Women’s Stories of Home: Meanings of Home for Ethnic Women Living in Established Migrant Communities

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ABSTRACT

The subject of this thesis is the meaning of home for ethnic women living in Sydney. I argue that housing policy has paid little attention to the complex and significant role that home plays in our daily lives. Multicultural issues have also been missing from the agenda of planning theory and practice, which is unacceptable given the diverse nature of contemporary Australian society. My starting point is a broad conceptualisation and understanding of the notion of home. Both positive and negative imagery is found in the literature, which spans many disciplines and theoretical positions. Multiculturalism is also considered, focussing on its relationship to housing and urban planning policy. The ethnic woman's voice has, until now, been rarely heard in this discourse. From a feminist qualitative research perspective, I use phenomenology as my starting point for indepth interviewing with forty women from the Greek, Arabic and Vietnamese communities. The respondents live in established communities in and around the Local Government Area of Canterbury, located in Sydney's west. Detailed thematic analysis of the interview transcripts disclosed multi-dimensional meanings of home, with individual differences and commonalities across the three groups emerging. Interpretations of the data focussed on the latter, revealing that the physical house and garden are central to the meaning of home for these migrant women. The dwelling is a significant source of power, challenging the early feminist critiques that see it as negative and restrictive. Meanings of home are also closely linked to the experience of migration and the impact of loss. Not only can a microcosm of the lost culture be re-created in this residential form, the house is a powerful indicator of success, helping to atone for feelings of profound dispossession. The study demonstrates the appropriateness of qualitative methods for urban planning. These research techniques enable a fuller understanding of the complex and rich nature of people's attachment to place. They also allow unforeseen issues to emerge and value different ways of knowing. The thesis concludes with a consideration of the implications of both the substantive and process components of the work for urban planning and housing policy.
Acknowledgments

After a tentative conception, a long and eventful pregnancy was initiated. It finally heralded an exhausting labour requiring a disciplined response, commitment and determination. This thesis before you is the result. Born out of hard work, sometimes joy, occasional inspiration and a belief in what I had to say...
...a woman must be willing to burn hot, burn with passion, burn with words, with ideas, with desire for whatever it is that she truly loves (Estes, 1992: 97).

The writing of a doctoral thesis is an incredibly long, arduous and at times, lonely task. Nevertheless, there are many opportunities for human interaction. It is these that have made my experience overwhelmingly rewarding, both personally and professionally. I owe an enormous amount to those who have encouraged, inspired and taught me along the way.

My greatest debt is to the women who shared their stories, honestly and courageously. Without their generosity of spirit and time, their trust in me and my work, this project would be but an interesting idea. I will never forget their kindness in taking me into their homes, both present and past, and the willingness with which they opened their hearts to reveal intimate and sometimes painful memories.

My supervisor, Dr James Conner, has also been central to my learning and growth during this period. He has maintained his encouragement throughout, positively critiquing my reflections and questioning ideas when they needed clarifying. His belief in me as I challenged orthodox methods and patriarchal theories never waivered. This sustained me during the blackest times and gave me the strength to continue. I can never thank him enough.

Associate Professor Robert Zehner, my co-supervisor and colleague at the University of New South Wales (UNSW), has been a constant source of practical assistance. He has painstakingly pointed out grammatical mistakes and inconsistencies in arguments and presentation of the text. His ongoing support for my teaching and research role at the University, has publicly demonstrated his faith in me. I have found this humbling, as well as a great motivation for bringing the project to a completion.

My current employer, the Faculty of the Built Environment, UNSW, generously awarded me a grant to assist with the project. This enabled the purchase of reliable equipment and transcriptions, as well as a small token payment for interviewees.

A continuous flow of interest in, and enthusiasm for my work has come from friends and colleagues. This has fed my need to be in relationship with others at a time when the task frequently demanded solitude. There were also many generous individuals who gave freely of their guidance and expertise.

My former colleagues at the NSW Department of Planning helped by pointing out pertinent references. Barbara provided valuable information, entrusting me with original documents. Maureen shared interesting ideas about the meaning of home, as did Sophea. Mary encouraged me to speak through feminism and did not deny me my true feelings. Peter offered insightful comments and advice as well as ongoing encouragement. Glenn went beyond the bounds of friendship in taking on the task of my special support person during the writing and synthesis stage. His loyalty, professional commitment and understanding of my need to report achievements, no matter how small, was inspiring. Danny was a willing listening
post, always reminding me to go back to the “so what?” question. Rob’s cryptic notes sent me off to the library with a purpose and were instrumental in keeping me abreast of the most recent literature. Helen, Alison and Elizabeth were encouraging and supportive of the struggle. Thanks especially to Helen for her insightfulness at some very critical moments. Joan and Kathy kept focussing on the finish. Chris helped me to be more critical of my use and arrangement of words.

