16-24) from West Marsh, for example, worked as a supervisor at a supermarket but had made enquiries at his local Jobcentre about the possibility of retraining as a plasterer. His discovery that free training was only available to individuals claiming benefits generated a strong sense of injustice centred on the eligibility of those he perceived to be less deserving:

> *I wanted to do a free plastering course and the advice they give me was like 'best thing mate is go on the dole, you get it all paid for'. That's a joke, you've got some guy peeing outside as well, I never lose my rag often, I said 'that's a joke, I want to better myself and you're telling me I'm better off on the dole because I get it all paid for'. I just walked out. Someone who's not bothered, who's drinking outside and can get it for free and isn't bothered anyway.*

This theme recurred in other accounts, in which worklessness became associated with unacceptable forms of public behaviour, with the sense of injustice exacerbated by the perceived fecklessness of others. For Malcolm, this tangible frustration developed into a more general condemnation of the character of individuals out of work:

> *I know a lot of people can't find jobs, but some of them are just bone lazy and don't want to work and drugs and that but I think they should make them people come up the parks, clear up the rivers to make their money, earn the money. I know some of them can't but it helps everything. If the council can't afford to pick up litter and pick up stuff out of the river so why are they paying those people to sit on their bums, why can't they come and do it for a couple of hours a day.*

Moral distinctions were not simply made along binary distinctions of being in or out of work however. Individuals who were not in work sometimes asserted their greater entitlement to benefits or their moral superiority over others who were out of work. Arthur (45-64) from Wensley Fold, for example, had not worked for over thirty years and explained how:

> *... it's hard work to get into the labour force. They are trying to get people like off the sick into work but they should sort out these people who can work first. I mean now there's so much unemployment, I think they did say it's probably over three million so they want to sort that out first before they get us on the sick, you know them proper people that's on the sick to work. I knew there's quite a lot that's on the sick that shouldn't be but you get the good and the bad. Mine's genuine, I've got arthritis, I've got schizophrenia, it's not like I put on.*

These comments indicated Arthur's determination to assert the validity of his own claim whilst disassociating himself from other less deserving claimants believed to be able to work. This echoes other research that has identified the different moral judgements that are attached to different positions *outside* the labour market (Smith, 2005; Pahl *et al,* 2007) which, in this case, evidently cleave along long-standing distinctions between the 'deserving and 'undeserving' poor (Bauman, 2005). As Parker *et al's* (2008) study of families facing material hardship also noted, this processes of social distancing may become all the more imperative when a powerful and pervasive discourse about the deficiencies of those on benefits circulate in particular neighbourhoods.

The vehemence with which Arthur made these distinctions could also be related to concerns about government plans to re-test and, potentially, require those on health-related benefits to look for work. The perceived need to make distinctions about entitlement to benefits could, therefore, be intimately linked with benefit rules

determined at national level, especially as his personal entitlement was believed to be under threat. Processes of disassociation were not only generated internally within neighbourhoods but also shaped by institutional processes operating at broader spatial scales.

Such distinctions were also evident in the case of Ethel (45-64) from West Marsh, who was no longer able to work because of disability. She explained how angry she was that she wanted to work but was unable to do so, whilst others capable of work chose not to:

> *The system wants to change because there's a lot of people that are getting away with it cos I know some and it's so wrong. I know some people that's like that, they don't care, they said 'why should I work'? I mean I know one guy he's, I can't remember if he's 52 or 54, he says 'why should I get a job now?' 'Well why not? You take my illness and I'll go out to work then'. That's a really bad attitude to take.*

Ethel asserted the deservingness of her own workless status relative to the perceived malingering of a neighbour, again exemplifying the way in which moral distinctions were based on comparative assessments of orientations to work *within* the workless population. Moreover, it shows how individuals attempt to resist, or at least limit, the stigmatisation associated with being out of work though processes of disassociation based on a strong moral sense of what constituted correct behaviour.

In this context, disassociation from others on the basis of employment status or orientation to work appeared to play an important function in asserting moral and social distance from groups deemed undesirable within neighbourhoods. It could be argued, therefore, that employment still functioned as signifier of social difference but more on the basis of cultural orientations to work than the financial rewards or status it conferred. Both those in work and those out of work sought to disassociate themselves from others deemed to have a cultural aversion to work. Such distinctions between '*rough*' and '*respectable*' residents have a long pedigree in working-class neighbourhoods (Watt, 2006). It was striking, however, that these distinctions were made almost exclusively made using moral or social criteria based on perceived attitudes to work rather than differences in occupational status or income. This may highlight the way in which the growing precariousness of employment has reduced the material grounds on which such distinctions were traditionally constructed (Watt, 2006).

It was also interesting to note that some individuals extended the self-critique of themselves and their own inadequacies to their failure to take advantage of the welfare system:

> *Sometimes I feel like a mug, I get up, go to work, I've always worked…I get up and go to work, for example might have four kids cos I know someone like that, she's laid on her bed, I'm rushing to drop him at school, go to work, come back, …I always say I wish I had the option to get up, to go to work take the benefit route you have to justify it, they would call you up or contact you, you would have to justify, I'd rather make my own money so I don't have to justify anything.*

(Cordell, 30-34, West Kensington)

There is a notable distinction here between the attitudes expressed towards more affluent individuals or groups in which a sense of 'good luck to them' appears to be grounded in the perceived legitimacy of their achievements (qualifications, higher incomes, more material wealth etc.) and the resentment felt towards those who are

viewed as making illegitimate gains through 'playing the system' by not working or claiming benefits that they are regarded as not being entitled to.

Residents also tended to have limited awareness of the precise employment status of neighbours, although this was sometimes inferred from observable daily routines. This lends weight to Dean's (2007) observation that low-income neighbourhoods do not support shared experiences of work. Nonetheless, work continued to exert a powerful hold because of the symbolic and cultural associations made between worklessness and socially unacceptable behaviours.

Whilst residents do not tend to make comparative judgements about work in relation to those with more income or higher occupational status, there is a countervailing tendency to distinguish themselves from those deemed to occupy inferior positions. Processes of creating social distinctions across the six neighbourhoods often involve the use of discourses that closely align with representations of poverty and worklessness made by both policymakers and the media (see Levitas, 2005; Smith, 2005). The influence of more powerful others is perhaps, therefore, implicit in attempts to put distance between others considered less deserving. This is not to suggest, however, that residents are merely ciphers for narratives that originate elsewhere. The relationship may be more symbiotic, with official, media and popular discourses serving to reaffirm the legitimacy of each other

7.7   Conclusions

These findings are consistent with the evidence that relationships characterised by affective 'bonds' with family and friends provide an important source of support for getting by in low income neighbourhoods. Family and friends provide more intimate, sustained and committed forms of support that enable people to manage the daily, immediate challenges of living on low incomes. The strong bonds of attachment and emotional commitment that characterised relations between some family members and, to a lesser extent, friends underpinned the provision of three broad forms of sustenance or income: transfer payments, including financial gifts or loans; services and practical help, such as help with child care; and emotional and social support.

A small number of participants were engaged only in transactions with neighbours, comprising limited practical support and bounded forms of conviviality. More commonly, participants were engaged in attachment forms of neighbouring, involving a commitment to look out for others, to provide practical support and to engage in social contact. Some however, particularly younger, participants were ambivalent about neighbourly relations, preferring to 'keep themselves to themselves'.

These findings are consistent with other research studies suggesting that bonds with family and friends, rather than neighbours, provide the most important source of support for getting by (Blokland, 2003; Olagnero, 2005; Warr, 2005). There was some evidence that relationships have become more spatially stretched and socially selective and 'regulated'. However, in some instances, neighbours were also friends and relatives, and neighbour relations were underpinned by strong bonds, resulting in the exchange of this full range of support and assistance. This finding concurs with Boyce's (2006) conclusion that strong and intimate relationships do still often exist between neighbours and are rooted in, and sustained by, the need for support and assistance in the face of social and financial hardship (see also Mooney, 2009; Collins, 2004).

It is important to note that perceptions of neighbouring and social relationships were primarily driven by micro-geographies of direct personal experience based on adjacent properties or immediate common stairs or streets. Therefore residents

respond to their locations within webs of social relations they themselves cannot map in detail (Tilly, 1998) and form evaluations based on an 'anonymous sociability' arising from their co-existence in the same neighbourhood with many people who they do not have direct contact or relations with (Shon, 2007). Dynamics of neighbouring and social contact will vary considerably *within*, as well as between, neighbourhoods. The variation in the existence of bonds, attachments and transactions between family members, friends and neighbours was therefore associated with the interplay of individual and place-based factors. Individual level factors including residential history and the geography of mobility; current and previous engagement in education and training; parental responsibilities; access to resources (including transport and access to the internet and use e of social networking sites) and personal disposition (see Robinson, 2010 for a fuller discussion).

In West Marsh and, to a certain extent, Hillside and West Kensington, the mutual support and exchange that used to characterise relationships between neighbours had come under pressure and been hollowed out, prompting individuals to forge more inward-looking relationships (bonding capital) with family and friends only. West Marsh corresponded most closely to Lupton's (2003) depiction of a community 'shrinking under pressure' and the decimation of much of the public realm in Hillside suggests that it is heading in this direction, although the fact that redevelopment has restarted may alter this. West Kensington corresponds most closely to Blokland's (2003) notion of a spatially and socially 'stretched' community, in which a relative lack of emotional commitment to the neighbourhood is perceived as a 'given' rather than a 'loss'.

In contrast, in Oxgangs and Amlwch a broader range and greater depth of relations were apparent and in Wensley Fold a changing population, combined with a successful physical regeneration programme, appeared to have enhanced relationships and positive interaction between neighbours and diverse social groups. There were also clear differences in the perceived desirability of bond-like relationships with neighbours among older and younger residents. It was predominantly participants under 40 years old who talked about 'keeping themselves to themselves'. If they felt where they lived was unfriendly, they were more likely to express this in terms of moving out to another place rather than using temporal reference points. Older participants, on the other hand, lamented the decline of sociability over time and often pointed to the perceived unwillingness of newer, younger neighbours to interact as a contributory factor.

Variations in bonds, attachments and transactions were therefore influenced by a series of place-based factors, including:

- *Turnover and residential stability* – personal experiences in Hillside, West Marsh and West Kensington illustrated how turbulence in the local population could undercut the development of attachments and bonds between neighbours. Residentially mobile residents often looked outside the neighbourhood for social contact, to friends and relatives living in other parts of the town. Meanwhile, existing residents experienced a gradual depletion of neighbourhood acquaintances. In West Marsh, residential turbulence resulted from the relatively large private rented sector in the neighbourhood and reflected the area's function as a 'zone of transition' within the local urban system. In West Kensington, relatively high levels of mobility reflected the fact that people were drawn to the area for practical, rather than personal, reasons (connectivity to other areas of London; local services and resources; availability of housing). In Hillside, turbulence within the local population was associated with the programme of large scale demolition and rebuilding.

- *Social and physical characteristics of place* - the opportunities for contact and interaction varied between the case studies. In particular, there was a lack of opportunity for interactions in public space in West Marsh and, to a lesser degree, Amlwch and Hillside. Also evident in West Marsh and Hillside were high levels of 'defensive' neighbouring, as individuals constructed social and spatial boundaries to maintain distance, in response to a series of external pressures centring on perceptions or crime and safety.

- *Collective social functioning* – Oxgangs, Wensley Fold and, to a certain extent, Amlwch and Hillside were notable for their closely knit networks of family and friends, which had often been nurtured over many years. The relative stability of these neighbourhoods provided the opportunity for a shared history and notion of a collective identity to emerge, which served to effect more positive neighbouring and neighbourliness. However, in Amlwch insider-outsider identities served to undermine a sense of belonging to such collective identities for some (particularly English) people.

- In the following chapter the focus shifts from collective experiences of neighbourhoods and social networks towards the personal realm of identity and sources of self-esteem.

8. Identity and Self-Esteem

8.1 Introduction

Previous chapters have examined how research participants referred to the influence of personal and place-based histories, their use of space in and around the neighbourhoods, and the sources of social solidarity and division in the neighbourhood and beyond. The focus in many in-depth qualitative studies of poverty has been on the individual, or the household, and how they actively negotiate the manifold challenges of getting by on a relatively low income. This approach acknowledges that these people are active agents, and not just the ciphers of social, economic and cultural forces beyond their control, even if the space for the exercise of choice, autonomy and decision is strictly circumscribed and regulated. We turn to this level of analysis in this chapter, looking at how participants assess their own situation, whether and how they compare their circumstances to others, and whether distinct neighbourhood or other factors seem to shape their self-esteem and the tendency to reflect critically on their social and economic position (see Batty and Flint, 2010, for a full discussion).

Participants' narratives of their own 'capability' were nuanced, complex and in places contradictory, with issues of esteem and comparative poverty returned to at various stages of the interviews, both explicitly and implicitly. It is important to note that, although this chapter examines the drivers of self-esteem, the research participants differed considerably in how they conceptualised their circumstances and the impact of their circumstances on their self-esteem. Some respondents, for example, did not appear to locate their situation within a personal judgemental framework:

> *I don't disappoint myself. I don't bring myself down like that. I just think positive: it's less stress isn't it? Think positive, help each other if you can afford to.*

(Sabina 30-34, Wensley Fold)

These participants exhibit *doxa*: the taking for granted of their circumstances which are perceived as natural, ordinary and mundane and not a subject of critical self-reflection (Oliver and Reilly, 2010; Allen *et al*, 2007; Savage *et al*, 2001). These perceptions would suggest the need for an additional category to the classifications of self-esteem, such as those developed by Orr *et al* (2006) or the reflective concept of 'subjective economic welfare' (Burchardt, 2004) which are all premised upon an individual's comparative self-assessment.

8.2 Sources of Anxiety and Low Self-esteem

The study confirmed the findings of previous studies (Davidson, 2008; Creegan *et al*, 2009; Frost and Hoggett, 2005; Hooper *et al*, 2007 and see also the review by Ridge, 2009) about the detrimental impacts of low or insecure incomes on many individuals'

sense of self-esteem and wellbeing. However, perhaps surprisingly, the research participants rarely located notions of self-esteem as directly resulting from processes of stigmatisation. The explanation given by Rebecca (25-29) from Hillside was therefore quite unusual in demonstrating the significance of such processes where they were perceived to operate:

> *I think people look down on people out of work…Yeah I do feel like people look down on me and our family, I know they probably don't but you do feel that, your own self worth, self confidence, you feel like people think of you as lazy even though they don't know the half of it.*

There was also little reference by participants to stigmatisation of place affecting self-esteem. While the previous two chapters have indicated how differences between the neighbourhoods helped to shape the use of space, the development and depth of social relationships, and the nature of social division in the areas, such factors did not often emerge in the discussions about what people were proud about in their lives and how they felt about their own position.

It was evident, on the other hand, that the financial status of some participants generated very high levels of stress and low self-esteem:

> *I was in a two-bedroom house, took on the grandson, came here, we'd got nothing, there was no wallpaper, or carpets, nothing, it was a complete shell, water pouring in down there. It took about five years to get things straight and I had to struggle to buy furniture, go to second hand shops, most of the stuff I get, even me clothing come from charity. I can't afford to go and buy new.*

> (Kathleen, 65+, Wensley Fold)

It was also evident that the fragility and unpredictability of some residents' incomes led to a general sense of having to 'make do' and to unease, anxiety and insecurity. Many participants talked openly about the centrality of an adequate income to individuals' lives and psychological health. This sense of low-self esteem was, in some cases, exacerbated by a sense of not contributing, not progressing in life (see Hooper *et al*, 2007) or caused by negative experiences with the welfare system:

> *If you haven't got money…you can still participate in society but you're not adding something.*

> (Mohammed, 45-64, Wensley Fold)

> *I didn't achieve what I wanted, this is not the life I thought I would ever live…I never thought I'm going to be like that, not working, I never thought it would happen to me, never.*

> (Aaliyah, 35-44, West Kensington)

> *You go down the dole office and they made you feel like, I don't know…and it was just the way they said it like they were giving me something. I was glad to get out of that situation. I didn't like the way they were talking to people.*

> (Bret, 45-64, Wensley Fold)

For some participants, this sense of exclusion or failure to meet personal aspirations was located within a wider belief that they were powerless to address their circumstances. For those living on the margins of poverty, this constraint was epitomised by the borrowing of money which was a necessity, but which came at a price. As shown in the previous chapter, the family was the crucial resource for this borrowing. Many individuals faced a tension between trying to balance their everyday finances, already stretched to the limit, against the need to pay for a school trip or buy a school uniform. It was those tensions that posed a dilemma to some individuals who felt they had no choice but to compromise themselves and ask for money. This is exemplified by Jackie (30-34) from Oxgangs, who explained her dilemma as follows:

> *Financially it's too much to be asking them [family] every month cos we're short of that but if there is a school trip, uniform, the middle one's starting [a new school] so that's a whole uniform and the older one needs a new uniform so coats and shoes are normally the thing that I ask for.*
>
> *Interviewer: But you said that's a difficult thing to have to ask for?*
>
> *Yeah I don't like asking.*

For other individuals, (see also Hooper *et al*, 2007) managing alone was a better alternative to asking for help, risking refusal or being judged negatively, as Anthony (30-34) from West Kensington explained.

> *Maybe a few years ago I would have [borrowed money] without hesitation. Now I always try and sort it out myself first, I try and exhaust every avenue as an individual.*

The 'exhausting of every avenue' epitomised the sense of self-perceived required agency amongst the majority of participants in which they felt it incumbent upon themselves to manage their situations. Their position was explained by reference to a sense of personal incapacity rather than the impact of more structural factors. The interviews therefore revealed how, for some individuals, a low income and the insecurity of financial circumstances generated anxiety, stress and depression, exacerbated by a sense of not achieving or progressing in life or contributing adequately to society. These feelings of low self-esteem could additionally be generated by reliance upon the financial support of others.

8.3   Drivers of Positive Self-esteem

For many participants, as Johnston and Mooney (2007) and Oliver and O'Reilly (2010) suggest, generators of personal satisfaction or self-esteem were not based or focused upon their financial circumstances:

> *I don't really worry about material things. It's more about relationships and family situations that affect me more.*

(Sajid, 30-34, Wensley Fold)

Independence and the ability to socialise were presented as important drivers of a sense of satisfaction for some participants. Others identified a sense of achievement, enhanced self-esteem and growing confidence that were generated through achieving educational qualifications, completing training and accessing a job, although in some cases, training or education did not result in employment, which could be a source of anxiety and disappointment.

Paid Work

Many of the accounts given in interviews corroborate claims made in other studies about the inability of low-paid, low-skilled work to lift individuals above the poverty threshold or to enhance health and well-being (see Charlesworth, 2000; McDowell, 2003; Smith, 2005). It would be misleading, however, to conclude that these experiences were universal or all-encompassing. Participants were also able to identify positive elements of work that contributed to self-esteem and well-being, and this was not necessarily linked to financial gain.

Nonetheless, several respondents in each area mentioned the importance of the financial rewards of working. There were only a few instances where individuals discussed the benefits of enjoying what they perceived as a high income, as in the case of an apprentice fabricator in West Marsh who had enjoyed periods of high pay (c £40k) and considered himself likely to find well-paid work on completing his apprenticeship. Another notable example of a relatively high personal income was a young man living in West Kensington who was employed as an accountant within the NHS.

More commonly, individuals moving from benefits or experiencing promotion noted small but important increases in income. For example, Doris (30-34), from West Marsh, had been promoted to the post of manager of a day care centre by the time of the second wave of interviews. However, in discussion Doris emphasised the difference promotion had made in terms of her ability to help the young parents attending the centre. The sense of vocation provided though her work seemed as important as the increase in income. This is an example of the value placed on 'making a difference' as a crucial element of work, which is discussed below.

Moving from benefits to work could increase spending power, ease debts and enhance the well-being of individuals and other household members (Crisp *et al*, 2009). Given that the type of work secured rarely paid high wages, this indicates that even comparatively low-paid work can still provide financial gains over and above the income secured from out-of-work benefits. One element of working and earning a living that was valued was the sense of financial independence it provided - often expressed, as in the case of Gary (45-64) from West Kensington, in terms of avoiding dependence on welfare:

> *The job is my life, if I don't go to work I can't pay my rent, I can't look after the family. It's my living, if I don't go to work I don't get money, I don't want to be on government, getting money for the government, so I just work to get the things I need, I want to buy something. When I work I get paid, that's when I can do things I want to do.*

This sense of financial independence had a gendered element. For example, Nusrat (35-44) from Wensley Fold had previously worked as seamstress but had not engaged in paid work for many years due to the demands of full-time child care. She explained her desire to go back into employment: '*I just want a bit more than staying at home and cleaning and tidying, socialising more if anything*'. There were several instances where female respondents expressed a conscious desire to extend roles and social relationships beyond the domestic sphere by participating in the labour market (Crisp 2010a). This adds weight to McDowell's (2001) contention that narratives of decline that focus on the loss of male manual work perhaps fail to account for changes in women's experiences of work. The value many women derived from taking on new roles and identities in the labour market did not square easily with the overall narratives of loss and decline about these areas outlined in Chapter 4.

It was striking, however, that most of the comments regarding the benefits of work did not concern financial gains or the sense of independence gained through receiving an income from paid employment. More frequently cited benefits included: social contact with colleagues (as in Callum's case below); a sense of purpose derived from structured, meaningful activity; a notion of 'making a difference'; and social status.

> *Refuse collector, brilliant job. I'm a people person, I love talking to people, you can have a laugh, they take the mickey out of you. I enjoyed it.*

> (Callum, 35-44, West Marsh)

Work could also be a source of routine, enjoyment, purpose and mental stimulation:

> *Yeah I do [miss work] to be honest, I did love work, I do feel like you lose confidence when you give up work and I liked that adult environment, it's all children now and baby talk and I feel like I'd like to go back to work just to get out of the house for a bit.*

> (Verity, 25-29, Hillside)

Respondents also valued the structured activity that work provided. Zara, who was working as a carer in a nursing home, explained how she missed this element of work whilst on leave:

> *I like it, it's good. It's a lot better than being unemployed because I'm in a routine… I've just been on a holiday with my annual leave this week and … I've been so annoyed the last couple of days cos I've had nothing to do. It was good the first three days but then I started getting bored so I can't wait until I'm back at work… if it's been a good day at work I come in like satisfied.*

> (Zara, 30-34, Oxgangs)

Another positive aspect of work was the sense of achievement and purpose, evident, for example, in Julie's account describing the satisfaction gained from the varied and sometimes challenging tasks involved in her role as a personal carer to a woman with Parkinson's disease:

> *We do all sorts. I actually tiled the bathroom, never tiled a bathroom and I thoroughly enjoyed it. And to get paid for doing something that you get so much satisfaction out of, it's not a job is it? I do gardening so I'm paid to go out in the sunshine and garden. I get out and about with her because we go shopping, clothes shopping and we go and have a coffee and a chat and meet friends out. Not many people can have a job where you have got to look after somebody but you still have a social life at the same time, which we do.*

> (Julie, 45-64, West Marsh)

Julie's example testifies to the fact that jobs that do not necessarily require high levels of formal qualifications can still demand crucial practical and social skills. These are perhaps unrecognised in formulations that characterise the personal service industry as one of a number of industries that provide 'donkey work' (Warhurst and Thompson, 1998: 5).[4] Equally, this type of one-to-one personal care

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[4] Included in this pejorative frame are serving, guarding, cleaning, waiting and helping in the private health and care services, as well as hospitality industries.

service may be more challenging and, by extension, stimulating than more routinised care work based within large institutions. It is still indicative of how individuals with low skills and limited employment options are able to navigate these opportunities in a way that enables them to secure some degree of esteem and satisfaction from paid work.

A further positive element of work was a sense of 'making a difference'. This was sometimes couched in terms of helping to improve the circumstances of the particular group they worked with, as Sarah (45-64) from West Kensington, who worked full-time as a teaching assistant, described:

> *It's a feeling that you're making a difference, I like to think that one day, obviously if it's not one of my own children, one day one of the children I've ever taught may grow up and have a seed of a thought that I may have given them and then use that in their adulthood and be someone.*

A final benefit that work provided for a small number of participants was the social status derived from occupational position. Robert (25-29) from Amlwch worked full-time as a pharmacy technician in a local hospital and described how he felt *'a respected member of the community cos I work in hospital'*. But on the whole few people discussed their work in terms of social status and, when they did, it was rarely framed in terms of comparisons with the status of others. Indeed, it was entirely absent from the accounts of those in low-paid, less-skilled work, suggesting that such forms of judgment may be restricted for those for whom career progression was an expected and desired part of the job. Whilst social distinctions within working-class neighbourhoods may, historically, have been constructed around differences in occupation or income (Watt, 2006), this was not evident in any of the case study areas.

What also emerged strongly from the interviews, as Edge and Rogers (2005) and Canvin *et al* (2009) have also found, was the importance that individuals gave to being active in addressing or improving their situation through education, training or paid work. Sometimes this was manifested in a sense of achievement:

> *Well I've achieved a lot in my life, I went from operator to supervisor and then I was [an officer bearer in an important local representative body] for a couple of years, that's quite reasonable you know.*

> (Lloyd, 65+, Amlwch)

In other cases, the importance of their own agency was crucial, even if the outcomes of their own efforts were uncertain:

> *I need to work for myself, and the money and the kids…just for a bit of respect for myself…I think if you're working you feel better about yourself, definitely…I don't know, I can give it a try, that's all I can do, if it gets too much then I'll put my hands up…but I'll respect myself more for the fact that I've tried it.*

> (Olive, 35-44, Oxgangs)

Although further research would be required to establish this point, it may be the case that, as relative pay levels for manual and unskilled workers have declined, the non-material and intrinsic benefits of work become more strongly emphasised as forms of compensation in the absence of greater financial rewards. However, for some individuals we interviewed, work could also be 'soul destroying' and it could also generate a sense of anxiety and insecurity.

Training, rather than achievements in the formal education system, also emerged as an important factor for some of the respondents Nigel (30-34) from West Kensington, for example, not only learnt a trade but gained sense of self worth, he felt that he was able to make a positive contribution to society. Nigel's words highlight the sense of progress and wider obligations to society that characterise the value frameworks within which individuals assess their self-esteem. When asked what he was most proud of he explained:

> *Going to college and learning a trade I know I'm all right because I done it for five years when I lived in Somerset as a labourer. I know how the mixes are and I got half my tools of what I need for plastering so I'm quite happy with that…it makes me feel I'm doing something, I'm gonna put something back into the community, I'm paying my tax and insurance.*

A final but important observation is that some accounts conveyed the way in which the benefits of work could be experienced *in spite of* otherwise onerous terms and conditions. This was evident in the case of Barbara (45-64) from Hillside, who had experienced a significant pay-cut when made redundant from a full-time cleaning job that included generous overtime. She had only managed to find part-time cleaning work with another company since then and these hours had been further reduced because of the recession. Her husband had also been made redundant recently following a number of years in skilled manual work and they consequently found it difficult to manage financially. Despite the low wages and insecurity associated with her present job, Barbara she still reflected:

> *Well with working in [in my previous cleaning job] I was up at quarter to 5 every morning to be in for 6 so I've always, even before then, in the schools and that when I worked, I've always been a morning person, up and out and that's what I like about me job, I get up and go out and go in in a morning, plus the people I work with are nice, that helps.*

Barbara clearly enjoyed the social contact that work brought despite the lack of financial rewards or security it gave her, indicating that low-skilled, low-paid work can deliver valued benefits, even when insecure. Whilst several accounts corroborated the negative portrayals of work in previous academic research (Charlesworth, 2000; Smith, 2005), others showed clearly how it could also confer a number of valued benefits. Although some respondents experienced financial gains in moving into work or, in a minority of cases, good incomes, the benefits were identified in largely non-financial terms. Our findings suggest that pejorative labels that are often used for more menial work, such as 'poor work' (McDowell, 2003), 'donkey work' (Warhurst and Thompson, 1998) or 'junk jobs' (Lash, 1994) fail to capture some of the value attached to work at the lower end of the labour market. Whilst is certainly the case that such forms of employment can involve low pay, long or unsocial hours and pervasive insecurity, it is also evident that these jobs can still generate esteem, often involve undertaking essential tasks for the benefit of others and can provide the basis on which dignified working identities can be constructed.

The experiences recounted in the research therefore echo other findings about the capacity of low-paid work to deliver valued benefits (Shildrick *et al,* 2010; Ray *et al* 2010). At times, this takes on a gendered dimension, with women placing importance on the opportunity to take on additional responsibilities beyond domestic identities that are sometimes experienced as restrictive, unfulfilling and monotonous.

Voluntary and Community Work

Several research participants were, as Orr *et al*, (2006) also found, able to generate self-esteem through voluntary work, community activism and sports:

> *I do voluntary work and I've always been some kind of activist…I do quite a lot of talking about being HIV positive and I do quite a lot of public speaking about it and I also work with pressure groups and stuff like that to try and get recognition for my situation…I play pool [to a high standard] and play pool locally and I'm quite big on the game. I just live it, so I do things, other things with my time as opposed to sitting and brooding about the fact that I'm not very well.*

> (Martha, 35-44, Wensley Fold)

As the previous chapter showed, those without paid employment were often subject to critique and condemnation by the research participants. This sometimes prompted those without work to seek to legitimise their status with reference to the 'deservingness' of their entitlement to benefits. It was also notable, however, that some residents across the six areas engaged in activities outside the labour market including caring, and seemed less prone to these processes of disassociation. These activities were often seen as a source of meaning and identity and, perhaps significantly, often presented as socially valuable in terms of benefiting other household members or, more broadly, the community as a whole.

Volunteering seemed to provide a sense of purpose as well as a way of fulfilling broader responsibilities. Ahmed (45-64), a Sudanese refugee in West Kensington who cared for his sick mother, for example, explained the benefits derived from his volunteer positions with a local hospital and charity:

> *I am full time carer but in order to feed myself as a human and provide something to my society I am not living just for my mother, I have two days per week to four days, one day I go to Chelsea and Westminster and work as volunteer there in the Macmillan Centre... Cancer centre yes, and I work also as volunteer in my culture in the church, if the church needs anything. In any occasion related to the church the bishop will call me in order to come and serve in this occasion because I am professional at take photo. I feel that I am providing something to my society, I'm not completely isolated.*

These volunteer activities clearly provided Ahmed with valued social contact whilst also instilling him with a sense of purpose and of making a wider contribution to society. There were other cases across the neighbourhoods showing how a high degree of meaning and satisfaction can be derived from such unpaid activities such as volunteering for a drug misuse support agency or volunteering at a local community centre. Such activities can enable individuals not in paid employment to construct identities that confer respect. They perhaps had less of a sense of stigma about being out of work because they felt they were engaged in socially valuable activity. The information in interviews did not include evidence on how respondents viewed the unpaid activities of others around them. It was not possible to comment, therefore, on whether engagement in unpaid work was seen more generally to 'exempt' individuals from the sort of critique subjected at those deemed to be undeserving of the benefits they claim.

These kinds of activities can provide important sources of esteem, identity and social contact for men and women, particularly when compared with the potential benefits of paid work. They can confer a rich source of satisfaction for those individuals directly involved. This challenges policy assertions about the primacy of *paid* work

as a form of social inclusion (for a further critique of this position see Levitas, 2005). Moreover, this indicates that worklessness is not always detrimental to health and well-being in the way that much of the policy and academic literature suggests (Jahoda, 1981; Marsden, 1982; DWP, 2008). This is not to deny the potentially corrosive effect of being out of work on individuals, but simply to highlight the potential for alternative activities to provide meaningful and valued activity in its absence.

Family Responsibilities

For many participants, their children and their role as parents, or grandparents, were a source of considerable pride and self-esteem, particularly when linked to achievements in education or a sense of progress that they had made. Several indicated that their role as parents, and the agency and commitment that this required, was their primary source of identity and focus:

> *My children: that's my job, that's my career. Everything else helps me fulfil that.*

> (Daphne, 45-64, Oxgangs)

Some participants explicitly related the achievements of their children and grandchildren in terms of resilience shown in a context of financial adversity:

> *Me grandchildren they're very good and they've done really well in life so I'm pleased, even though we're in a deprived area, I'm really proud of what they've achieved.*

> (Pearl, 65+, Hillside)

This group included full-time mothers who asserted the importance of their parenting responsibilities. Various combinations of moral, economic and cultural factors enabled these women to legitimise their non-working status. They were able to draw on positive identities that were not always available to others claiming benefits. Caring for other family members was also cited as a form of valued activity. Arthur from Wensley Fold (see Chapter 7), described how he supported his wife who had a number of health conditions. He emphasised how 'busy' he was, underlining the vocation-like quality of caring for his wife and carrying out domestic chores. It implicitly conferred legitimacy to this activity. There were a range of similar experiences among the respondents that illustrated how work undertaken outside the labour market could provide both self-esteem and a sense of purpose comparable, or even superior, to the satisfactions to be gained from paid employment.

Other sources of self-esteem included accessing, buying or owning a property, as this was linked to both a sense of having achieved something independently and providing the opportunity to leave a financial legacy for one's children:

> *When we paid our mortgage off we went to see a lawyer and we actually signed our house over to our son and daughter and it gave me great satisfaction cos I felt 'well if I've got nothing else to give you you've got that' and it gave me great pleasure in doing that.*

> (Norma, 45-64, Oxgangs)

The interviews revealed how paid work was an important source of esteem, but it also underlined the value placed on non-material factors, including family, social

networks religious and community activities, in generating self-esteem. Many participants highlighted how esteem could be generated or maintained through a sense of agency and responding to challenges. It should be borne in mind that the positive responses presented above may partly be a result of individuals seeking to rationalise very challenging circumstances and responding to the specific interview questions about esteem. It is also important to note that some of the drivers of self-esteem, including parenting, training and education, housing and volunteering still have a material base in that they are, in part, dependent upon some access to financial resources.

8.4   Independence, Self-reliance and Self-criticism

The emphasis on the centrality of agency and effort was linked to two themes that were prominent in most interviews: the need to be independent, and the self-responsibility required to accept and address individuals' circumstances. This echoes the findings of other research, such as Skeggs and Wood (2009), Orr *et al* (2006), and Pahl *et al* (2007). There was a pride attached to not being dependent or reliant on others, including friends, family and the government:

> *Being independent; I'd love to just do everything by myself without getting any support from anybody because sometimes it's like somebody's feeling sorry for you, that's why you are getting that support. I don't normally want that, I just want to do it on my own, don't need anybody's help.*

(Saima, 16-24, Wensley Fold)

This strain of individualism was evident in various guises in many of the interviews: at times expressed as a form of privatism ('keeping myself to myself'), at times as an aversion to the merest hint of dependency (on the state, on others) and at times in taking due credit for a personal or family achievement. It was also present in the rather nuanced and guarded perceptions of friendliness and neighbourliness shown in the previous chapter. Any sense of collective hopes, experiences and struggles was often confined to the narratives of loss rather than as part of contemporary life in these areas.

Contrary to the feelings of resentment and inadequacy found in other studies, some respondents appeared to be accepting of their circumstances. Crucially this also limited the extent to which they subjected themselves to a negative self-critique. As Creegan *et al* (2009), Skeggs (1994), Dolan (2007) and Orton (2009) have also found, other research participants believed that their circumstances were caused by their own decisions and actions and that the responsibility for addressing their problems lay with themselves:

> *Things have to be dealt with so live with it. I chose my path and that's that. You occasionally think 'oh god I wish I'd done that' but tough now pal, you're forty now, get on with it.*

(Betty, 35-44, Oxgangs)

This was often related to individuals being self-critical and perceiving their own weaknesses and inadequacies as the primary cause of their present situation, while others referred to their lack of financial skills. These self-critiques were located within a widespread narrative that the solutions to coping with lower incomes were essentially individualistic and that the agency of individuals could still determine their own outcomes:

Problems in life, you don't back away from them, you try and face your problems, the fear inside you've just got to face. I think whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger so I've just got to keep going…it's all down to the individual, some people want everything and you can't have everything in life, you've just got to take it in your stride.

(Faizal, 16-24, Wensley Fold)

Many participants referred to their avoidance of relying on credit, even for temporary periods, to get by. Sometimes this was due to bitter personal experience, sometimes due to the fate of friends or family members who had done so. But the barriers to accessing credit were not seen as the responsibility of financial institutions (even though that is often the case), but rather through individuals' self assessment of their own likely behaviour. Though Bauman (1998) describes 'flawed consumers', it was these individuals' internalised sense of self-failure to budget that precluded them as perceiving credit as something suitable for themselves.

In the interviews, it was not the primary limitation of a reasonable disposable income that was identified as the problem. Rather, this income was perceived as providing the potential to be stretched to new possibilities if only the household economy could be managed more effectively. The absence of a comparative framing of their low incomes as being the central or defining feature of their financial situation also resulted in individuals defining a series of activities and goods as 'luxuries' that may be gone without or are indulged as guilty, frivolous or ostentatious non-necessities (as also found by Hooper *et al*, 2007).

It sounds mad doesn't it but what I try to do is stock up so at least one week in the month I don't have a huge shopping bill or bills that week...and that week I have little luxuries like bath oils, it's going to sound stupid isn't it?

(Kelley, 45-64, Hillside)

Joanne's observation below includes an apologetic framing of the budgeting required to purchase an everyday item. In this conceptualisation, a range of common purchases and events that are central to social interaction and family connection are viewed as demonstrating periodic breaches in the self-restraint or discipline required in budgeting:

I spend probably more than I earn. Mostly shopping, food shopping, clothes for her [a daughter] occasionally, this time [of year] Christmas presents, a night out. I sometimes go for a meal at my mum's, or Chinese or something.

(Joanne, 16-24, Oxgangs)

Purchasing take-away food or going for a night out become viewed as wasteful. This tension evident between individuals' social and familial obligations and their limited budgets becomes internalised in a process that creates guilt around 'extravagant' expenditure that actually would be widely viewed as a legitimate and indeed necessary. Individuals' perceived personal inadequacies to budget effectively were often linked to a wider internalisation of their personal circumstances and 'choices' over the life course and a further self-critique of their own failings. The need for self-discipline represents a technology of the self in which individuals subject themselves to constant surveillance and self-critique. This was also based, particularly among female participants, on a need to undertake domestic labour (Skeggs and Wood, 2009) that demanded a permanent rigour against laziness and inactivity, as Olive noted:

Some of the mothers who put their kids in say 'I go home and I sit with my feet up and I watch the telly and have a cup of coffee' but I just feel so guilty doing that because I know that I should make the most of the opportunity and crack on.

(Olive, 35-44, Oxgangs)

The interviews revealed the importance of self-reliance and independence to individuals' sense of esteem and respect. Some individuals were not overly critical of themselves or resentful of others, whilst others did locate their circumstances within a framework of self-criticism and being inadequate in relation to managing money or domestic tasks. This criticism was based on individualistic notions of being able to rectify situations, in which individuals' responsibility, capacity and obligation to manage modest resources efficiently were paramount. Crucially, as writers such as Bourdieu (1984), Skeggs (1994) and Frost and Hoggett (2008) have argued in such processes, social and structural issues become replaced by the internalisation by deprived individuals of personal critique and crisis as an explanation for their circumstances, with physical or verbal abuse directed at the self as well as others (Creegan *et al*, 2009).

8.5   Perspectives on Comparative Poverty

In order to understand the extent to which individuals deployed a comparative framework to assess their own circumstances, they were asked a series of questions. These included whether they compared themselves to other people (including their neighbours and their friends and family) and what indicators, symbols or markers they would use to make this comparison. We also asked whether individuals made comparisons between their current circumstances and previous periods of their lives.

We found some evidence to support Knies *et al's* (2007) previous findings that conceptualisations of relative deprivation may overstate their importance in individual's assessment of their own and other's circumstances. Some interviewees reported that they did not view their circumstances in comparative terms or in a relational framework to others and indeed suggested that such judgements would represent an intrusion on others' privacy. Other interviewees stated that they did not compare themselves to others, but rather used a personal comparison with their own previous situation:

No, because I've no time to do it [compare oneself to others], no not really. I suppose when things are bad you always think 'how come if I'd done this, if I'd done that'.

(Daphne, 45-64, Oxgangs)

Other individuals suggested that, even If they were minded to do so, it was not possible to determine how their incomes compared to their neighbours or to assess the financial situation of those living in the same area. Some individuals assessed their immediate neighbours as being in similar financial circumstances:

Well more or less I think we're all in the same boat, people haven't got the money nowadays. One time you used to see a lot of them getting taxis from the shop, going to Huyton village, I don't see that as much.