Many of my students have displayed a keen interest in the research, challenging me to make concepts and issues clearer. Kate and Larissa were especially wonderful, their hard work invaluable. So too Edwina’s thorough checking.

Jackie did a lion’s share of the typing, formatted the document and gave freely of her love and friendship. Trevor, Bob and Margaret ably assisted with graphics. The nurses’ research group provided a haven where it was safe to be honest and declare ignorance. Similarly, co-supervision with Penny and Susan was a nurturing and supportive experience. In the Writer’s Group, Margaret, Jane and I shared the pain and joy of getting ideas into shape. Special thanks to Margaret for pioneering the trail and contributing her thoughts over coffee after swims at the uni pool.

Peter’s timely reminder to drop my preciousness helped to shift me at a point when I was overwhelmed with the enormity of it all. So too did Tom’s suggestion about going back to my initial inspiration, just as the sculptor returns to the markette. Cathy helped me to battle the detractors who at times undermined my confidence and belief in alternative ways of knowing and understanding the world. Adrian and Jocalyn encouraged me to focus on the things that were important. Amanda administered to tired and knotted muscles and Michele listened to my story, encouraging me to claim my own power through the process. Felicity and Melissa gave so much, patiently and painstakingly proof-reading the final manuscript. Thanks as always, for Mutti’s support throughout.

Trevor has been the long suffering spouse of a PhD candidate, weathering the highs and lows on a day-to-day basis. There have been times when my obsession with the thesis got in the way of our relationship. Even when this became difficult, Trevor continued to cook delicious spicy food and understood my need for space, both physically and emotionally. My other household companions, Kabya Min and Rasta, have purred and licked, head-butted and kept me company by curling up amongst the papers, books and pens that constantly littered my desk.

Finally, I would like to thank the home makers in my life. Ruth and Jim, my parents who gave me the first home that I knew and loved; Chris for shared flat living which heralded the beginning of my independence; and Trevor who agreed to be a special part of my life’s journey. You have all developed my understanding and personal meaning of the richness of home.
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the development of different ways of knowing and understanding in urban planning.
Women’s Stories of Home:
Meanings of Home for Ethnic Women Living
in Established Migrant Communities

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<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHRC</td>
<td>Australian Housing Research Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMCORD</td>
<td>Australian Model Code of Residential Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>Building Better Cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCA</td>
<td>Building Code of Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIMPR</td>
<td>The Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBD</td>
<td>Central Business District</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSHA</td>
<td>Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>DUAP</td>
<td>Department of Urban Affairs and Planning</td>
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<td>EAPS</td>
<td>Ethnic Affairs Policy Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA Act</td>
<td>Environmental and Planning Assessment Act, 1979</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPIs</td>
<td>Environmental Planning Instruments</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGA</td>
<td>Local Government Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>NES</td>
<td>non-English speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NESB</td>
<td>non-English speaking background</td>
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<tr>
<td>NHS</td>
<td>National Housing Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
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<tr>
<td>OMA</td>
<td>Office of Multicultural Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>SORA</td>
<td>Summary Oral Reflective Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>Sydney Statistical Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSW</td>
<td>University of New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWS</td>
<td>University of Western Sydney</td>
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ERRATA

p3, footnote 4: "NSW State Government Election" should read "NSW state government election"

p62, para 3, l2: "...the latter is expensive..." should read "...the latter is generally expensive..."

p92, para 2, l5: "...(Reinharz, 1992b: 428), but in terms..." should read "...(Reinharz, 1992b: 428). In terms..."

p98, para 4, l4: "...women in their home." should read "...women in their homes."

p148, para 2, point 3: "disciple" should read "discipline"

p161, para 1, l1: "women" should read "woman"

p246, para 2, l1: so big should read so big

p311, para 3, l5: "Fraser government" should read "Fraser Government"

p423, para 2, point 2: "...to emerge (in coming..." should read "...to emerge. (In coming..."

p431, para 2, l18: "...to hear." should read "...to be heard."
Part One

Setting the Framework
Introduction

Here through art I shall live for ever.  
Who will take me, who will go with me?  
Here I stand, my friends.  
A singer, from my heart I strew my songs,  
my fragrant songs before the face of others.  
I carve a great stone, I paint thick wood  
my song is in them.