(Winnie, 45-64, Hillside)

Others believed that there were differences in the circumstances of residents in their neighbourhoods, based on physical and visible signifiers such as household goods and whether they were home owners. Even where participants did perceive material differences between themselves and their neighbours, this did not necessarily manifest itself as a comparative sense of less worth or relative inadequacy:

> *… they're not better than me, I'm on the same level, there's a lot of people like me' so it doesn't make me an outcast sort of thing.*

> (Marie, 35-44, Hillside)

Many residents did not know, or want to know, the financial situation of their neighbours, and it was also recognised that possible signifiers of wealth could be misleading or that material wealth did not necessarily equate to wellbeing (Flint and Batty, 2010). Some individuals compared themselves to other members of their family or their friends, but again, there feelings towards more wealthy relatives were complex and ambiguous:

> *That issue doesn't really bother me. I'm probably the least educated from my family. My cousin is a head teacher in Blackburn, I've got another cousin who's a head, he's a psychiatrist, head of a department and a brother who's got a computer business and another one's a planner, so they're far more educated than me and financially better off…I'm very content with my life in that respect because I compare myself to people who are worse off.*

> (Sajid, 30-34, Wensley Fold)

Many participants, as in the study by Creegan *et al* (2009) and those reviewed by Ridge (2009) did not define themselves as being on low incomes and compared themselves to those who were less, rather than better, off than they were. In these accounts a clear marker was used to distinguish between individuals' own circumstances and what they termed destitution or extreme poverty.

The research participants were, as Burchardt (2004) found, much more likely to compare their present circumstances with previous situations in their lives:

> *I see the past. My thinking mentality, the way I think, look at previous experiences I've had and reflect back on things that are happening now, seeing how to improve it, how much I have improved, whether I have or not.*

> (Sabah, 16-24, Wensley Fold)

For some individuals, their present situation represented considerable progress from earlier periods of their lives, both in terms of relationships, personal happiness and financial security:

> *We're not as worried as people who've normally got more money that I think that have really lost out…I suppose we think we're in a better position at the moment, we don't have jobs to lose.*

> (Shirley, 45-64, Oxgangs)

However, for others, their lives had been significantly and negatively affected by a worsening financial situation, which was a cause of considerable regret and anxiety. Previous financial circumstances were reflected upon by several participants, in some cases in a judgemental manner or with regret that money had been squandered in some way.

It does, it makes me feel down a little bit thinking that gosh you know, a waste that I did with the money when I should have saved it and maybe had a bit more.

(Christina, 30-34, West Kensington)

Reflecting the complexity and ambiguity of these issues, the following account by Mel indicates the ability of individuals to adapt to their present circumstances and reinforce the point that income status is only one element of how individuals' view and assess their situation:

I'd think 'oh my god' because I've been brought up on the bit nicer things I couldn't go and buy Tesco basic brand…it's hard but I've learnt now there are some things that just don't taste any different…its whatever we can afford and it doesn't make any difference. Juice is juice but…obviously I'd love to have the luxury items that they used to have but I've got me independence, I've got my family, I'm happy. I'm not bothered about sacrificing what I used to have.

(Mel, 16-24, West Marsh)

It is important to state here that the narratives of self-reliance, independence and agency in managing on a low income identified above were, as the previous work of Parker and Pharoah with Hale (2008), Nayak (2006), Tilly (1998) and Goffman (1968) demonstrate, very strongly linked, in all six neighbourhoods, to judgements about the fecklessness on the part of others, as discussed in Chapter 7.

The evidence from these interviews supports the findings of previous research studies that individuals, contrary to 'underclass' assumptions, are engaged in the rational management of their households and undertake a series of strategies to 'make do' and 'get by' in an attempt to emulate wider societal norms of employment and self-sufficiency. What is also evident is that Bourdieu (1984: 156) is correct to identify how social crisis and critique is interpreted as personal critique and crisis, illustrated in these individuals often perceiving themselves to be inefficient and inadequate in their domestic economy, particularly in relation to budgeting and the occasional consumption of 'luxuries'.

However, the findings also suggest that the relationship between low-income and personal self-esteem is more complex and ambiguous than some previous studies have suggested. The way out of deprivation is by improving one's competence at budget management, so their domestic economy is imbued with a sense of striving towards further achievement and possible futures within their individual life projects. In addition, these actions in themselves can also be a source of self-esteem and bring a sense of achievement through 'small victories' for individuals. On the other hand, there are also times when the implacability of a low income, particularly in relation to children, penetrates these understandings and brings a sense of relative deprivation and social unfairness into sharper focus (see Hooper *et al*, 2007).

Domestic economy on a low income has a complex and non-linear relationship with self-esteem and social stigmatisation. This is partly because these individuals do not constitute their lives in a simple comparative context with more affluent groups in society. Rather, they frame their behaviour and life outcomes within their personal and family histories (especially where extended family members continue to live nearby) and the conduct of their neighbours and, at times, gain a sense of achievement and self-development in managing, if not overcoming, their immediate circumstances. They are engaged in strategies of living, and these are not

understood as 'coping' strategies as they are often presented in comparative poverty research, but rather as ordinary, mundane and unremarkable actions.

The research found that the impacts of neighbourhood on self-esteem and perceptions of comparative poverty were limited. Living in a neighbourhood was not viewed as a particularly strong driver of self-esteem, although neighbourhoods were important for individuals' ontological security and this could be severely affected by crime and anti-social behaviour. For some individuals, distinctions based upon length of residence or nationality were important to their self-identity (and the views of others). This was the flip side of the social differences discussed in Chapter 7.

8.6   Conclusion

The experiences and perceptions of the research participants indicate the different scales of poverty that households were confronting. It is clear that living on a lower income was a source of stress and health problems such as depression. It is also the case that a lower or fluctuating income or financial status could create ontological insecurity and a constant sense of unease. However, the findings also suggest that some individuals do not view their financial circumstances as something that they reflect upon or locate within a judgemental framework of critique.

This research also highlights the importance of non-material factors in generating self-esteem and a sense of individual happiness and wellbeing. Work was a significant source of self-esteem, but this was seldom related entirely or even primarily to enhanced income. Rather it was other benefits, such as independence, socialising and mental stimulation and a sense of purpose, that were most valued. These findings suggest that studies of the effects of poverty and low income need to relate financial circumstances more closely to other non-material drivers of self-esteem and self-assessment and to recognise that, for some individuals, their happiness and wellbeing is largely determined by other factors, whether expressed as an 'adaptive mechanism' or not. Family responsibilities were the most notable and significant element in most individual's sense of achievement. Conversely, it was often concerns about providing adequately for children and other family members that could be the source of the greatest self doubt and concern.

Volunteering, community activism, participation in sports, arts and other community groups and socialising were also drivers of a sense of esteem and value, particularly in terms of making a wider contribution to society. Further sources of esteem were (children's) achievements in education or accessing a desired home. Some of these responses may represent the rationalisation of their circumstances in a research interview context, but they do indicate that positive drivers of self-esteem are clearly evident.

Individuals internalised a personal and self-critical explanation for their circumstances, based on a sense of not being 'clever' or resourceful enough or having made the wrong choices. In such processes, structural explanations were negated in favour or self-critique and the perceived ability to determine one's own outcomes. However, this focus on agency also generated the perceived possibility of a future improvement in individual's circumstances and prospects.

Individuals often viewed their circumstances and actions as mundane and taken for granted, as 'what has to be done' and this means that they do not necessarily view their lives as 'problematic' but rather within a membership of 'ordinary hard working families'. Individuals did not, generally, compare themselves to their neighbours or wider society.   Rather they compared themselves to family members or, more regularly, to previous periods in their own lives. Comparative reflections about

relative poverty were internalised to personal biographies rather than focused outwards to the circumstances of others. However the 'good luck to them' (rather than resentful) attitudes to those on higher incomes contrasted with hostility to those deemed not to have lived up to expectations of independence and self-reliance.

The research has highlighted the implications of individualistic notions of poverty and citizenship being framed purely in terms of economic or employment status. There is a need to recognise the centrality of non-material aspects of their lives (not least their family relations) in generating a sense of well-being for individuals. The findings support previous evidence about significant levels of self-critique and self-blame amongst individuals, who would often conceptualise their circumstances as arising from their own inadequacies and deficiencies, including their financial and domestic management skills and their intelligence. These narratives of self-critique were located within a wider culture of individual responsibility, whereby the causes of poverty were given less emphasis than the responses to this poverty. In this understanding, individuals were required to accept and face up to challenges and to adapt to lower incomes. Indeed, individuals' abilities to economise and to be adaptive and creative in order to manage on a low income were a source both of self-esteem and opportunity and a main criterion in the judgement of self and others.

The research suggests that some of the assumptions about the relationship between poverty, stigma and self-esteem need to be rethought. Individual responses to living on low incomes vary widely and there is often a continual striving to work upon oneself arising from the sense that a more effective domestic economy *is* actually achievable. There is a sense of self-esteem and self-worth as well as self-critique evident in these strategies. Family history was a more potent reference point than comparisons with contemporary wider society in shaping individuals' assessments of their own circumstances. Individuals' life histories also provided a more prominent and powerful lens, a set of values and comparative frame of reference through which they reflect upon their contemporary circumstances than the influence or adoption of the perceived values of other groups in society. Three of these biographies are the focus of the following chapter, as a way of illustrating through personal experiences some of the disparate themes that have been considered in the analysis of the research material in this chapter and the previous four chapters.

9. Selected Biographies

9.1 Introduction

This chapter presents biographical accounts of three of the participants in the research: Stan, from Oxgangs; Geraldine, from West Marsh; and Graham, from Amlwch. Further (and fuller) accounts are provided in one of the research papers (Green and Hickman, 2010), and, in addition, more focused personal accounts are interspersed throughout this report to illuminate specific experiences.

These biographies provide a counterpoint to some of the analysis elsewhere in this report, by providing a more developed account of individuals' lives, rather than according to themes and issues. The biographies provide an account of changes and continuities in circumstances over time. Stan, Geraldine and Graham were interviewed in all three waves of the research and it was considered that their stories would help to shed light on the relationship between (experiences of) poverty and place.

9.2 Stan's Story

Stan is in his mid-40s and has lived in Oxgangs for around 20 years. He initially lived in Oxgangs' high rise flats, moving out shortly before their demolition in 2003. He is married and has two children, both of whom left home about five years ago. When asked, he described his ethnicity as 'White Scottish'. He now lives in a two-bedroom flat rented from Edinburgh City Council. Stan does not currently work, nor has he done so for approximately ten years. He cares for his wife, Paula, who has a disability, and he receives a carer's allowance and income support. During his time in Oxgangs he has experienced poor housing conditions and some difficult times, financially and emotionally. In addition to his wife's illness, Stan himself has experienced poor health. He has a close association with Oxgangs as a place and often takes part in community activities.

Turning Points

In conversation, Stan identified a number of key turning points in his life. Before moving to Oxgangs, Stan and Paula lived in a small Scottish town, and moved to Edinburgh after their children were born. This was motivated by the need to move to an area where there was a better chance of finding paid employment. In order to move, they separated for a short period to give Paula a better chance of securing a council house in Edinburgh, as she was able to gain homeless status. Stan admits that they 'played the system' to secure affordable housing, but felt there was no other choice at the time.

While this strategy eventually resulted in their housing needs being met, Stan found permanent employment in Edinburgh hard to come by. An offer of a catering job in

Southern England came up, and the family moved there and stayed with relatives. Stan worked as a trainee chef in a restaurant. However, it was low paid work, long hours and he added to his income by doing extra hours cleaning at the same place. At one point, he took a second job in a local pub. Eventually, this became too much for Stan. The long hours had a detrimental effect on family life and had an impact on his health. After six months, Stan and his family then returned to Edinburgh and rented a Council flat on an upper floor of one of Oxgangs' three high-rise tower blocks.

Eleven years ago, Stan's wife was diagnosed with an illness that restricted her mobility. Since then Stan has taken on the role as her carer full-time, a role which has become an important part of his identity. He does it very willingly and provides a great deal of support to Paula. He has accepted that he is unlikely to be in regular employment ever again, and that this means their household income is unlikely to increase. Stan himself has also suffered with poor health. A heart attack and ongoing cardio-vascular disease forced him to re-evaluate his way of life.

One of the major events of Stan's life was his experiences of living in the high-rise flats in Oxgangs. This proved to be a very difficult time for the family. Stan was out of work; he and Paula were suffering poor health and the children were young and required a lot of care. It was a difficult start to the tenancy:

> *We were seen as the outsiders coming in with two scraggy wee bairns and no very much else, pretty much that was what we had. (Wave 3)*

It was also a difficult place to bring up children. Stan believed that tenants with younger children should not have been allocated above the first three floors under council rules, but at the time a flat on a upper floor was all that was available and they were in need of immediate housing. His two children were both very young, and living in the flats presented practical challenges:

> *I can'nae keep my eye on them, … so you're stuck with playing on the landing and realistically unless we actually all went somewhere to do something pretty much that was their life till they were eight or nine year old [and were] a wee bit more independent. (Wave 3)*

Social problems were also prevalent in the high-flats at that time. Stan knew that there were tenants with substance misuse and alcohol problems living in nearby flats. At one point, after about six years living there, Stan's wife and children moved out of the flats for about three months to escape antisocial behaviour from some neighbours. Stan remained there to ensure that it was not broken into or vandalised. After three months, the troublesome tenants moved out and Paula and the children returned to the flat.

Physical conditions in the high-rise flats also had a negative impact on Stan and his family. Dampness, lack of effective heating, draughty windows and poor noise insulation had been evident in the high-rise flats since they were constructed in the 1960s, and had never been adequately solved. These conditions prompted Stan and other residents to make a collective (formal) request to Edinburgh City Council for them to refurbish the flats, and he became very involved in compiling evidence about the poor state of many of the properties. This collective effort led to the eventual decision by Edinburgh City Council in 2003 to demolish the flats and redevelop the site.

Despite the personal benefits that Stan derived from this 'campaigning' role, the move into the high-rise flats in Oxgangs had been detrimental. At the time of their application for housing, the family were desperate to find accommodation. Their circumstances were such that they had very few choices. Although, in the end, Stan and his wife have become settled in Oxgangs, he accepted that their initial move to Oxgangs was highly detrimental to their well-being. However, Stan believed that this was largely to do with the physical condition of the high flats and problems associated with crime and antisocial behaviour within the flats, rather than a reflection of Oxgangs as a neighbourhood.

Stan is very proud to have been involved in this collective action. Being involved helped to raise his self-esteem and, for a period gave him a focus and a 'cause' that was motivating. However, he did not anticipate that the tower blocks would be demolished and the site redeveloped as a mixed tenure development, nor that it would then be owned and managed by a housing association, rather than Edinburgh City Council.

Individually, Stan and his family were granted a transfer request from the flats before the demolition decision was made and were allocated a two-bedroom flat within one of the four storey blocks in Oxgangs. While the flat was in need of some refurbishment, it was structurally sound and was far more suitable for the family than where they had previously lived. In 2009, the flat was refurbished with a new kitchen and bathroom as part of a city-wide upgrade of council housing. Since moving, a great deal of stress has been removed from Stan and Paula's life. They no longer have to experience anti-social behaviour problems from neighbours, the flat is more suited to Paula's disability and it has adequate thermal comfort. They do not plan moving again in the foreseeable future.

Finances

Stan and his family derive virtually all of their income from state welfare benefits - Income Support, a carer's allowance and Housing Benefit. Stan lives within the means of this income quite successfully. There were periods of Stan's life, particularly when his children were younger, when he needed more money and sought to find work. On at least two occasions this involved moving from town to town. At present, and for the foreseeable future, Stan and his wife do get by on their modest income, though at times they have to make sacrifices, and if they are 'short' they have to find ways to earn a little extra money. While he cannot afford holidays abroad or expensive goods, he does manage to cover his basic living costs and have a little extra left over for socialising – occasional nights at the pub with friends.

There have been occasions when Stan has resorted to using expensive credit; but he is realistic about the cost of purchasing goods this way, and pragmatic enough to recognise that the choice he has is either to buy necessities this way or go without:

> *… there's a company down there where basically you can have what you want and you just pay it off every week. So basically I needed a cooker, I needed a fridge so I went and got one, simple as that. We pay for it every week. It's a fact of life isn't it, that's what everybody does. ... you end up paying almost twice the price of the actual item that you're buying but you're getting it when you need it. (Wave 1)*

Stan seemed to place little value on how much money he had in relation to other people. When asked how his circumstances compared to that of other residents

living in Oxgangs, he made comparators relating to 'lifestyles' (such as similar daily routines) and 'outlooks' ('like-minded' neighbours), and directly opposed the notion that material wealth could indicate differences or similarities between people. Stan also did not believe that others would view him in terms of his material wealth and work status:

> *I never really gave that a thought, what other people think about our [income]. It's never entered my mind, and it doesn't enter my mind how other people get their money. Do your own thing, get what you can. At the end of the day that's what everybody does in different ways (Wave 2)*

Stan's attitude to managing on a relatively low income was less anxious than that of many other participants, partly because he acknowledged that he could make some extra money if he chose to. He occasionally undertook some cash-in-hand work, such as minor repairs to motorcars, and occasionally tried to buy and sell goods at a profit. Stan was also prepared to 'shop around' for bargains.

Place / Neighbourhood

Stan has developed a close affinity with Oxgangs. He has many friends and acquaintances locally, and regularly gets involved in events and activities happening locally. He regularly uses the local shops, the library and the community centre.

While he regards Oxgangs as a pleasant place to live (especially since his housing conditions have improved), he does recognise that there are some problems. He is aware that other members of the community feel that social problems, such as drug and alcohol misuse, vandalism and anti-social-behaviour, have increased recently in Oxgangs. However, he reads the situation very differently. First, he does not accept that Oxgangs is any better or worse than elsewhere in Edinburgh. Second, he believes that the problems in Oxgangs, particularly anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse, are no worse that they were in the past. He thinks instead that they have become more visible (to more people) since the dispersal of tenants from the high-flats throughout Oxgangs.

> *We had [problematic residents] when we had the flats, we just did'nae see it as much because it's like a street in the sky. … Now you can actually see what's happening. (Wave 1)*

While Stan identifies very much as being a 'local', he admits that it took twenty years to be considered as such. His family were viewed as 'outsiders' for a long time when they first arrived. His involvement with the local residents' group campaigning for the improvement of the high-rise flats, and his involvement in various local events and activities, both helped to cement his 'local' status. He regards Oxgangs as a place that most people want to settle in:

It's a very popular place to live because basically it's a close knit community. Everybody seems to know everybody else. I know a couple of streets up the road, they've got like a granny there, a daughter there, the other daughter's over there and the son's in the street behind that and Oxgangs is really like that. If you come to here you really want to stay here, although we were outsiders coming in when we first came in. It's took twenty years to be accepted as part of the community.

Commentary

Stan's biography touches on a number of issues that are explored elsewhere in this report. Stan has, at times, moved about Britain to find employment, particularly when his family required more income than welfare benefits provided. This pattern of residential mobility was relatively unusual among the sample as a whole, and it lasted for a temporary period, until he decided his family was 'settled'. Stan and his family saw a dramatic improvement to their quality of life when they moved from poor housing conditions to a more suitable home. This was, in part, tied into what was widely perceived as the successful regeneration of Oxgangs following the demolition of the high-rise flats, even though Stan himself was initially opposed to this.

Over the past 20 years, Stan's income has fluctuated as he has been in and out of employment. While his income is currently derived mainly from welfare benefits, and is lower than in previous times, he has found it easier to adjust once his children grew up, so he considers that he is 'getting by' more effectively than in the past (at times of higher income). He has also developed a sense of self-esteem around his dedication and fortitude as a full-time carer for his wife. Stan plays an active part in community life in Oxgangs, and this has also been important to his self-esteem as well as helping him become accepted as a 'local' man. It has reinforced his strength of attachment to the neighbourhood and the social networks within it.

9.3   Geraldine's Story

Geraldine is in her late thirties and lives with her two (school age) children, Crystal and Maxwell, in a small privately rented terraced house in West Marsh. She moved into this property in 2006. Divorced more than five years ago, Geraldine is a single parent with her ex-husband playing a relatively small role in the lives of her children. She describes herself as 'White British'. Geraldine grew up in Cleethorpes and has always lived in the area. She has family member living close-by, as does her partner, Barry. She does not live with Barry, mainly due to the loss of welfare benefits that would, in her estimation, not be compensated by Barry who, like Geraldine, has a relatively low income.

Geraldine talked about her divorce as a key turning point in her life, which (she felt) had changed both her outlook on life and her personality. Because of the divorce, Geraldine moved to the West Marsh neighbourhood in 2003, having previously lived in a small village on the edge of Grimsby. She had been reluctant to move to West Marsh, as she was unhappy about exchanging a large semi detached house in a *"more up-market area"* for a small terraced house in a less 'desirable' area, a move which initially had left her *"devastated"* because she was a *"snob"*.

On divorcing my partner I moved from [previous home]. … an allegedly more up-market area. The move here was quite, what I thought would be a big change but it's not as different as I thought it would be … I think from a totally personal point of view I left semi detached three bedroomed house… and moved into a rented two bedroomed terraced house. And yeah, being a snob, I was devastated. (Wave 1)

Work

Geraldine has had a range of low paid jobs since leaving school. After the birth of her first child, all of these jobs have been part time, thereby negating the need for Geraldine and her then husband to rely on formal childcare. Configuring their working lives around looking after their two young children put a strain on the relationship between Geraldine and her ex-partner:

I got a job in [an] office that I used to work nights. So me ex-husband would come in at 5, we'd have tea and I'd go to work at 6 till midnight. Ships that passed in the night yeah and then I got divorced. (Wave 3)

Geraldine left school with relatively few qualifications. Since then she has completed an NVQ at a local college, which she undertook in order to give her the skills (and qualifications) required for her current job. She reported that she really enjoyed the course. She also noted that, unlike most other things in her life, she did it: *"not for anybody else; just for me".* This led to a job in the education sector. At the time of her first interview, she had worked for her employer for four and a half years, although she had done so on a voluntary basis for part of this time. She works 16 hours a week. In December 2009, Geraldine was promoted and now spends more of her time undertaking administrative work.

Geraldine is relatively low paid, even after her promotion, and receives a salary just over the minimum wage rate As a result, she believed, that she was (financially) little better off working than not working - she reported that being employed increased her income by only £1.02 per week. And in her wave three interview, she noted, that because of the numerous 'benefits' (or *"perks"*, as she described them) available to people in her situation, she would be better off if she did not work.

I will say I was better off on the dole than I am working financially. And the perks are unbelievable. Just little things, like Crystal came home from school the other day saying: 'oh mum we can get a free laptop, one for me and one for Maxwell'. And she would love a laptop. This new government incentive to get your kids a laptop. So I rung 'em up. But because I work I'm not entitled. And I'm saying to this bloke: 'but I'm on minimum wage, 16 hours a week'. 'Sorry'. We can't claim free school meals. There's a lot of…. I wouldn't say I'm much better off at all by working but I still would prefer to work. (Wave 3)

So if improving her financial position was not her motivation for working, what were Geraldine's reasons for doing so? After putting herself through college for nearly three years and then eventually securing her post after a number of years of volunteering, her current job made her feel 'better' about herself and gave her a strong sense of achievement. This was proud that she had achieved the job by completing training, while bringing up two children on her own, and without the

support of a husband. She felt that it was important for her to work in order for her to go be a 'good role model' to her children:

> *I think it's important for the kids to realise that nothing comes for nothing. You work for what you have in life because I think some kids find it all too easy and the kids need to know that. (Wave 3)*

Geraldine said she had not considered working full time for two main reasons. First, she did not want to have to resort to using formal childcare for her children, and she enjoyed having more time to be with her children. Second, her reluctance to increase her hours was driven by her concern that financially it would make little sense for her to do so.

> *Because, to be honest, if I work more hours I lose more money. If I go over me 16 hours you lose part of your family credit and that, so it would not be worth me doing any more than 16 unless it was full time…. they offered me 21 hours when I worked and I said no…... best I could possibly be unless I got full time permanent. But even then if I'm still renting house it would not be beneficial for me to get a full time job because I wouldn't get any help with me rent. (Wave one)*

Financial Circumstances and 'Getting By'

Despite being on a relatively low income, Geraldine felt that (financially) she 'got by' and was able to *"manage"* on her income. However, in practice it appeared that sometimes doing so was a real struggle for her. For example, she noted that sometimes she found it difficult to pay her bills and could only afford to pay one at time. She also noted that saving for a planned holiday with Barry was financially *"killing"* her and that she had to *"cut things out"* of her budget so that she could afford to go. In the wave three interview, she noted that it was getting more difficult to afford new clothes for her children.

Geraldine reported that she rarely very went out, and while she was very keen to stress that her kids 'wanted for nothing', it was also clear that her relatively low income did impact on them. They rarely went on holiday or day trips; and she said that they received a lower level of pocket money than their peers.

It appeared that Geraldine was only able to 'get by' for two reasons. First, she led a frugal lifestyle, which involved her making 'sacrifices', and living very much within her means. (She was opposed to the idea of borrowing from a loan company and had never done so.) Second, her family occasionally helped her out. For example, in 2009 she said that Barry had paid for her last holiday and her mother paid for a holiday she took in Florida.

Life in West Marsh

On a number of occasions Geraldine said that she did not like West Marsh as a place to live. Her dissatisfaction with life in the area could be attributed (in part) to the untidiness and 'filthiness' of its streets and the anti-social 'attitudes' and behaviour of some local residents, including drug taking and dealing:

I mean, we'd been away for the weekend and we came home on Sunday. And there was two supermarket trolleys outside my front door: 'mum what are they for?' 'I don't know, they're not mine'. And it's stupid things like the streets are filthy round here. Absolutely filthy. Full of dog muck and rubbish all down the street. And the bins don't get collected as much as they do in better areas. There isn't as much street light as there is in better areas, which really makes me cross because it's unfair. (Wave one)

However, Geraldine thought that West Marsh's social problems were not unique and were likely to be a feature of life in other neighbourhoods. As such, she felt that her life was unlikely to be better elsewhere. Geraldine felt that West Marsh had declined as place to live during the time she had lived there, attributing the decline to the 'irresponsible' behaviour of residents and the increasing number of young mothers (living in the private rented sector) who she felt had inadequate parenting skills.

There were some aspects about life in the area that she liked. For example, she liked the strong sense of the community that existed in the neighbourhood, and she liked her neighbours. She noted that residents on her street, including herself, helped each other out.

She (Geraldine's neighbour) will often say, if I'm going to the shop, she'll watch kids for 10 minutes. And vice versa. And we borrow things off each other. And it's community spirit really. (Wave 2)

The Future

In all three of her interviews, Geraldine was asked about her hopes and plans for the future. In all three she reported that she wanted to move home. Indeed, as she noted in her first interview, she was really keen to do so.

I would move tomorrow, you know, if the opportunity arose I would move. Yeah, I would move tomorrow. I'd move now.

The aspects of West Marsh that she did not like were clearly a 'push' factor, but other factors lay behind her desire to move home. One was her current home: it did not have a garden where the children could play safely. Another factor was her desire to get her eldest child, Crystal, into a better secondary school than the one she currently attended. Finally, Geraldine's desire to move home could also be partly attributed to her unhappiness with being a private rented tenant and her desire to become a home owner. She noted that rent was *"dead money"* and that she would not benefit from equity growth for the improvements she had undertaken to the property when she (eventually) left it.

Despite her desire to move, she was nowhere nearer actually doing so when last interviewed in the summer of 2010. This was because she could not access (or afford) a mortgage or the higher rents that she would have to pay in the area (close to West Marsh) that she wanted to move to.

I've looked for rented accommodation nearer that school (Geraldine's preferred school for Crystal) to see if we could move to get into catchment. But you're looking at probably another £100 a week to rent in that area because it's a nicer area, you see. So there's no way. (Wave 3)

Commentary

Geraldine's story exemplifies some of the financial juggling between the boundaries of work, care and benefit. The value invested in work 'for its own sake' came across clearly as a source of self-esteem, as did her commitment to ensuring her children 'did not suffer' as a result of her modest income. Her story sheds light on the issues of immobility and housing affordability – despite reporting in all three of her interviews that she wanted to move home she has been unable to do so. Geraldine valued the 'community' that existed in the neighbourhood, although for her, it was very much confined to her immediate neighbours. Other than that, she regulated local social contacts and said she wanted to keep 'herself to herself'.

Since being divorced Geraldine has found it difficult to 'make ends meet'. She employed a number of strategies to 'get by' in these circumstances and remained 'optimistic' in spite of the insistent pressure on her budget – a case study of 'endurance', as she kept her own longer term personal goals in sight.

9.4 Graham's Story

Family, Education, Housing and Employment

At the time of his third interview in May 2010, Graham was in his early thirties. He described himself as being 'White-British'. He lives with his partner, Cressida, in an area of the town known as 'Amlwch Port'. They live in a two bedroom terraced property which they rent from a private landlord. Graham was *"born and bred"* in Amlwch and, apart from a two year period when he lived nearby, has always lived in the Amlwch Port. His parents and brother live close by.

Graham was educated in Amlwch and he left the local secondary school with relatively few GCSEs. He said he wished he had worked harder at school and highlighted his failure to do so as something that made him feel less good about himself. After leaving school, he then went to college in Llangefni, a town some twelve miles from Amlwch, where he began a diploma. He dropped out of this course because he *"couldn't cope"* and then took a City and Guilds course, which he successfully completed.

In terms of housing history, Graham left his parents' home when he was in his early twenties and moved into a caravan. He moved into a flat over a shop in Amlwch, and then after a short period living there, moved into his current property (with his partner) in 2006.

Graham has had a number of low paid manual jobs since he left college, most of which have paid at, or around, the minimum wage. Immediately after he left school he worked as a mechanic while at the same time working part-time as a landscape gardener. After leaving these jobs (and after a short period working in a factory in Amlwch) he worked for a number of years for a national public sector agency. He then went to work in another factory in Amlwch and for a company in the west of Anglesey. After these jobs, he then began work as a delivery driver for a local

company, which was his occupation when he was first interviewed in 2008. This was a very demanding job which involved him working very long hours. It was also low-paid. In 2008, Graham received £5.50 an hour. He also had a part-time job, working on Friday and Saturday nights, which earned him £33 per hour 'cash-in hand'. Graham routinely worked more than eighty hours a week and seven days a week. Such long hours put a strain on his relationship with his partner:

> *It was every night arguing … I'd get home she'd be in bed. … And towards the end I felt it's not fair … I felt I had to sort something out here. (Wave 3)*

In 2008, Graham reported that he was financially 'comfortable' (and had no debt) even though he and his partner appeared to lead relatively frugal lifestyles – they very rarely went on holiday or had nights out – and had comparatively few savings. However, it is important to note that they were only able to 'get by' because Graham held down two jobs and worked exceptionally long hours and because the rent they paid to their landlord, of £55, was well below the prevailing market level locally (around £125). The landlord accepted a lower rent from them because he was a friend of the family.

Difficult Times

In 2008, two months after his first interview, Graham signed-off sick at work because he was *"stressed"*, depressed and *"couldn't cope"* anymore. After two months off work he decided to leave the job after his (apparently unsympathetic) employer had given him an ultimatum: *"if you're going to come back, come back now, if not it's over you're not coming back"*.

Graham refused to sign-on; instead he began working part-time and *ad hoc* as a handyman, being paid cash-in-hand and *"off the books"*. However, this work only generated *"pocket money"* for him and his partner and their financial position began to deteriorate. By February 2009, after the company that Graham had started working for in September 2008 had gone bankrupt without paying him his last month's salary, he and his partner had fallen into debt and were "struggling".

> *We were struggling. That's how the debts started when my company went bankrupt. That was a big kick in the teeth…. I was on £1,200-1,300 a month there and when it came to my last pay packet they went bankrupt and I never received it so all the five weeks wages over Christmas and everything, so that knocked me right back … (Wave 2)*

Graham reported that during this period he and his partner found it very difficult to pay their bills and at one point could not do so, and their telephone was disconnected. The couple became increasingly reliant on Cressida's income. This point was acknowledged by Graham who noted that Cressida was primarily responsible for paying-off their debt, which at one point had reached £1,000. Graham's parents had also helped him out financially during his period of indebtedness with small amount of money and purchasing groceries for them.

Graham and Cressida did eventually manage to pay-off most of their debts, but it involved cutting back; they went out less; had downsized their satellite TV package; and a got a smaller car.

A Fresh Start

In April 2009, Graham started work for a local company involved in the leisure industry, which involved travelling extensively across North Wales and Northern England. However, the hours were relatively 'regular' and 'reasonable': typically he began work at 7-8am and finished between 4pm and 6pm. His pay was £6.73 an hour, and Graham was happy with this as it was more than he was paid at his previous (permanent) job, and was above the minimum wage.

Like many of his previous jobs, Graham secured his current position informally, specifically through a 'word of mouth' contact from a friend who lived locally, during a visit to a local pub:

> Well, I was in [a local pub] and a friend of mine works for [the company]. And he just asked one day: 'do you fancy a job?' So I said: 'yeah'. So I went out to see the boss with him on the Friday night. And he said: 'you can start Monday morning, half one in the morning'. I went: 'ok'. 'And we'll see how it goes'. I did a week with him. Everything's fine. And at the end of the week the boss was saying (that there are) all sorts (jobs that need doing). … And I thought: 'he's testing me, see what you can do what you can't do'. And he said to me last week, week before: 'bring your P45 in, you're on the cards'. (Wave two)

Graham highlighted how his new job was much better than his old one for two main reasons. First, it was better paid, which led to an improvement in their financial circumstances. In May 2010, he reported that they were debt free, *"coping"* financially, and had accumulated some savings. He also did not have to do a second job to make ends meet. Second, it was shorter hours, which had a beneficial impact on his physical and mental health and on his relationship with Cressida.

Attitudes, Experiences, Values and Identity

A theme to emerge in all three of Graham's interviews was the importance he attached to work and working. He reported that he enjoyed working and would not be happy to *"sit in the house all day, watching telly"*, and he regarded himself as a *"grafter"*.

Family played a central role in Graham's life, and he saw his parents and his brother on a regular basis. Family members provided him with support in different ways. His parents had loaned him money on occasion, and while he was happy to accept this, he was unequivocal that he would not accept it from his brother.

> I wouldn't ask my brother … probably because he's younger than me. I used to do a lot better for myself so like a pride thing, I think. (Wave two)

Graham also placed a great deal of importance on having friends nearby, and most of his friends lived in Amlwch. Many of them provided him with emotional and practical support, but he was adamant that he would never borrow money from them.

A recurring theme in all three of Graham's interviews was how much he enjoyed life in Amlwch Port, and how proud he was of the neighbourhood and his 'roots' within it. He regarded himself as a 'Port boy'. There were three inextricably linked features of life in the 'Port' that Graham especially valued: it was a relatively safe, crime-free area; it had a 'cohesive', vibrant and supportive local community; and, linked to this, that he was part of this community and, as a consequence, was 'well known'.

Graham said that he knew relatively little about the history of Wales and identified more with Amlwch Port as a geographic, cultural and social entity in itself than as a part of Wales. Nevertheless, he said he was proud to be Welsh, and proud to be a Welsh language speaker. However, he felt that the language should not be used to exclude non-Welsh speakers, and noted that this practice did happen.

The Future

Graham's two principal goals over the next five years were to get married (which he plans to do in 2011) and to buy a property in Amlwch Port. He had a strong desire to remain living in Amlwch Port, and he identified a number of 'holding' factors:

> *My job's in Amlwch so that's keeping me here. My family are here, my mum and dad and my brother's which are round the corner, all my friends are here, Cressida's family are there the next village. (Wave three)*

Commentary

Graham's story exemplifies both the centrality and importance of family, and the value placed on 'hard work' as a response to setbacks. 'Making ends meet' has been a challenge for Graham since he left school and on occasions he has found this very difficult. At one point during the two year period when we were in contact with him he and his partner were unable to pay their bills. He employed a number of strategies to 'get by' in these circumstances including (for a number of years) holding down two jobs which involved him working (sometimes) eighty hour weeks and seven days a week.

Graham really valued the close knit community that existed in Amlwch Port and the support it provided him during difficult times. This was set against the dominant narrative of decline about Amlwch Town and Amlwch Port evident in all three of his interviews.

9.5   Conclusion

These biographies reinforce some of the key aspects of the lives of residents living in low-income neighbourhoods. Having close links with some family members was important in practical and emotional terms, and clearly made the difference between 'coping', and not. Support from family members in the form of financial gifts and loans; practical help with, for instance, childcare were very important; but equally as important were the forms of intimate support - friendship, solace, 'a place to escape to' were highly beneficial to their ability to cope with various challenges. Critically important also was the reciprocal nature of support. Support of this kind from neighbours was less pronounced, and it was evident that these social networks carried a different 'social contract', that would permit a degree of intimate support, sometimes practical support but rarely financial support.

The stories in this paper shed light on different attitudes to formal work. For some residents, it was a source of pride - Graham is an example - while others did not regard working status as central to the perceptions of themselves, or indeed the perception of themselves by others (such as Stan). The stories illustrate the impact that low-paid, low-skilled work can have on people's lives. While on the one hand, a number of positive consequences may emerge from this form of work, such as financial independence, social contact, and a renewed sense of purpose, a number

of negative consequences may also be associated with it. Jobs were generally chosen on different criteria to any notion of 'progression', such as availability, proximity to home, fit with family and child care commitments. Future aspirations rarely touched putting together any kind of career path, which in part was reflected in the nature of these jobs, which were often precarious and easily lost.

The impact of neighbourhood change, whether regeneration or decline, comes through in all the accounts, and this prompts different responses. For good or ill, the regeneration of several of the case study areas is perceived as something that happens to them, driven by external agencies, and they do not feel that they exert control or power over the process, whether they have attempt to be involved or not. It is very clear that place 'matters' and there are significant impacts for residents and individuals who view their future lives as being intimately connected to changes occurring within their existing neighbourhood over which they feel they have little control.

10. Revisiting the Six Neighbourhoods

10.1 Introduction

This chapter distils some of the issues raised in the preceding analysis of the research material and explored how the relationship between poverty and place differs across the six neighbourhoods. It highlights how place matters (or not); how living on a low income is experienced and what prompts subsequent action and behaviour in different places and through time. It draws together some of the implications of the research for different explanations of geographical variations in experiences of poverty. Also, through reference to individual experiences in each of the neighbourhoods, it illustrates how place affects individuals' lives in space and over time.

This research has attempted to explore the *reciprocal relationship* between 'people' and 'place', and how that might vary, both *within* a specific neighbourhood, and also *across* six deprived neighbourhoods with different social and locational characteristics. The six case studies contain physical resources and social relations, and each is invested with meaning and value (Gieryn 2000; Cummins *et al*, 2007). They provide different packages of resources, services and facilities. Different dominant cultures and identities may offer safety, security and belonging for some people, but, at the same time, serve to isolate other people by making them distinct and different (Robinson, 2010a). It is worth returning to Macintyre *et al's* (2002) framework outlined in Chapter 2 which set out three types of explanation for geographical variations in health:

- *compositional* explanations, that draw attention to the characteristics of individuals living in particular places

- *contextual* explanations, that draw attention to opportunity structures in the local physical and social environment; and

- *collective* explanations, that draw attention to socio-cultural and historical features of communities.

This study has attempted to consider the interplay between the compositional, contextual and collective explanations, which often overlap, to recognise and comprehend the connectivity between people and places. The compositional and contextual nature of the neighbourhoods was reviewed in Chapter 4 (for more detail, see Batty *et al*, 2010d). In this chapter we focus on the socio-cultural and historical features gleaned from the qualitative research, bringing together participants' experiences, perceptions and looking more closely at responses to social and physical changes in the areas, whether as the result of specific policy interventions or not.

10.2 Amlwch, Anglesey

Amlwch was a unique case study in a number of ways. The geographical isolation of the town was described by several participants as being at the *"end of the line"* on the Isle of Anglesey. A striking feature of the interviews was the importance of the Welsh language, which had both positive and negative connotations. The combination of these features helps to construct the identity of participants in Amlwch. They had clear views about the particular residential area that they lived in and their identity was framed within those parameters, and also within a sense that the town has 'missed out' to other settlements in terms of public and private sector investment.