Aztec Song (Brotherston, 1972 in Maybury-Lewis, 1992: 173)
BACKGROUND

For many years the nature of home has fascinated and intrigued me. The houses I lived in as a child and that of my grandparents hold very significant memories. Shared flat living, the experience of dwelling in solitude and my present home have a primacy in my life that is central to everything I do and who I am. Home is the place from where I start the day and my resting place when I return at night. A safe corner of the world where I can be myself and express my many parts – dreamer, nurturer, creator, worker, organiser and host. When my house is disrupted, I have to make a conscious effort to overcome the feeling that somehow I am disjointed and less than whole. My spirits are buoyed when order returns and I can, once again, retreat into a sanctuary of harmony, both on a material and spiritual level. My home is the most important constant in an ever changing and challenging world.

My undergraduate academic training in human geography officially heralded my fascination with the relationship between people and place. There were so many questions that I wanted to explore. What is it that makes a place special and what can destroy this? How and why do people connect with place? What role do daily interactions, the imagination and dreaming play in the creation of a special place? This love of geography led me to a career in urban planning, which further fuelled my passion for understanding people and place.

As a town planner working in local government, issues around neighbourhoods and domestic environments dominated much of my time. I was surprised that my colleagues never saw the concept of dwelling as more than just an important physical structure. From my personal experience I knew that the home carried significant meaning, and yet this did not rate more than a mention in housing policy. I wondered if this could explain the continuing difficulties facing policy makers trying

\footnote{My use of the term "home" is deliberate. It is more than the physical manifestation of dwelling. This is explicated in Chapter One.}
to change dwelling preferences. I pondered planning’s preoccupation with the "scientific", the observable and tangible, together with its reluctance to consider human emotions, dreams, aspirations and hopes. I questioned the centrality of physical planning in Australia and the consequent marginalisation of social and cultural issues (see for example, Watson, 1993; Llewellyn-Smith and Watson, 1992).²

Over the years, I have observed state government trying to persuade local communities that urban consolidation is good for them and that it must be implemented throughout residential areas.³ In spite of the "logical" economic and environmental arguments presented, this policy has been met with considerable and consistent opposition.⁴ Various attempts to enhance the image of flats and town houses have been slow to effect change. Bipartisan political support, the freeing up of planning legislation enabling medium-density housing and extensive public relations exercises, have all met with limited success.

² This separation has always disturbed me and throughout my career I have tried to break down the barriers. As a young and naive local government planner, I spent a lot of time visiting the community development section of the council where I worked. The office was located in a building physically separated from the main administration block, so it was difficult to drop in unnoticed. These absences from my town planning desk were often seen by my colleagues as suspicious, getting out of work and consequently, a waste of time. Conversely, my visits were always valued by the community workers keen to find out about planning issues and ways in which we could work more cooperatively and creatively together. Today in my teaching role, I am encouraging students to question the artificial compartmentalisation of physical and social planning. I focus on the interrelationships between the two and the need for planners to be much more aware of their decisions on the day-to-day lives of people.

³ Urban consolidation is the term given to the policy which aims to increase residential densities in areas already serviced with physical and social infrastructure, rather than continued development of the city’s suburban fringes. It is assumed that considerable savings in both housing and infrastructure costs will result. The single house on its own block of land is perceived as the villain in the piece, mitigating against the achievement of urban consolidation.

⁴ In the 1995 NSW State Government Election, some candidates actually based their whole campaign on opposition to the "dual occupancy" aspects of the policy (ABC, 1995).
Equally fascinating has been the response to legislation to protect traditional Australian styles of architecture. I experienced this first-hand as a zealous local planner trying to convince politicians and residents alike that stringent planning restrictions were appropriate to ensure the maintenance of historic character. The public's reaction was mixed, although concerns about the rights of a local council to dictate what could and could not be done to a private dwelling appeared central to the opposition. In spite of my professional commitment to protect local heritage, I personally experienced gnawing doubts about the proposal. In particular, I started to question the meaning of restrictions on home owners coming from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds. Did changes such as replacing old timber window frames with aluminium, creating landscaped gardens with fountains and statues, brick veneering timber cottages and removing internal fixtures such as fireplaces, connecting doors and walls, reflect more than a wish to update and reduce future maintenance? What did the large, new and highly visible house represent for the many migrants building in the area? Was it only to accommodate an extended family and to provide ample entertaining space? Could different ideas about the constituents of "taste" coexist? Whose values was I trying to perpetuate? Were they essentially middle class and Anglo-Celtic? How could they coexist with and incorporate multiculturalism? Did different cultural groups hold varying notions of home and how could planners, working in multicultural communities respond? I knew what was true for myself in terms of the importance of my own homes. I wanted to begin to explore the concept for others, to ask them about their homes, the role they play and the meaning they give to their lives.
Distinctive architecture in my study area\textsuperscript{5}

These personal, academic and professional experiences provide the backdrop to the present research.