Residents clearly identified with either the 'town' or the 'port'. The strength of feeling for each area, particularly Amlwch Port, was manifested in a strong sense of territoriality, generating a sense of self-esteem and wellbeing and also providing the framework for the comparative denigration of the status and behaviour of others (Elias, 1994). Welsh- speaking respondents in Amlwch, across all ages and gender, felt intensely about "their" Welsh nationality, identity and heritage. This manifested itself particularly in terms of language. This identification with nationality was far more pronounced than the other case study areas. Although in Oxgangs (Edinburgh) almost half of all participating residents wished their nationality to be recorded as 'Scottish' rather than 'British' the importance of a Scottish identity was not a central feature of their narratives (and there was no equivalent language issue).

Many of the interviews revealed an underlying tension between long standing residents and 'incomers' in which national identity was a key marker of difference. There were strong feelings about incomers and this presented some tensions for non- indigenous respondents. It was notable how in Amlwch discourses around worklessness mapped onto long-standing distinctions between insiders and outsiders. Brenda (35-44), for example, had lived in Amlwch for 24 years, married a local, worked in the school and was heavily involved in the local carnival, but she considered herself as an 'outsider'. However, at the same time she dissociated herself from the negative connotations she felt were attached to this status.

> *Well because I live in Amlwch I don't want to be claiming benefits, I don't want people to label me as 'one of those from Manchester again coming here scrounging'.*

The industrial history and heritage of Amlwch also had complex impacts on residents' sense of esteem. Several residents spoke with pride about the role of industry in the town's development and the characteristics of its population. This industrial heritage is celebrated at an annual festival and at the town's heritage museum. However, the loss of this industrial base, and its perceived impacts on employment and the social dynamics, was more keenly felt in Amlwch than anywhere else (Chapter 4). Many participants referred to the slender thread on which the economic fortunes of the town were seen to depend – 'Wylfa B'.

Mobility opportunities were perceived to be limited in Amlwch, due to a combination of financial and 'social' reasons. The desire to remain close to family and friends was prominent. Moving out was not considered as a possibility by many of those we interviewed - whether due to the sheer familiarity of a lifetime spent in the town, the fact that one would need to move some distance to improve labour market prospects or due to the multiple obligations, responsibilities and relationships that would need to be set aside if one moved. Residents often returned 'home' after a period living away, often for a mixture of financial and social reasons.

Robert - housing choice and constraint

At the time of his first interview in May 2008, Robert was in his late twenties and living with his heavily pregnant partner, Megan, in a small one bedroom flat, rented from a private landlord. He was born in Amlwch, and apart from three years spent at a university in the north of England, he has spent all of his life in the town. His parents also live in Amlwch – his only sibling, his sister, lives in England. One of his parents is Welsh and one is English and reflecting this, and the fact that many members of his (extended) family live in England, Robert describes himself as being "half English". He noted that his "Englishness" was an issue for some local "Welsh" residents.

Since leaving university, Robert has worked for a public sector agency based in a town located an hour's drive from Amlwch. He reports that he is relatively poorly paid – in 2008 he noted that he was paid £850 a month – and has often struggled to 'get by' (Megan is also a low earner). This was especially the case in the spring of 2009 as their income declined significantly after Megan stopped receiving (statutory) maternity pay – she gave birth to their first child towards the end of 2008.

It appeared that the biggest issue in Robert's life when we first spoke to him was his inability to secure suitable, affordable housing for himself, Megan and their future child. He noted that he was *"desperate to get out"* of his cramped and poorly furnished flat. He reported that he could not afford to buy a property in Amlwch and, would not be able to do so in the near future, because of his relatively low income and (what he perceived to be) the comparatively high price of housing in the area, which he felt, given the average earnings of local residents, was not affordable.

> *I hear plans of a new affordable housing estate that's ... going to be built. And they reckon it [house prices] starts from £110,000 a house, which if the banks aren't lending is still over the budget of the average islander's wage … well, the people who say it's affordable housing are on £30, £40 grand a year. So that's affordable to them. But if they look at the average islander's income, which is about £10,000, then that's 10 times your annual wage. So it's not really [affordable].*

The frustration he felt at being unable to become a homeowner, something which appeared to be very important to him, was compounded by his 'failure' to secure a social housing property; he and Megan had been on the waiting list of the principal social housing landlord in the area for more than a year. And he was unhappy with the allocation policy of this landlord which he felt, like all social housing landlords, 'penalised' working residents like himself and favoured non-working residents on benefits:

> *Only if you're a single mother, sixteen years of age, you'll get a council house. If you're a working family like us two, we're not as much priority. The government … penalises us … [we're] paying our rates and paying our taxes and everything else. It doesn't feel that the government's giving us any chance or trying to help us. I feel that I pay my taxes. They help people that take advantage of the system.*

However, by the time of his second interview in 2009, Robert, Megan and their baby were living in a modern three bedroom social housing property on the Craig y Don estate in the town, which they secured after a local councillor became aware of their situation. In his wave two interview, Robert noted that he and Megan had begun redecorating the property and by May 2009 they had spent more than £600 doing so. By the time of Robert's third interview in 2010 the decoration process was complete and he noted how much he liked his property and how happy he and Megan were at their current address. This happiness was reflected in his desire (at some point in the future) to purchase the property through the right to buy process.

10.3   Hillside, Knowsley

In Hillside, the dominant view amongst participants about the estate was that it was 'just ordinary', with few differences between it and surrounding areas (see also Allen *et al*, 2007). Within the neighbourhood, two main denotations of difference between people were noted: first, between long-standing and more recent residents who have arrived in the past ten years, either because Hillside was considered to have become a 'dumping ground' through local authority allocation policies or because the increasing proportion of private rented properties on the estate had attracted transient households, including drug dealers; and second, the potential for future tensions arising between the 'surviving' community in Hillside (that had not left or been allocated property elsewhere during the long process of neighbourhood remodelling) and households due to move into the new low cost home ownership properties, once completed (Cole and Green, 2010). Both cases illustrate how internal conflicts can be exacerbated during a process of neighbourhood change.

The loss of the long-standing 'community' in recent years was a recurrent theme in Hillside and for many participants, the most prominent neighbourhood effect was caused by the substantial regeneration programme, which, at the time of the wave three interviews, had stalled due to the recession. This process was central to their attitudes about the past, present and future of the neighbourhood. Indeed public policy (in this case, neighbourhood renewal) is perceived to be far more central and prominent in accounts of the circumstances and prospects of the neighbourhood than in other case study areas. It was evident that residents had been severely affected by the ongoing regeneration activities in the area, including those who were still waiting to be re-housed. This had created a great deal of concern, and many participants felt deflated and unsure of their future. This had a direct impact on individuals' sense of progression and wellbeing and highlighted that, just as uncertainty about personal income generated anxiety and insecurity, so the lack of definitive outcomes for the wider neighbourhood could have similar effects. The lack of power or agency to influence or determine the future of the neighbourhood was also evident (Bashir and Flint, 2010).

The fact that the new development had been suspended as a result of the economic difficulties facing the developers, leaving wide tracts of empty spaces, was taken by some respondents as visually emblematic of the underlying sense of dispersal, displacement and decline, especially when coupled to the loss of public facilities on the estate over the preceding ten years. Barbara (45-64) summed-up the experience of being caught up in a stalled process of renewal:

> *We're still living with open areas that have been cleared of housing and I don't think that's very good for morale on the estate… People feel as though they're in a bit of a limbo at the moment, it's demoralising and it's such a shame because the plans for the estate were wonderful, we've all seen the plans and we've not seen the reality yet.*

Winnie's story also illuminates the problems that residents faced.

Winnie - the impact of neighbourhood change

Winnie is in her early 60s and has lived in the same home in Hillside all her life, which her mother and father occupied when they were first built. She subsequently took over the tenancy and purchased the house through the Right-to-Buy scheme. The house is now paid off. Due to the redevelopment of Hillside, Winnie's house is scheduled for demolition. Despite attempts to stay in Hillside, she has recently elected to buy a house in a neighbouring area. Winnie is married and has four children. One still resides with her and others live close by. She now has several grandchildren. Winnie works part-time as a cleaner, her husband is retired and her son does a range of casual part-time jobs. This story examines one particular

aspect on Winnie's life - the impact of neighbourhood change upon her housing circumstances.

Over the course of the *Living through Change* project, Winnie and her family have witnessed a deterioration in their housing circumstances. When she married some 40 years ago, her husband moved in with her at her parent's house where they subsequently had four children. At times, this meant the family were overcrowded. The house has three bedrooms, but as her mother's mobility deteriorated, the downstairs living room became a bedroom too. They did apply for re-housing, but the properties they were offered were (in their eyes) too far away from Hillside and they chose to remain in the area. Winnie's mother eventually moved into a sheltered housing scheme nearby and she took over the tenancy, and went on to purchase the property through the Right-to-Buy scheme. One of her sons currently lives at home with Winnie and her husband, and other family members live close by.

While their household income fell, they were still able to cover their housing costs by making economies elsewhere in their household budget. However, the regeneration process in Hillside has had a negative effect on them as home-owners. Winnie's home is in a part of the estate that has been scheduled for demolition. Her neighbours, who were renting from the local housing association, have already gone, either moving away from Hillside or moving into the newly built properties on the estate.

The uncertainty about her future housing has caused a great deal of anxiety. She was first made aware that her house was part of the demolition plans in 2002, and was very upset by the notion of moving. Over the past eight years, Winnie has been given a host of different housing options which have never come to fruition. Initially she was told that a 'like-for-like swap' would be possible if a council property became available elsewhere on the Hillside estate. She was offered a property, which would be refurbished, but she had misgivings about the road it was located on, and turned it down. She also sought advice from the NDC's regeneration team about selling her house and moving on, but she soon realised that the proceeds from the sale would not be sufficient to buy another property on the open market. She was very reluctant to switch from being a home-owner to being a tenant again. When she had bought the house she had done so with a view to being secure and having no housing costs in later life. More recently (2009/10), she was offered the opportunity to purchase a newly built shared ownership property in Hillside. She declined this offer because she did not want to wait for three years (minimum) that it would take for the new-build home to become available.

Although she was very reluctant to move from her home and away from Hillside, she finally decided that it was necessary to do so. The declining condition of her home, and the decanting and demolition around her were having a detrimental effect on her quality of life.

> *… after this winter I said, my fella says 'we'll have to get out' so I did start looking around then.*

More recently, the Council offered Winnie and several other residents in her situation a £40,000 loan to help homeowners on the estate buy elsewhere on the open market. The loan was interest-free and only repayable on the future sale of the property. This made purchasing a house on the open market a possibility, and Winnie had made a successful offer on property in a neighbouring area, and had begun the conveyance process.

Being in this uncertain position for an extended period had affected the way that Winnie looked after her house. Since receiving notice that her house was scheduled for demolition to make way for new development, Winnie was reluctant to invest in her property as she would have liked to. In 2007, she stated that she had put off buying anything new for the house and tackling any repairs that were needed, as she would have to move out soon, and the house demolished. However, as time went on and she had not moved on, she was forced to make repairs and replace 'white goods'. When we spoke to her in 2010, she had been forced to buy some essentials for the house using small amounts of money that she had saved for moving house:

> *Well like I just had to pay out, I didn't want to but, 'cause we're in the position that we've been like this for about five years. We know we've gotta go, I don't wanna go anywhere, I would be quite happy if they just left me alone, I don't wanna go anywhere, I wanna stay where I am. But I'm being forced out so we haven't done nothing to the house for the last few years 'cause we're in this position, I can't afford to keep my*

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The planned redevelopment and tenure diversification for Hillside was not viewed positively by many of the research participants (Cole and Green, 2010). The new development was seen as a physically separate part of the neighbourhood and not directed to the interests of the existing community, contrasting sharply with the perception of new development in Wensley Fold and Oxgangs. Alongside these concerns, there were positive accounts from recipients of new properties. Connor (25-29) for example had moved into a new house, and had remained close to former neighbours and friends:

> *Brilliant, I love it. Everyone who's moved as well is from the street that I've lived in, so it's like the whole street moving to a load of new houses. But it's between people who were KHT, Knowsley and some people own their houses as well, that's a bit different. It's not like a whole estate the way it used to be it's all like council tenants, they're all like home owners and that. [My kids are] having a great time playing out on the street and that, made loads of new friends, there's loads of kids who've moved here, there's about fifteen little boys between the ages of five and ten so they've got plenty of friends here.*

As In Oxgangs, Hillside residents did not attribute different forms of behaviour or values to more affluent households. The material differences were acknowledged, but this did not generate a sense of difference or 'deficit' in terms of norms or expectations. Participants in Hillside, unlike those of Oxgangs, did not 'calibrate' their neighbourhood with other surrounding areas They felt that their area was 'just ordinary', like everywhere else and as a result they did not aspire to move for anything other than practical reasons, rather than in terms of 'getting on'. To them the neighbourhood was 'lived space' rather than a signifier of social and economic status.

There was a sense in Hillside that strong social networks had played a vital role in the functioning of the community, and that individuals' futures were bound to the neighbourhood, even if these prospects were not always viewed positively. There were more extensive family networks and more limited spatial and social horizons than in other areas, such as West Kensington or Oxgangs.

As seen in Chapter 4, Hillside was invested with a strong narrative of decline. The new community centre at Hillside, due to be formally opened in summer 2011, had been delayed by about two years. This had a marked impact on some of the longer standing residents in the area, who claimed it was the last chapter in a long story of civic neglect. This neglect was linked to wider issues of physical and infrastructural decimation, significant problems of anti-social behaviour and more serious crime, which was attributed this to the 'vacuum' created by the regeneration of the area and had direct impacts on individuals' sense of ontological security and well-being.

Residents perceived little prospect of economic renewal, and there was a sense that the process of de-industrialisation is complete, exacerbated by the fact that, historically the estate was developed to resolve a housing issue rather than in response to economic and employment patterns. While some of the participants were working, this tended to be low-paid, part-time and, particularly for younger people, temporary 'agency' work (see Kyle's story below). While concentrations of worklessness in Hillside were perceived by residents as problematic, this case study

was unique in the sense that these concerns were eclipsed by other issues such as regeneration plans, housing allocations, crime and antisocial behaviour. In Hillside, to a greater degree than elsewhere, there was less of a tendency to stigmatise the workless; perhaps indicative of a long-standing recognition that there was simply not enough work around, not just in the immediate neighbourhood or contiguous areas, but in the conurbation as a whole.

Kyle's story, below, outlines the difficulties faced in obtaining permanent work in the area and touches on the routes into (and out of) work.

Kyle - fragmented working life

Kyle is 23 and has lived with his parents on the Hillside Estate in Knowsley all of his life. One interesting aspect of his life was his employment history, which included a variety of different jobs and training programmes. This short story highlights Kyle's employment history and his attitudes to work.

Kyle left school when he was 15 with four GCSEs. From there, he enrolled on an NVQ training course at St Helens College to become a chef. This was a common pathway amongst his peers and friends on Hillside, and he travelled by bus to college with people from his school, some of whom were also taking catering courses. For Kyle, going to college to study catering was *"something to do"* after leaving school, rather than a carefully-planned career path. Part of his motivation was that his close friends were also doing so, and being able to claim an Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). Although this was a relatively small amount of money (around £20 per week) it was more 'disposable' income than he had at school, and he regarded it as his 'earned' income, rather than pocket money from his parents. It was also an incentive to 'turn-up' at college, as poor attendance could jeopardise payments. As he was living at home and not expected to contribute to the household budget, the allowance was used mainly for social activities. These included buying cans of beer at the supermarket to drink at night, and buying fast-food.

He successfully completed his NVQ, but never sought a job in the catering industry.

> *I done me training at St Helens College, so I was there for like a two year course. I spent like a year and a half but I didn't like carry on to be a chef afterwards like because I got a bit bored with it. I thought I'd try and do warehouse work and stuff like that, and got me CSCS Card and I'm just getting trained up basically. I'm not really time served, basically a fella's given me a start and he's training me up and he's going to like learn me the machines and stuff like that you see. (Wave 1, 2008)*

Kyle, therefore, did not use his catering training, instead opting for other manual work, and doing some further training along the way. This included warehousing, labouring, factory, refuse collecting and recycling centre jobs. The training that Kyle mentioned above did not lead to a permanent job, which he found disappointing and made him reluctant to do 'on-the-job' training in the future. Working was a source of pride for Kyle. Many of his friends were not working, and while he was very loyal to them, distinguished himself from them by working. He also believed that it made him *"better off"* than many other people.

Kyle's work came through employment agencies, which he thought had been beneficial in getting work, but it was never permanent. The longest job had been six months. Kyle, at the age of 23, had *"lost count"* of the number of different jobs he had done. He also felt that it was impossible to get manual work in the area without doing it through an employment agency. When asked about doing so many different jobs, Kyle said:

> *Yeah, not because I've been sacked. Because they was agencies and you never know from one day to the next whether you're in or not. …the longest job I've had is probably six months. … Yeah cos of the agencies. The company's never hiring, it's always the agency that's hiring for 'em. (Wave 2, 2009)*

Kyle told us that he was paid at the minimum wage for most of these jobs. However, he became used to having this income, and during periods when he was out of work and claiming income support, the drop in income had a significant impact. It meant that he did not contribute to the household income, as he did when he was working, and it meant he could no longer afford to purchase video games and DVDs or go out to pubs and clubs.

In 2010, Kyle was out of work and finding it harder than ever to find a job:

> *I don't know, people say 'there's jobs out there but they just don't look'. But they haven't got a clue what they're talking about because I'm in the job centre every day and when I'm not I'm on the internet and passing me CV out and it's just agency work and no-one's taking on. There might be jobs out there for people who are qualified to do certain things but when it comes to little things like labouring, it's a lot harder for them. (Wave 3, 2010)*

> *The worst thing about it is you start getting used to [not having a job]. Yeah you just get depressed. (Wave 3, 2010)*

Kyle was still signed up with several employment agencies, but felt there were lots more unskilled people doing that, and less work coming through. He was determined to find another job and actively looked each day. *"Yeah well",* he said, *"I've got nothing else to do cos I'm just sitting there bored".* He was pessimistic about finding a job, and very negative about the support he had received:

> *I'm not [confident about finding a job], I'm just hoping for the best, I really could do with a job badly. The job centre don't do a thing for you, they're crap. They'll stop your money for any reason but they won't go out their way to help you look for a job. They just want to stick you on some course, like thirteen weeks where you get an extra £15 a week for it, learning how to do CVs and applications even though I've got certificates saying I've done that before, I have to do it again. Think, all the time I'm wasting in there I could be out looking for a job. So they're actually setting you back a bit but they don't seem to take it that way.*

Kyle had actually refused to go on some of these courses that the Job Centre offered him, preferring instead to sign-off:

> *I don't bother [with the courses]. They say if you don't go they'll stop your money but I just sign off. I'd rather go without no money than go on them … cos the time I'm wasting there I could be out looking for a job. I'm more than happy to stay at me ma's. I don't need that money, the only reason I get it is to give it to me ma to help her out, but she's not bothered so I just sign off at any time. I know it sounds horrible but they don't do much to help you and don't give you much really. (Wave 3, 2010)*

In addition to his paid working history, Kyle also took a great deal of pride from the voluntary work he did for a youth club several evenings a week. This involved helping to supervise sessions. It had given him an interest in seeking paid work as a youth worker in the future, but he felt that his existing school qualifications held him back, and there was no chance of improving them:

> *I'd love to get into youth work but I know I've got GCSEs but with jobs like that you need like maths, science and English grade A-C and mine aren't that good. I've got a couple of Bs but mine are B, C and D.*

> *Interviewer: Could you ever see yourself going back to try and get those?*

> *Not in this lifetime. I think volunteering's the way to go, maybe you can get a job out of it. (Wave 3, 2010)*

10.4   Oxgangs, Edinburgh

As a neighbourhood, Oxgangs had relatively good transport links and access to Edinburgh city centre and other neighbourhood centres within the city. The research initially explored how Oxgangs' location in the midst of several very wealthy suburbs in Edinburgh might affect the perceptions and actions of its residents (Flint and Casey, 2008). Residents did not attribute different forms of behaviour or values to more affluent households, whether they were near neighbours or more geographically distant. The material differences were acknowledged, but this did not generate a sense of difference or 'deficit' in terms of norms or expectations. As a result, the research participants did not seek to emulate their more affluent

counterparts. Where there was sharing of local facilities, most obviously in the attendance of children at the local primary school in Oxgangs, parallel rather than 'mixed' social networks were noted.

Oxgangs is a predominantly social housing estate (in appearance, even though the tenure profile has now become mixed). For many participants, any potential sense of stigmatisation was offset by an acute sense of hierarchy in which Oxgangs was viewed as a better council estate than most others in Edinburgh. Residents readily compared Oxgangs (favourably) with other social housing estates in Edinburgh, but were reluctant to draw comparisons with adjacent wealthier private housing neighbourhoods. The qualities of Oxgangs were therefore expressed comparatively in terms of the relative lack of certain negative or threatening aspects of neighbourhood life assumed to be present in unpopular areas elsewhere.

Oxgangs has experienced tenure diversification via the relatively high take-up of Right-to-Buy (resulting in owner-occupation and private renting) and recent housing regeneration (the demolition of three Council high-rise blocks, replaced by a mixed tenure development). Despite these processes, tenure itself was rarely cited as a difference between groups of residents. In part, the similar appearance of properties throughout Oxgangs meant that different tenures did not stand out, but tenure did not appear to be a social signifier anyway. The practical *utility* of different tenures was calibrated, however, especially in terms of access to social housing, seen as offering (relatively) affordable and decent quality accommodation in an expensive city. This prompted concerns over the operation of social housing allocations policies. The introduction of choice-based lettings in Edinburgh was perceived to have 'opened up' council housing in Oxgangs to newcomers, thereby creating unwelcome competition with 'local' housing applicants.

Several residents cited differences according to income, or at least between those who were working and those who were not. For residents who were unemployed, this difference was less likely to be seen as problematic. For those who were working, the difference between working or not carried more weight, and, as shown in Chapter 7, this was a consistent theme across the neighbourhoods. Several participants referred to younger people as being work-shy; sometimes in comparison with new economic in-migrants who, it was felt, competed better for any work that was available.

Within the neighbourhood there was a clear perception of difference between long-standing residents and newcomers, and the arrival of what were seen as 'transient' households was viewed negatively. Newcomers were viewed negatively in some cases where there was a perception of conflict over resources or where they were perceived to be 'taking over'. There was evidence of problems encountered between younger and older people in Oxgangs. This was particularly the case where the demographic profile of households on certain 'stairs' shifted over time, from predominantly older residents to a mix of older occupants, younger people and families with young children. Older people complained about problems caused by 'more kids' on the estate, mainly relating to noise. Younger people, in turn, reported that they were victimised for 'hanging-out'.

While there has been some public policy/regeneration intervention in Oxgangs, its impact was less perceptible in shaping participants' views towards the neighbourhoods than in other case studies that had undergone similar programmes (Hillside and Wensley Fold). Neighbourhood change in Oxgangs was driven by significant housing transformation, through demolition, clearance and redevelopment (see Chapter 4), accompanied by significant shifts in the population, involving the dispersal of previous social networks and the arrival of new residents and the perceived need to build up social interaction and a sense of community.

The scale, stage and pace of this regeneration in each of these neighbourhoods had a major impact on residents' perceptions of change. In contrast to Hillside, the regeneration of Oxgangs proceeded more-or-less on time, and due to the position of the high rise flats to be demolished near the edge of the neighbourhood it had relatively little impact on the core infrastructure of the estate. The significance of disruption, the loss of previous social-spatial networks and some tensions over new populations meant that many participants in Oxgangs were quite ambivalent about change, whereas the regeneration process in Hillside was viewed in an almost unremittingly negative light by respondents. Crucially, the new development in Oxgangs was largely an uncontested space/housing resource. Participants perceived that its purpose was to attract newcomers and accepted this.

Oxgangs did not come across from the accounts of respondents as a neighbourhood in decline. Instead, the dominant narrative might be termed as one of 'disruption then renewal' (Cole and Green, 2010). Demand for housing was high, and while there were some reported problems associated with antisocial behaviour (including alcohol and drug misuse), that was not an overwhelming view. Several residents in Oxgangs appeared to attach a positive sense of status and distinction to living in the neighbourhood. They suggested that it was a desirable area to live in and contrasted it favourably with other areas of Edinburgh. There was also a strong sense amongst individuals of securing a property in Oxgangs as a signifier or marker of social progress compared to their previous residential history. Moreover, residents were relatively mobile - many had lived in other areas of Edinburgh, the region or further afield. They were less averse to moving in future than participants in the other neighbourhoods. They had both the connectivity with other residential areas (within similar labour markets, and without necessarily breaking family and social ties) - unlike Amlwch - and had better access to affordable housing nearby, due in part to the size of the estate and the range of property types - unlike West Kensington.

Olive – adapting to changing circumstances

Olive is in her early forties, and when we first spoke to her in 2008, she lived in Oxgangs with her husband and their three young children. Her husband was employed full-time, and she had given up work to care for her three children. Olive did return to work part-time after the birth of her youngest son but she found it too difficult to balance work and childcare. Also, with tax credits they were around £30 better off if she did not work. Money was tight, but a maturing endowment meant they could purchase a car, which Olive described as "*a luxury*". The family also relied on Olive's parents (who lived close by) for loans, which they would have otherwise sought from a loan shark.

By 2009, and wave two of our research, Olive's husband had left her suddenly and she found herself managing the children and the home alone. The trauma had a severe financial and emotional impact. She was claiming benefits, struggling to manage and finding it difficult to deny the children their usual lifestyle. She found it very hard to come to terms with the change in direction:

I never ever thought I would be a single mother with three kids.

Family and friends provided a source of support and Olive depended on and enjoyed infrequent social outings with her friends. However, she only socialised when her budget allowed. With less income, unplanned expenditure (such as an invite to a children's party) had a more detrimental impact to making ends meet.

Yeah or someone's birthday or they're invited to a party or something like that, just a few things like that, 20 quid or something, 20 quid's a lot of money if you're not [pause] it is a lot of money.

She did accept some financial support from her parents, but was reluctant to rely too heavily upon them:

10.5 Wensley Fold, Blackburn

In Wensley Fold, there were two linked themes within most residents' narratives. First, the neighbourhood, like Oxgangs, was viewed as being a good area to live in compared to others nearby. Second, and in contrast to the uncertainties and ambiguities about the urban renewal programmes articulated in Oxgangs and Hillside, these was a sense that the regeneration of the neighbourhood was linked to a sense of progress and improvement in individuals' own lives which in turn generated pride and enhanced well-being.

Neighbourhood change in Wensley Fold was driven by significant housing transformation, including a new development in the centre of the neighbourhood following the grid-iron street pattern and refurbishment of existing terrace houses. The neighbourhood has also benefitted from ancillary neighbourhood investment (see Chapter 4). Residents had strikingly positive perceptions of physical regeneration and housing new build as a signifier of a neighbourhood on an upward trajectory. There was also a tangible sense that crime and anti-social behaviour (which included 'gang' activity) had reduced in tandem with the physical redevelopment of area.

However, the most important change in Wensley Fold had been the strengthening of family and social networks. Investment in the neighbourhood has been accompanied by significant shifts in the population, involving the dispersal of previous social networks and the arrival of new residents. Although the regeneration programme had caused some disruption, the majority of residents were supportive of change and identified an embryonic, but rapidly strengthening, sense of community and stability - particularly, greater social interaction between the two distinctive groups - the 'Asian community' and the 'White community'.

There were, however, some mixed messages about the level of connection and association between 'Whites' and 'Asians' in Wensley Fold. For some participants, there remained a clear divide between the two communities, and several White respondents perceived the Asian community was as 'separate' and 'difficult to get to know well'. While there were often connections between neighbours and positive encounters on this basis, more integrated friendships were harder to achieve. This was the case for Maureen (65+), a long-standing resident who felt she was more isolated in her community. She perceived that many of the Asian women nearby often spent time together at each other's houses and would assist each other with

aspects like shopping and child care - a social network that she felt excluded from, but very similar to what she recalled from her past:

> *I mean when I first moved in here we had such a lovely community, everybody helped one another. I'm completely isolated now because, don't get me wrong I won't quarrel with the Asians, I can't say I'm racist, I am and I'm not. I think there are far too many of them and they're putting other people at risk because they're taking a lot of the jobs that our people should do.*

The new development itself was perceived to have reduced the sense of physical segregation of different tenures and ethnicities in the area, which had been beneficial to breaking down barriers throughout the neighbourhood (see Hashim Mirza's story below). Faizal also commented on divides between the two major ethnic communities breaking down:

> *On my street it's a mixed street, there's half Asian and half English and there's other ethnicities as well and I think everyone gets on fine, there's no trouble, nothing. … Yeah because before there was segregation, you'd get one area where there was all Asians and then you'd get English and you've got other ethnicities and stuff like that but now you see English people moving to Asian areas, Asians moving into English areas and it shows that times are moving forward and the people just learn to live with it, That's what it comes down to, you have to live with it because at the end of the day they're all one and as a nation it's how we cope with this problem. 'Cos it is a problem, there are issues, there are still elements of people who won't really accept it, even though they have to, they won't accept it, but there's always hope for the future.*

(Faizal Hussain, 16-24, Wensley Fold)

The recent new housing development in Wensley Fold, of mixed tenure, three, four and five bedroom properties, has been an important factor in local social change. It was associated with an uplift of the physical condition of the locality, and a better perception of the neighbourhood within Blackburn (Cole and Green; 2010; Bashir and Flint, 2010). As well as reducing physical segregation, the new housing development was perceived to have engendered greater social interaction than elsewhere in the locality. It brought about greater interaction between White and Asian residents, and the arrival of 'new people' was viewed positively. Sabah Khan and Martha, for example, reported that the new development had been planned with the needs of the community in mind:

> *… some were built as council houses and some were built for (the) public so people could buy. […] Initially they had a meeting and a conference and told people about it, so if they wanted to buy a house there and wanted something according to their choice and stuff they could have it built according to how they wanted it.*

(Sabah Khan, 35-44, Wensley Fold)

Beforehand everybody had done what they thought was a good renovation on the property but everything was different so some people had stone cladding, some people had rendered fronts, some people hadn't done anything at all, some people had new windows, some people had white windows, some people had wood windows, everything looked like a patchwork, whereas now it looks like an integrated area in the sense that they don't look the same, there are differences between the houses but there's a much more uniform look and a uniform feel about it.

(Martha, 35-44, Wensley Fold)

Overall, interviews with participants over three years revealed a strong sense of maturing social relations between these groups and enhanced social cohesion. While some respondents in Wensley Fold perceived a 'divided community' along ethnic lines, there was also evidence from other accounts of greater levels of connection and association between White and Asian residents. The evidence points to three key processes that had brought this about: a) the ethnically mixed occupation of the new housing development, which was perceived to have reduced segregation; b) the increasing length of time spent living together, which had fostered greater tolerance; and c) the arrival of new European migrants to the locality which cemented the Asian community's relative position as stable and settled (Cole and Green, 2010).

Wensley Fold has experienced in-migration from EU Accession States. Some participants associated this with the growth of the private rented sector, and often characterised the newcomers as 'passing through' and making very little investment locally. The relatively recent arrival of Eastern European workers in the locality was believed to have had a positive effect for the Asian Community. The community itself no longer regarded themselves as the 'newcomers', and many considered that the White community's perception had changed as a result.

A different source of social division in Wensley Fold, as elsewhere, was the distinction between working and non-working households. The tendency to pathologise worklessness tended to be higher in those areas (Amlwch, West Marsh and Wensley Fold) which were still facing the attrition of major employers. Instability, insecurity or competition in the labour market seemed to encourage discourses that stigmatised worklessness. Such discourses may arise because of the greater public visibility of workless residents and the subsequently more urgent need to distance oneself from 'undeserving' claimants. In Wensley Fold, for example, several participants criticised neighbours who they deemed undeserving of non-working benefit.

While Wensley Fold lacked the mobility of the other ethnically diverse case study area (West Kensington), its South Asian community had extensive networks across the UK and abroad. For some, financially supporting geographically distant relatives was a key pressure on the capacity to get by that was unique amongst the six case studies.

Wensley Fold was perceived to be an accessible place, having easy access to Blackburn town centre and other areas of East Lancashire. Several respondents believed that there was an economic resurgence occurring in Blackburn, which was closely associated with the progress of Wensley Fold itself. Although the regeneration was widely acknowledged to have made a significant physical improvement, there were still significant concerns about management of the public realm - particularly littering. The neighbourhood had also retained (and recently

enhanced) many of its services. Local shops, pubs and cafes were frequently used, although there was some evidence that certain shops were used by the Asian community only. Green spaces in the neighbourhood were also generally well used.

Most participants reported that Wensley Fold was a neighbourhood in which they wanted to remain long-term, citing its proximity to the centre of Blackburn, amenities and services; suitable housing and opportunities to invest in property and realise equity growth (Hickman, 2010). The quality of neighbourhood amenities was a particularly important 'place' related driver of residential mobility in Wensley Fold. Mohammed Nazir (45-64), for example, explained why he chose to live in Wensley Fold:

> *First of all there the infant school is there. And the high school is just down the road on the other side. And after that the college is next door. And the shopping centre is near. And there's a mosque near as well, two or three mosques nearby. And our Asian shops are there… I've thought of moving out of this area a few times but … if I go somewhere else I will not get them facilities.*

The findings from Wensley Fold are very important in that they indicate how well planned and sensitive physical redevelopment and redesign can create a sense of positive future and sustainability within a neighbourhood. These are important lessons in exploring how diversity may be achieved alongside a sense of strengthened neighbourhood stability. Although only one example, this also poses questions about policy rhetoric which views multiculturalism as a potential threat to the sustainability of social relations and does not take account of the temporal dimension through which such relations can change and become embedded in local communities.

Hashim Mirza - cohesion and regeneration

Hashim Mirza is 25 years old and has lived in Wensley Fold since 2006, in a newly-built three-bed house rented from a housing association. She described her ethnicity as Pakistani. She is married and has three young children. Wensley Fold is an ethnically and tenure diverse neighbourhood, the main ethnic groups being 'White' and 'Asian'. More recently, there has been a growing Eastern European community, occupying the private rented sector. Hashim Mirza's street is part of a new mixed-tenure housing development in the middle of Wensley Fold that has been sympathetically integrated into the traditional grid-iron street pattern that exists.

She believed that there were good relationships between her neighbours, and she had never been a victim of racism while living there. Her positive perception of Wensley Fold was tempered by the very negative experience she had before moving there:

> *Yeah that's what the big difference were for me cos when I used to live in my old house they used to say racist comments and stuff and here it's totally different people. Not everybody's the same. (Wave 2, 2009)*

She had a particularly amiable relationship with her White next door neighbour, which she felt typified the street as a whole. However, she did not believe that this was the case in other parts of Wensley Fold, where there were tensions between 'Whites' and 'Asians'. So why the difference in her part of the neighbourhood? She pointed out that her street comprised predominately new houses and the people living in them were mostly new to the area. They therefore had a 'new resident' status in common:

> *Our neighbours and that we're all friendly. I don't think many's lived in that area, cos everybody, these houses were built newly and we were all coming in at the same time and as far as I know I think everybody's quite happy with the area, they don't have a problem.*

While it was clear that she perceived there to be mutual respect between neighbours, it was clear that the nature of relationships varied between people, based on ethnicity. Generally speaking, relationships with her 'White' neighbours were polite, but not 'personal', whereas

she had formed closer relationships with other 'Asian' women. This was revealed when we asked her whether her neighbours were in similar financial positions:

To be honest, I haven't asked cos she's not Asian, she's White. But she's really really nice. Every morning you'll see her, we'll say hi and bye and how are you and everything but we don't go into financially or how's this and how's that but [further up the street is] an Asian, she's like single and that, she was married and that but her husband's gone and she's got a hard life, we'll talk to her and that. But we won't go into complete detail and how life is and that, I just think that's a bit rude going straight into that.

The quotation above also suggests that there were 'personal boundaries' between neighbours that Hashim Mirza would not cross. She also reflected that her neighbour interactions in Wensley Fold were very different from those of her parents and the experience she had whilst living at home with them.

We don't actually really mix in the way that we, you know, when we used to live at our mum's. It's not the way it used to be then because we don't go out much now, the kids play out and we just watch them.

Hashim Mirza's relationship with her Asian neighbours was also tempered by language. Not being fluent in Punjabi often made her 'shy' in the company of other Asian women. This was in contrast to her sister (who lives close by) who had a better grasp of Punjabi, and with whom she did most of her socialising in the neighbourhood:

I'm sort of the shy one. They talk to me, I don't know, I think I'm like hi and bye sort of thing, but when they start talking and everything, my sister, she's the chatty one, she talks about everything, what happened on that street and what happened to this person and that, and I just sit on one side and listen to it.

10.6 West Kensington, London

West Kensington has a more diverse population than the other case study neighbourhoods, ethnically and socio-economically. The comparisons that residents made about their circumstances and those of others were often made on supposition or on judgements about financial (mis)management, rather than first hand knowledge of others' circumstances. However, these judgements revealed a degree of uncertainty about the status of others and divergent views on whether individuals regarded themselves as better or worse off materially than their neighbours:

I suppose there are other people that are worse off than me, there are a few single parents around here that probably are worse off than me but if they are I don't really know.

(Christina 30-34, West Kensington)

Other respondents drew comparisons from a wider circle of acquaintances and from peers as a measure of success. However, in common with the findings from other neighbourhoods, many residents did not compare themselves to their neighbours. Unlike other case study areas, and perhaps linked to the relative proximity to other neighbourhoods and the more porous nature of its transport and housing systems, residents in West Kensington did not articulate differences between the sub-areas of the neighbourhood, but rather made contrasts with other nearby parts of the city.

Among the case studies, West Kensington had the lowest level of awareness of and interaction with neighbours (Crisp and Robinson, 2010). But conversely, there was a greater sense that this was the product of choice rather than a defensive response to crime or transience that was present West Marsh for example. The reduced level of local social interaction went hand-in-hand with less awareness of the employment

status of others and, by extension, fewer concerns about the impact of worklessness on neighbourhood life (although there were lower levels of worklessness in West Kensington than the other areas in any case).

West Kensington was also the case study with the least distinct neighbourhood identity, perhaps associated with: its location within a 'world city'; a diverse labour market (geographically and sectorally); the lack of collective experience in terms of work or awareness of collective historical experience of work/function (as with the other case study areas except Oxgangs). Indeed, many participants had different names for the area, including 'Fulham' and 'North Fulham', or none; and some residents appeared to identify more with 'West London' as a spatial entity. There was less sense, relative to other case studies, of individuals' futures being intrinsically linked to the trajectory of the neighbourhood, although the experience of place varied by population groups who 'see' and 'read' place in very different ways. This also highlights how the strength of non-neighbourhood forms of identity were linked to the importance of places as fostering a sense of belonging, such as being a Londoner (as in the prevalence of the Welsh national identity in Amlwch).

West Kensington as the most ethnically diverse case study, made up (as one participant described it) of a series of 'micro communities'. The research evidence suggests that, while there were accounts of conflict based on racial/ethnic differences, ethnicity alone was rarely used as a notation of difference. Ethnic diversity was embedded in the community, though the ethnic mix was perceived to have changed over time. Participants also perceived West Kensington as an area of mixed tenures and incomes. However, a key marker of difference, and potential conflict, was age. There was some tension between older residents and residents with younger children, and between older and younger people. Changes to the demographic profile of some parts of the estate had occurred. Areas where previously only older people lived were now more mixed, and this had led to conflict (usually relating to noise) and occasional reports of anti-social behaviour. Young men and boys 'hanging around' were seen as a distinctive and problematic group, while for others, the perceived increase in the number of children in the area was a source of frustration (Cole and Green, 2010).

Several participants felt increasingly isolated from others in West Kensington. Generally, they saw themselves as having little in common with their neighbours, and had social networks that took place outside of the community. Some respondents also perceived West Kensington as a place where the community had become more fragmented, disparate and disconnected over time. For those who had established social networks outside of the neighbourhood, the lack of 'interaction' with others had less of an impact. However, for those residents whose lives rarely extended beyond the home and neighbourhood, the lack of a 'sense of community' in West Kensington exacerbated their isolation. Furthermore, some residents believed that parts of the locality had more community spirit than others. This may be partly due to the layout of the blocks.

The proposals for wholesale clearance of the West Kensington area as part of the expansion and redevelopment of the Earls Court complex prompted a range of responses from participants during wave two interviews (2009). These proposals provided a context for exploring notions of identity and attachment to place (see Cole and Green; 2010; Bashir and Flint, 2009). Some people were opposed to demolition and relocation; some were surprised by the proposals, not least given recent investment in the estate by the NDC and the Decent Homes programme; some were relatively neutral, but reticent about moving to a different area; and some said they would be happy to see the estate demolished and be relocated elsewhere.

There were several instances of anxiety about displacement and the powerlessness of local residents to do much to prevent the plans going through. However, not all residents were opposed. To some extent this stemmed from the fact that many participants had only a loose attachment to place, with the exception of the North End Road street market as a valued social space and amenity. The neighbourhood was not the focal point of family and social networks to the same extent as the other study areas. Also, several individuals said they had become disenchanted with the area over time, due to problems such as antisocial behaviour, crime and physical decay. For example, Christina, who was a Council tenant, did not oppose the plans as she was looking for a way of getting out of the area after a threat was made to her daughter. She saw the proposed redevelopment as the only way to achieve this. Sarah, on the other hand, had some reservations about where she might be re-housed; fearing that she might lose her footing in the precarious London housing market.

Overall, there was considerable anxiety about future housing prospects which overshadowed concerns about whether any sense of community would remain intact or not. The instrumental view that prevailed in many of the discussions about the advantages of living in West Kensington was also evident in responses about the prospect of redevelopment, as the comments of Nigel (30-34), who lived in a shared ownership property, indicate:

> … yeah because we only own half of this house and the problem with that is if they ask us to move, if they do a compulsory buy we lose the right to half the house. So in theory we lose out. Michael, he's at college at the moment and without my dad and that supporting it god knows, he'd maybe be back inside or summat. The fact of the matter is it's all for the big cats and they'd happily make you think it's in everyone's best interests but it's not. They spend £5 million on a park complex, Norman Park, which is a load of pants. All right it's busy for the kids and that but it's not really. I think they're better off with youth centres and things like that.

Cordell's Story - Life in West Kensington

Cordell is in her early thirties, has two young children and has recently separated from her long term partner. She is a long term resident of West Kensington, and rents her flat from the local authority. She works part-time in a local school. She described herself as being 'Black British'. This section looks at one particular facet of her 'story'; her association/life in West Kensington. (For a fuller account of Cordell's story, see Green and Hickman, 2010).

Although she had some concerns about the quality of life in West Kensington, Cordell reported that she liked living in the area. She also reported that she liked living in London and would not live outside the city. She also liked living in West London, which she felt offered a much better residential and cultural environment for her and her children than the only other place where she had lived, South London. She did not like South London because she felt that it was '"rough" and, unlike West London, which she described as being multi-cultural, it was mono cultural - she did not want her children to go to schools *"where all (the) other kids are black"*.

Cordell also noted that the neighbourhood's social problems, such as antisocial behaviour and drug dealing, were not unique to it and could be found in all parts of London. Therefore, she reasoned that moving from the estate would not insulate her from social problems.

> It's a nice area West Kensington, Fulham, Gibbs Green. It's just a problem with teenagers everywhere. Wherever you go in London now there is drugs, I think. Everywhere you go it's a place which is quieter than the other one but this problem you can find them everywhere in London. (Wave two)

Moreover, she noted that the social problems that existed in West Kensington might actually be more acute in other parts of London. However, it is important to note that, to some extent, her apparent satisfaction with West Kensington as a place to live may be more about her reluctance to move to places that she was unfamiliar with, and less about her satisfaction with

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the neighbourhood *per se*; she talked on a number of occasions about the importance of 'knowing' people and being 'known'.

Cordell highlighted a number of positive attributes about life in West Kensington. For example, on a number of occasions she noted that it had a strong and close knit community. In her Wave one interview, she noted that *"there's a lot of community"* in the area and (inextricably linked to this) that she was fortunate to have excellent neighbours. For Cordell, 'community' appeared to equate to her immediate neighbours and there was little sense that she saw it as encompassing all of the residents of the West Kensington estate.

Her neighbours were often very supportive:

> *My next door neighbours, they're brilliant. (I) wouldn't change them for the world… there's a few neighbours down there that we get along good with and we've known for many years. Something happens they all come rushing to see what's going on and see if you're all right…. I'd say round here, to be honest, with you cos if there's any trouble or anything like that or you're in need of anything, all you have to do is knock on the door and ask one of the neighbours. Or something like that. The ones that we talk to and keep in touch with yeah. (Wave one)*

She felt that the *"rapport"* that she had with her neighbours only existed because she had lived in West Kensington for a long period of time.

> *Yes, I don't think you'd get it anywhere else unless you lived somewhere for a certain amount of years. You wouldn't have that rapport. That's what I believe. (Wave two)*

Cordell noted that living in an area with close community ties could be both a *"good and bad thing"*. A recurring theme to emerge from all three of her interviews was that she did not like the fact that (in her eyes) everyone appeared to 'know her business'. Her and her partner's strategy for dealing with this perceived intrusion was to *"keep ourselves to ourselves"*. This was clearly evident when she talked about her shopping trips to the main shopping area in West Kensington: North End Road, and her desire to remain anonymous:

> *I hate North End Road … I try to avoid it because North End Road's a place where you see everybody you know. And that's where you've got your Sainsbury's; your Iceland, (where I do) do my shopping.*

> *Sometimes (knowing lots of people) … it can be a bad thing. I mean sometimes I dread going down North End Road market as people will come-up to me and want to start talking … but when I'm busy, that's the last thing I want to do. They're what I call acquaintances. They're not friends but acquaintances. They're a nice lot but sometimes they do my head in … I've got a really busy life.*

Cordell noted that West Kensington had a number of social problems. She noted that drug dealing was a particular problem as was the antisocial behaviour of teenagers and young men who 'hung around' in gangs on the estate. She noted that these problems had become so severe that residents on the estate routinely referred to it as being on located on the "front line", with (historically) the police being a very visible presence.

Interestingly, she noted that many of the perpetrators of crime and anti-social-behaviour that occurred on the estate were not from the area.

On a number of occasions Cordell noted how West Kensington had deteriorated as a place to live and how, as a result, its reputation had declined. For example, in her Wave one interview she noted: *"it's a case of this area used to be so nice"*. Although she spoke very highly of the area's New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme, she felt that it had not been able to reverse the (downward) trajectory of the neighbourhood.

Furthermore, while she noted that the NDC had developed the infrastructure of West Kensington, there was a still dearth of facilities, activities and amenities for young people living on the estate. She felt that this was the reason that why so many of them congregated in public spaces on the estate.

> *More things (are needed) for young kids. When I was growing up just across there - they've knocked it down, though - there was a youth club …. just over there opposite the surgery, we used to go there. There used to be so many different things for kids. But now the reason why kids congregate now is because there's nothing for them now. There's no youth clubs. No youth centres. So parents don't really want their kids and*

10.7   West Marsh, Grimsby

Of the six case study areas, West Marsh was most strongly invested with a narrative of decline, linked to the loss of traditional employment, problems of crime and antisocial behaviour, high turnover, a degraded physical environment and some social tensions. While similar in economic and social trajectory to Hillside, there was little evidence of any resurgence in its fortunes 'around the corner' from planned regeneration and redevelopment.

West Marsh was one of the more (economically) isolated areas in the research, where concerns about future levels of employment were especially prominent in the responses about the impact of the recession (Batty and Cole, 2010).   Some residents had extended job search patterns to remain in employment. This could involve travelling vast distances to find and then keep hold of a job, often with negative consequences for family life, as Geraldine (35-44) noted:

> *My partner's brother does the same job [off-shore rigger] but again he has to work away for them to have that life, so it's weighing up the pros and cons ... I personally would rather have my husband home every night, especially when you've got the kids. My best friend, she has got a three year old but she doesn't see her dad for six weeks at a time.*

Communities such as West Marsh, where low wages and casual employment were already embedded in the local economy, were starting to suffer even more as a result of the recession. The decline of the fishing industry in Grimsby, for example, which primarily affected male unemployment, was now being followed by the closure of food processing plants (Parkinson *et al*, 2010), where many of the women in West Marsh had worked shifts.

The pattern of social relationships was rather different in West Marsh than in the other areas, and the evolution of the local population had followed a different path. There were few cases of long-standing local family ties and many of the respondents had been 'dislodged' from other parts of the town or county and 'ended up' in West Marsh, not least because the housing was more affordable than elsewhere. Many participants in West Marsh seemed especially vulnerable to being exposed to the negative effects of the downturn, as they had least room for manoeuvre – either through alternative opportunities in the labour market or in access to other social resources – whether in locally provided public services, voluntary and community groups and activities, or through social and family networks.

While West Marsh was homogenous on the basis of ethnicity, it was marked by sharp divisions according to age, with middle-aged and elderly residents shrinking from inhabiting public space in the area due to concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime. Social networks here were more fragile than in other case studies. For example we found that social networks were *less* pronounced amongst the longer standing residents in West Marsh than amongst newcomers to Wensley Fold.

In contrast to other areas, residents in West Marsh tended to be more critical about their neighbourhood. Holly's response was typical of such sentiments: *"I'm stuck. I hate it. I'd do anything to get out"*. There was little sense that the neighbourhood's

fortunes would improve in the future, either in terms of economic recovery or by public intervention. However, our research revealed mixed messages. Some participants believed that that there was a general lack of self-respect which manifested itself in the physical deterioration of the neighbourhood, and for some their health and sense of security was significantly and negatively affected by anti-social behaviour. However, there were some participants who were more positive about the neighbourhood and its effects on their lives, particularly where their lives had been worse elsewhere. Similar to other case studies, participants in West Marsh, differentiated different streets in the estate as being more or less problematic, both in terms of crime and antisocial behaviour (e.g. the prevalence of gangs in certain streets), but also physically - low quality, poorly maintained housing (see Mel's story below). Tenure was also a differentiator - the growth of the private rented sector was viewed negatively, by accommodating transient households, and being associated with the arrival of Eastern Europeans who were often viewed to be problematic (Bashir and Flint, 2010).

There was a pervasive sense that perceptions of anti-social behaviour, crime and the transient nature of a proportion of the population had undermined the capacity or willingness to interact with other residents – the 'defensive ambivalence' described in Chapter 6, where trust was in short supply relative to other case study areas. While there were some strong family ties similar to Wensley Fold and Oxgangs, these were less likely to be combined with networks of family and friends; instead, networks had a tighter, defensive structure that centred on families where such ties existed. The prevalence of shift work amongst the participants may also have been a factor that detracted from the development of closer social interaction with neighbours. What stood out most strongly in West Marsh was the social isolation of some individuals, especially among young people and some older residents who did not live near (supportive) family members. This was perhaps a reflection of the impermanence and lack of choice that characterised moves into the area. In a similar vein, residents' attachment to place was low relative to other case studies. Residents often voiced a desire to move to 'better areas', often citing nearby villages outside the main urban area of Grimsby.

Mel - life in West Marsh

Mel is in her early twenties and has lived in Grimsby all her life. In 2008, she had recently left her family home to live with her partner and young daughter in private rented property close by. Having responsibilities for childcare, running the home and managing the household budget was challenging and she frequently made sacrifices to ensure her daughter was well cared for.

Mel grew up in West Marsh, and knows a significant number of her neighbours. When we initially spoke with her, she felt safe living there, but acknowledged that there was a degree of antisocial behaviour:

> I know most people on the West Marsh and I know the good 'uns and I know the bad 'uns and obviously I know them all.

However, when Mel was burgled in 2009, her attitude changed dramatically. She felt less safe, was much less likely to go out at night and told us that, *"there is a lot of crime"*. Mel's family situation had also changed. She and her partner had separated after having their second child. Mel had custody of the children, and received financial and practical support from their father, who visited them regularly. She had also moved to a different street in West Marsh, for reasons of affordability and because of her fear of crime:

> It's so much better, the area's so much quieter with it being a little off street, there started to be a lot of trouble round Store Street, we had a drug dealer living down the street and their windows was put in every night cos they weren't getting what they wanted and trouble fighting and all sorts.

The move worked out very well for her:

Me life's better here because I feel safer leaving the kids to go in the garden to play when I'm just pottering about in the house … where in the old one I wouldn't. I'd be happy for her [daughter] to play up and down the street with her friends when she got a bit older. I wouldn't before.

Mel, therefore, clearly differentiated between different streets within the neighbourhood:

… with this being a little street it's loads better, I feel safer in me own home, …I don't feel I have to have the door locked…before I had a Yale lock where every time my door shut it was shut and me back door was permanently locked and I wouldn't leave me kitchen windows open while I was in the front room and stuff like that.

…living down there [previous accommodation] you think all areas are the same and you look at them but all of Grimsby isn't the same and I've realised that moving 'ere, you don't have your gangs that you get and the noise and racing down the street…

In 2010 Mel's life was more settled, and she voiced an aspiration to buy the property and crucially, stay in West Marsh:

…if the opportunity ever come up to buy this I'd go for it, there's a lot I'd do, it would take time but I'd certainly stay.

11. Conclusion

This study had examined the salience of 'place' in the daily lives of a sample of residents living in six low income neighbourhoods in Britain in the period 2008-2010. It was suggested in Chapter 2 that until quite recently much of the discussion in the urban studies literature on the impact of place on neighbourhood attachment and neighbourhood effects had tended to rely on *compositional* explanations. These studies looked at the attributes of the population (or groups within the population) in question and how they changed over time, if possible controlling for the 'moving escalator effect' as some households moved out and others moved in. *Contextual* explanations have focused more on opportunity structures and the degree of social and physical connectedness of neighbourhoods to opportunities elsewhere. The degree of isolation or connection did prove to be an important discriminating factor in explaining how the six communities had developed differently over time and in comparison with other areas.

The approach in this study followed in the path of other work (Allen, 2005; Robertson *et al*, 2008; Watt, 2006) which has been based more on the accounts of those who live there, developing *collective* explanations of local neighbourhood variations, emphasising the distinctive socio-cultural and historical features of the communities in question. This approach therefore involved the interweaving of individual biography and local history, through examining patterns of change, and the impact of any major periods of disruption, discontinuity or transformation, and considers the way the physical aspects of place embody individual and collective histories. All this can give a different reading on what matters to residents, what is seen as valuable about their area and what needs to be preserved and what changed. In terms of a slightly different vocabulary, it can be expressed as being concerned with the 'use value' rather than the 'exchange value' of place.

These experiences and attitudes among the sample of residents in each of the six neighbourhoods suggest that one needs to be cautious in relying too much on the attributes of the population in order to assess the strength of attachment to neighbourhood. It is necessary to dig beneath the surface. Social networks were, for example, more pronounced among the relatively recent residents on Wensley Fold than the longer standing residents in West Marsh; respondents felt 'trapped' in both in the centre of London (West Kensington) and in an isolated town Amlwch). Both the area that was a pocket of relative deprivation amid wider affluence (Oxgangs) and the area within an equally deprived district (Hillside) were seen as equally 'ordinary' by those who lived there. What did seem to count more was the pattern of residential settlement over time and the degree of turbulence or stability created as a result, the proportion of younger people in areas where the public realm was eroding, and the extent to which the wider neighbourhood was a self-contained or a more 'porous' geographical entity for those who lived there. The historical narrative of the area, and the collective experiences that narrative comprises, acted as a key signifier of current social and community dynamics.

This research emphasis, we felt, helped to capture better the different motivations, priorities and concerns of residents in more deprived neighbourhoods, and their

preparedness to face up to new social or economic pressures. In particular, by concentrating on processes of change over time, it provided insights into the response of existing residents to selective migration over time, and this often proved a crucial ingredient in levels of attachment to the neighbourhood and sense of belonging, as the contrasting experiences of residents in Wensley Fold and Amlwch, for example, indicated. The pattern and progress of in-migration to such areas was critical. A sustained period of in-migration from a distinctive national or cultural group may lead on to the ancillary revitalisation of communal space, increased primary school rolls etc. Whether this was subsequently perceived as 'shared' or 'segregated' space by the existing and the new communities was crucial and more attention needs to be given to such processes of transition at neighbourhood level.

While three of the 'traditional' communities of the six were marked by narratives of loss and decline (although there were countervailing views as well) this was not the case in the other three neighbourhoods. The passage of time proved to be a key reference point for established residents, running the rule on their present situation against a remembered past. If the comparison of their own circumstances was not entirely temporal, it tended to be linked to the (variable) fortunes of other members of their family, both now and in the past. While reference might be made to others (and other places) who were seen to be worse off than oneself, comparisons with more affluent people were either non-existent, or neutral in judgement.

In terms of the spatial factors affecting the perceptions and experiences of residents in the six neighbourhoods, place still matters, for several reasons. First, forces of economic, social and demographic change could result in the major transformation of neighbourhoods, with significant impacts for residents. Second, these place impacts were particularly important for residents on lower-incomes who viewed their future as being connected to their existing neighbourhood, regardless of the changes occurring within it and in a context where they had relatively limited power to influence these changes. Third, place matters because the nature of neighbourhood change and the social and spatial experience of poverty varied between different types of neighbourhood.

The notion that fixed geographies have been eclipsed by a networked society filled with aspatial, mobile, flexible subjects is a considerable overstatement. Neighbourhoods are still relevant sites to explore to understand social and spatial organisation of urban life, but they are not 'containers'. The findings emphasised the permeability of the neighbourhood as bounded space, in terms of the daily routines of most respondents in each of the neighbourhoods, but also the differential value placed in the opportunities for social interaction at neighbourhood level, both between different groups and across the neighbourhoods. An understanding of the structure of opportunity (housing, labour market, public amenities) within and outside neighbourhoods is also critical.

In terms of any qualitative assessment of 'place effects', the situation is complex. It is not possible to compress the responses into a standard position. There were, for example, often differences between the personal trajectories of respondents and those of the places they lived in. At other times inconsistent or contradictory views were proffered. There was no such thing as the 'community voice'. A good example is the extent to which respondents felt that greater integration of White and Asian groups has occurred in Wensley Fold, Blackburn. Residents offered differing and, on occasion, ambiguous attitudes - a 'tried and tested' rhetoric about 'them and us', for example, was followed by instances of friendships, associations and the shared use of neighbourhood resources between the groups.

In terms of the different extent of diversity in the six neighbourhoods, Tunstall and Lupton (2009) have suggested that the two main mechanisms by which residents

might be expected to benefit from 'exposure' to a more socially mixed neighbourhood are through shared area resources and social interactions. This is confirmed by these findings. The extent to which the pattern of population change helped to maintain the shared spaces of the case study neighbourhoods emerged as a critical factor in the views of different social or ethnic groups in the locality.

The consequences of displacement and dispersal in Hillside, which predated the regeneration programme but had been accelerated by its introduction, were generally considered to have been detrimental to the maintenance of local social networks. In Oxgangs, conflicts were expressed about 'locals' and 'newcomers' in competition over access to existing social housing, but this did not extend to the new development that was now taking place. In Wensley Fold, the renaissance of the area had been reflected in more positive views about the heterogeneity of the area and fewer signs of conflict between different groups than before, though this was often nuanced by reference to separate communities in the neighbourhood.

The two areas that had been subject to relatively modest interventions without an explicit objective to promote mix, Wensley Fold and Oxgangs, seemed to be in the process of a relatively stable transition to greater neighbourhood diversity (on certain measures) without overt conflict or division between different identifiable groups of residents - even if shared social interaction was often limited. The neighbourhood that has received a battery of measures to promote greater tenure and income diversity, Hillside, has become marked by increasing fragmentation and division. And the community that was ostensibly already relatively mixed on several counts, West Kensington, may be shortly decimated and displaced – due to a plan supported by the local authority with the stated aim of producing more 'mixed and balanced communities' in Hammersmith and Fulham.

The research findings also highlighted the need for studies of poverty or disadvantaged neighbourhoods to consider the full spectrum of activities that could be considered as constituting work, beyond that of paid employment. They showed how work could have a negative impact upon financial and emotional well-being through combinations of low pay, long and unsocial hours and job insecurity. Such employment could also generate stress and tensions for the individuals directly concerned and for other household members. Whilst these findings corroborate many of the negative portrayals of low-skilled, low-paid work in other studies, it was also the case that these forms of employment could bring a number of valued benefits. These include financial independence, social contact, a sense of purpose, a feeling of 'making a difference' and social status. This suggests individuals can invest meaning and significance in employment *in spite* of otherwise onerous terms and conditions.

Economic change and the restructuring of employment opportunity were not simply processes which determined the outcomes for individuals living in the areas affected. They were, rather, the context in which individuals sought to negotiate and manage the economic opportunities or constraints they face. The extent to which they continue to be able to do this may be constrained, however, if the predicted rises in worklessness in the coming year materialise. Some of these areas have never fully recovered from the shocks of past recessions. A return to a period marked by austerity and economic decline may test to the limit the ability of even very active individuals who are trying to navigate turbulent and fragile labour markets.

Some workless individuals clearly felt the weight of moral judgements, while other residents engaged in unpaid activities outside the labour market appeared to have constructed identities that, at least from their perspective, conferred legitimacy and respect. These activities also delivered a number of benefits including a sense of purpose, social contact and a feeling of 'making a difference' to the wider community

or society as whole. Moreover, the benefits associated with particular forms of activity, especially volunteering, sometimes seemed to equal or even outweigh those delivered by paid work. This challenges the viability of a straight distinction between the positive impact of paid work on well-being and the negative effects of worklessness. At the same time, it highlights the need to study a broad range of activities in understanding work and its relation to poverty and place-based disadvantage. Debates about the economic link between worklessness, paid work and poverty could perhaps benefit from a concurrent focus on the potential for other forms of unpaid activity to alleviate some of the social consequences of living on a low income.

Experiences of work and the relationship between work, place and identity are therefore complex and nuanced. No single narrative can capture the diversity of experiences and perspectives of work, especially when unpaid work is also taken into account. Whilst work undoubtedly continues to matter for residents in low-income neighbourhoods, it matters in different ways according to range of a variables including age, gender, employment status. The processes of seeking and securing work and how employment status or orientations to work provide the basis for esteem or identity often require *active* management from those affected.

A further objective of this research programme was to contribute to a better understanding of how low incomes impacted on people's everyday lives. It explored what might be termed the *paradox of agency*. It found that living on low incomes generated anxiety, low self-esteem and detrimental psychological effects for many individuals. People internalised a personal and self-critical explanation for their circumstances, based on a sense of not being clever or resourceful enough or having made the wrong choices. In such processes, structural explanations (such as de-industrialisation) for their position were negated in favour of self-critique and the perceived ability to determine one's own outcomes.

However, this focus on agency also generated the perceived possibility of a future improvement in individual circumstances and prospects. Far from expressing a sense of passive fatalism or dependency, individuals articulated the importance of self-reliance, resilience, autonomy and personal responsibility. This did not support the idea that disadvantaged neighbourhoods have a culture made up of social norms and values that are somehow different from the rest. Rather, it echoed longstanding working class values of pride, independence and respectability (Batty and Flint, 2010).

Living in a particular neighbourhood was not viewed as a particularly strong driver of self-esteem, although for some individuals, distinctions based upon length of residence or nationality were important to their self-identity (and their views of others). However, neighbourhoods were important for individuals' ontological security and this could be severely affected by crime and anti-social behaviour.

Finally, and perhaps most fundamentally of all, it would appear, from this study at least, that the prominence given to continually rising personal economic prosperity and the consumption of goods assumes that these policy priorities reflect those in contemporary British society. This research has provided considerable evidence to show the negative consequences of low incomes on the wellbeing of individuals and the need for continuing, and further, government action to address this, especially within the context of growing financial inequality. However, it is also the case that individuals' self-worth, and their judgement of, and interactions with, others need not be dependent upon consumerist notions of fulfilment through material goods and symbols of social status. Many individuals regarded themselves as relatively fortunate in comparison to others in greater ('basic') poverty.

There was a common sense that self-respect and respect from others was achieved through being independent and not reliant on either other family members or, in some cases, the benefits system. Crucially, this respect was related to effort and determination rather than the actual achievement of higher incomes or more material goods. While economic forces were predominant in shaping opportunities for the residents in each of the case study areas, and the conditions of the neighbourhoods where they lived, they did not constitute the main factor driving what they took pride in and valued about their lives.

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A1

Appendix 1: Case Study Selection

A1.1 Poverty, Place and Diversity: The Selection of Wensley Fold and West Marsh

The case study selection was designed to support such analysis, allowing the experiences of diverse groups in distinct places to be explored. It also aimed to facilitate the comparative analysis of the experiences of people with shared identities living in divergent places.

Under this theme a long list of local authorities were initially selected, and then one was chosen that was deemed 'diverse' and a very homogenous local authority selected on contrast. The following method was used:

- calculating for all English local authorities entropy scores for *tenure* (three group: owner occupation, social renting and private renting) and *ethnicity* (two group: white and non-white);

- Z-standardising and combining to create a 'diversity index' for each LA; and

- selecting only those local authorities in most deprived quartile of an index that combines a LAs standardised average score on the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 and the LAs standardised Local Concentration Index.

Because most inner London boroughs have a distinctive and more diverse profile, non-London Local authorities were assessed separately. This provided two separate lists: one of the twenty 20 LAs with the highest 'diversity index' scores (10 most diverse in both London and non-London) (Table A1.1) and the 10 LAs with the lowest 'diversity index' scores (Table A1.2). Blackburn with Darwen and North East Lincolnshire were selected from this list as a 'diverse' and 'non-diverse' local authority respectively.

Table A1.1: 'Diverse' Local Authorities (London and non-London)

LA	Region	ONS LA classification	DEFRA Classification	Rank Diversity Index	Tenure Entropy Index	Ethnicity Entropy Index	Combined Deprivation Index	IMD 2004 Score	Local Concentration
Lambeth	London	London Cosmo.	Major Urban	1	5	7	37	23	82
Newham	London	London Cosmo.	Major Urban	2	7	6	11	11	60
Haringey	London	London Cosmo.	Major Urban	3	6	14	15	13	46
Westminster	London	London Centre	Major Urban	4	1	20	35	39	19
Camden	London	London Centre	Major Urban	5	2	19	23	19	55
Tower Hamlets	London	London Centre	Major Urban	6	16	1	4	4	22
Hackney	London	London Cosmo.	Major Urban	7	14	5	5	5	47
Brent	London	London Cosmo.	Major Urban	8	20	2	88	81	87
Southwark	London	London Cosmo.	Major Urban	9	23	8	27	17	83
Lewisham	London	London Cosmo.	Major Urban	10	19	15	87	57	138
Leicester	East Midlands	Centres with Industry	Large Urban	15	29	11	28	31	29
Manchester	North West	Centres with Industry	Major Urban	17	8	34	2	2	3
Birmingham	West Midlands	Centres with Industry	Major Urban	22	36	17	14	15	15
Nottingham	East Midlands	Centres with Industry	Large Urban	23	15	39	6	7.5	9
Wolverhampton	West Midlands	Centres with Industry	Major Urban	26	42	26	38	35	45
Sandwell	West Midlands	Centres with Industry	Major Urban	30	46	33	19	16	52
Blackburn with Darwen	North West	Centres with Industry	Other Urban	38	114	28	31	34	25
Bradford	Yorkshire & H	Centres with Industry	Major Urban	39	132	30	24	30	11
Newcastle upon Tyne	North East	Regional Centres	Major Urban	40	26	82	16	20	5
Liverpool	North West	Regional Centres	Major Urban	41	21	99	1	1	2

Rank of 1 - Most/Highest

Maximum rank: 354 - Least/lowest

Table A1.2: 'Least Diverse' Local Authorities

					Rank				
LA	Region	ONS LA classification	DEFRA Classification	Diversity Index	Tenure Entropy Index	Ethnicity Entropy Index	Combined Deprivation Index	IMD 2004 Score	Local Concentration
Barrow-in-Furness	North West	Industrial H'ands	Other Urban	300	254	339	26	29	16
Ashfield	East Midlands	Man. Towns	Other Urban	237	192	303	71	66	86
Sefton	North West	Industrial H'ands	Major Urban	230	204	241	67	78	42
Wigan	North West	Man. Towns	Major Urban	224	179	273	49	53	48
Derwentside	North East	Industrial H'ands	Rural-80	222	142	349	72	62	98
Wirral	North West	Industrial H'ands	Large Urban	203	170	225	42	48	8
Redcar & Cleveland	North East	Industrial H'ands	Large Urban	202	138	306	41	44	14
NE Lincolnshire	Yorkshire & H	Man. Towns	Other Urban	197	150	256	46	52	31
St. Helens	North West	Industrial H'ands	Major Urban	196	136	289	34	36	27
Sedgefield	North East	Industrial H'ands	Rural-50	190	106	346	69	55	100

Rank of 1 - Most/Highest

Maximum rank: 354 - Least/lowest

A1.2   Poverty, Connectivity and Cohesion: The Selection of Hillside and Oxgangs

Hillside

Under the theme of poverty, connectivity and cohesion, a local authority was to be selected to represent 'deprivation in the midst of wider deprivation'. The selection method was as follows:

- Z-standardise and combine a local authority's average score on the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 and the Local Concentration Index. This index highlights deprived LAs that have the most deprived local concentrations.

Table A1.3 displays the 10 LAs that score highest under this measure. Knowsley was selected from this list.

Table A1.3: 'Deprivation in the midst of wider deprivation

LA	Region	ONS LA classification	DEFRA Classification	Rank Combined Deprivation Index	IMD 2004 Score	Local Concentration	Extent Score
Liverpool	North West	Regional Centres	Major Urban	1	1	2	0.71
Manchester	North West	Centres with Industry	Major Urban	2	2	3	0.72
Knowsley	North West	Industrial H'lands	Major Urban	3	3	1	0.64
Tower Hamlets	London	London Centre	Major Urban	4	4	22	0.8
Hackney	London	London Cosmo.	Major Urban	5	5	47	0.83
Nottingham	East Midlands	Centres with Industry	Large Urban	6	7.5	9	0.63
Islington	London	London Centre	Major Urban	7	6	44	0.75
Hull	Yorkshire & H	Industrial H'lands	Large Urban	8	9	6	0.57
Easington	North East	Industrial H'lands	Rural-50	9	7.5	28	0.68
Middlesbrough	North East	Industrial H'lands	Large Urban	10	10	4	0.57

Rank of 1 - Most/Highest

Maximum rank: 354 - Least/lowest

Edinburgh

Under the theme of poverty, connectivity and cohesion, a local authority was to be selected to represent a 'pocket' of deprivation in the face of wider affluence.

The selection method for the case study based in Scotland was:

- to compute for all 32 Scottish Local authorities their average rank on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 2006 and a Local Concentration Index (see definitions below); and

- subtract the Local Concentration Index from the average rank on the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2006.

Glasgow was excluded from the analysis – partly because of a concurrent major longitudinal study being co-ordinated by the Centre for Population Health at the University of Glasgow (the 'GoWell' project) and partly because most exercises that scope the scale and intensity of deprivation in Scotland are inevitably dominated by Glasgow. Table A1.4 presents for each local authority the difference between their average rank on SIMD 2006 and their Local Concentration score i.e. those areas with pockets of deprivation far worse than the average for the district as a whole. From this list Edinburgh emerges as the most appropriate local authority for selection. Edinburgh has the greatest difference between the average rank of the most deprived data zones that contain exactly 10 per cent of the LA population and the average rank for all data zones.

**Table A1.4: Scottish Local Authorities; Difference and Deprivation (top 15 LAs)**

LA	LA average IMD Rank		Local Concentration		Difference IMD rank and Local concentration		
	Average rank	Rank	Average rank	Rank	Difference in average rank		Difference rank
	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(A-B)	Rank	(B-D)
Edinburgh, City of	4161	29	371	8	3790	1	21
East Renfrewshire	4965	32	1202	24	3764	2	8
East Dunbartonshire	4682	31	1369	25	3313	3	6
Aberdeen City	3844	22	595	13	3250	4	9
Stirling	3923	25	752	16	3170	5	9
Perth & Kinross	4119	28	1198	23	2922	6	5
Renfrewshire	3166	11	389	9	2777	7	2
South Ayrshire	3331	14	583	12	2748	8	2
Fife	3338	15	629	14	2708	9	1
South Lanarkshire	3113	10	412	11	2701	10	-1
Angus	3702	21	1054	22	2648	11	-1
Aberdeenshire	4457	30	1881	30	2576	12	0
Falkirk	3217	12	663	15	2554	13	-3
Midlothian	3507	19	966	21	2541	14	-2
Dumfries & Galloway	3420	17	886	17	2534	15	0

Source: SIMD and calculations

Neighbourhoods within Edinburgh

The thematic map below (Figure 1) shows how Edinburgh data zones perform on the SIMD 2006. Red indicates a data zone is in the bottom thirty per cent of deprived data zones in Scotland. Data zones in the top five percent are coloured dark blue, with those listed in the best 30 per cent to five per cent coloured light blue.

Figure A1.1: Edinburgh Data Zone IMD Scores
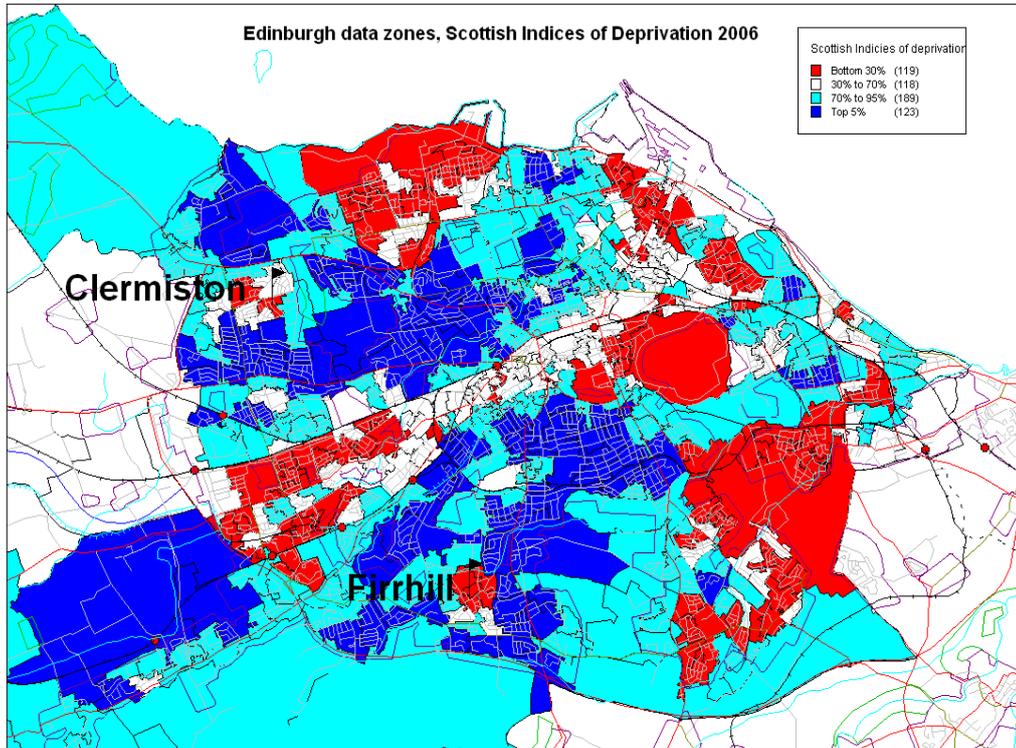
From inspection of this map - Clermiston (in the west of Edinburgh) and Firrhill/Oxgangs (in the south) emerged as the two case study neighbourhoods that might represent a 'pocket' of deprivation in the face of wider affluence (i.e. 'red' surrounded by 'blue'). Following visits to the area and discussions with local authority officers, Oxgangs (the name used locally, rather than Firrhill) was selected. The juxtaposition of wealth and apparent poverty can be seen within a few metres along one main road (when Oxgangs Avenue turns into Greenbank Crescent).

A1.3 Poverty and Mobility: The Selection of West Kensington and Amlwch

West Kensington

Hammersmith and Fulham was selected as an urban 'high churn' area, to contrast with Amlwch (see below). The long list was derived from LAs in the most deprived quartile of an index that combines a LAs standardised average score on the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 and the LAs standardised Local Concentration Index. From this only LAs classified by DEFRA as: Major Urban, Large Urban or Other Urban were chosen. The percentage inflow and percentage outflow from the 2001 Census were added together to denote 'churn'.

Table A1.5 lists the five LAs inside and the five Urban LAs outside London with highest combined inflow and outflow rate. Many LAs in this table tend to be those with large student populations.

Table A1.5: Urban and High Churn Local Authorities

LA	Region	ONS LA classification	DEFRA Classification	Per cent		Rank			
				In-flow	Out-flow	Diversity Index	Combined Deprivation Index	IMD 2004 Score	Local Concentration
Westminster	London	London Centre	Major Urban	15.7	11.2	4	35	39	19
H'smith & Fulham	London	London Centre	Major Urban	13.0	10.8	12	83	65	115
Camden	London	London Centre	Major Urban	13.2	10.5	5	23	19	55
Islington	London	London Centre	Major Urban	11.0	10.1	13	7	6	44
Norwich	East of England	Regional Centres	Other Urban	8.2	6.4	47	70	61	90
Nottingham	East Midlands	Centres with Industry	Large Urban	8.0	6.2	23	6	7.5	9
Manchester	North West	Centres with Industry	Major Urban	7.7	6.0	17	2	2	3
Lincoln	East Midlands	Regional Centres	Other Urban	7.0	5.8	80	65	72	59
Brighton & Hove	South East	Regional Centres	Large Urban	7.2	5.1	57	82	83	74

Rank of 1 - Most/Highest

Maximum rank: 354 - Least/lowest

Amlwch

Amlwch was selected as a town in Wales that was relatively geographically isolated with a low degree of population churn.

The selection method used was to:

- Z-standardise: the access to services component of Welsh IMD 2005, Welsh IMD 2005 score, population turnover 2003-04 from mid-year estimates (at MSOA level) and average travel to work distance for the 2001 census

- sum access to services, population turnover and travel to work

- sort on this sum for 30% most deprived LSOAs on WIMD 2005 only.

Table A1.6 presents the 25 lower level super output areas that score highest on the measure above. From this list Amlwch Port (Isle of Anglesey) was selected as the case study as it scored most highly on the composite measure and is a relatively isolated town.

Table A1.6: Low Turnover and Relative Isolation: Neighbourhoods in Wales

LSOA	Access to services (WIMD 2005)	WIMD 2005	Population Turnover	Travel to work	Isolation/ Turnover Index (sum without IMD)
	Z-Scores				
Amlwch Port	0.30	0.37	0.81	2.48	3.59
Talysarn	1.03	0.50	0.79	1.58	3.41
Bryngwran	1.23	0.46	0.55	1.41	3.19
Cwm-twrch	0.47	0.37	1.20	1.11	2.77
Llangyndeyrn 1	1.39	0.64	0.48	0.87	2.73
Garnant	0.93	0.39	0.60	1.14	2.67
Llanybydder 2	1.00	0.35	0.33	1.05	2.38
Glynneath 1	0.31	1.12	1.18	0.88	2.37
Trimsaran 2	0.95	0.80	0.58	0.82	2.35
Maesteg West 3	0.92	0.64	0.55	0.85	2.31
Milford: Hubberston 2	0.06	0.91	0.77	1.46	2.30
Glanamman 2	0.43	0.70	0.60	1.24	2.27
Onllwyn	0.78	0.90	0.74	0.71	2.23
Kingsland	-0.14	0.54	1.07	1.27	2.21
Lower Brynamman	0.13	0.54	0.58	1.45	2.16
Milford: West	0.05	1.02	0.77	1.30	2.12
Pontardawe 1	0.69	0.39	0.67	0.71	2.07
Vaynor 1	1.20	0.86	0.56	0.19	1.96
Blaengwrach	0.39	0.38	1.18	0.34	1.91
Hengoed (Carmarthenshire) 2	0.72	0.66	0.11	1.02	1.85
Blackmill 1	0.53	1.45	0.77	0.53	1.83
Saron 1	0.75	0.45	0.33	0.74	1.83
Glanamman 1	0.56	0.73	0.60	0.67	1.82
Aberteifi/Cardigan – Teifi	0.53	1.30	0.65	0.60	1.78
Bedlinog 1	0.58	1.48	0.86	0.16	1.61

Source: (1) Welsh Index of Deprivation 2005, (2) Mid year population estimates, (3) 2001 Census