**POSITIONING THE PERSONAL: WHERE AM I IN THIS RESEARCH?**

It is important to enunciate the assumptions that are brought to any study at the outset. The postpositivist context of this inquiry enables the acknowledgment of its value-ladenness (Lather, 1986). Research does not occur in a vacuum and is influenced at every stage by the researcher's background and value system, as well as the inquiry process itself. This thesis is no exception.

\textsuperscript{5} I took all the photographs which appear in this thesis. The one exception is the traditional Vietnamese house in Chapter Seven.
I have already outlined personal and professional interests that led me to this research. Two other influences need to be articulated.

Firstly, my academic background is in human geography, town planning and education. This helps to explain my leaning toward eclecticism and inter-disciplinary approaches. Adhering to one particular discipline can lead to a fragmentation of understanding. My focus is holistic, which has the potential to bring about a broader understanding of the phenomena being examined. This is particularly so in the area in which I am working.

Secondly, I am a feminist doing feminist research. As Callaway (1981 in Lather, 1986: 68) has stated, this position defines my purpose.

The overt ideological goal of feminist research is to correct both the 'invisibility' and the 'distortion' of female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position. This entails the substantive task of making gender a fundamental category for our understanding of the social order, 'to see the world from women's place in it'.

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6 It is important to note that there are different types of feminism which have developed over the last century (Schneir, 1995; Humm, 1992). Feminism first focussed on rights for women. Now known as first wave feminism, it was preoccupied with bringing about women's legal, educational, political, economic and professional equality with men. The focus started to shift during the '50s and '60s and continues today. Termined second wave, or radical feminism, its preoccupation is a fundamental analysis of the essential differences between men and women. The starting point was the politics of reproduction (Humm, 1992: 53), although interpretations varied according to one's theoretical and political orientation. Up until the 1990s, second wave feminism had essentialised women's oppression very much from a white, Anglo, middle class perspective. The celebration of difference, including racial and sexual orientation, continues to characterise contemporary discourse (Curthoys, 1994: 21; Humm, 1992: 54). Second wave feminism has taken the analysis of difference into nearly every academic discipline, including geography (for example, Rose, 1993a) and urban planning (for example, Little, 1994).

In situating my work, it is difficult to draw the line between first and second wave feminism (which I have only touched on here). For my purposes, Humm (1992: 53) has expressed it well "...while feminist theory and politics has different historical and national characteristics, the goal is constant - a full understanding of the effects of living the category 'woman'".

6
There are many different approaches to feminist research (see for example, Reinharz, 1992a) and considerable contemporary tension surrounding both the ideological notions of feminism and inquiry conducted under its banner. As a feminist researcher, I am motivated by a desire to enable women to speak from their lived experience in a way that does not objectify them in the research process. This means valuing the participants throughout and beyond the project. I have done this in a variety of ways (see Chapter Four). Nevertheless, I am aware of the current debate and the naivety of earlier hopes for feminist research (see Chapter Three).

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The physical dwelling is the site for intense human activities and inter-personal relationships. In most societies, it is the place where significant life events occur. People spend a lot of time at home and invest both financial and emotional energy into the place that they inhabit. In fact, homes can be described as "...among the most central physical settings of human life" (Altman, 1993: XIX). Given this primacy it is critical that planners understand what the home means to its inhabitants, in order to better provide for their needs. Central to this study is the assumption that the home is more than a significant physical environment. It embodies symbolic meanings, which reflect an individual's values as well as societal cultural norms.

My literature searches in mostly planning and architectural sources located a vast and growing body of knowledge on the multi-dimensional nature of home. My explorations also revealed an ignorance of the notion of home in planning and housing policy. I found gaps in the understanding of home for non-traditional families and individual household members, and only recent exploration of the concept for women. Although studies do acknowledge the importance of "culture" in defining home, there is very little about its meaning for migrants who bring their culture to a new country. The literature on home generally emphasises its positive
and secure nature. Sayings such as "home is where the heart is" and "home sweet home" serve to reinforce this ideology. But this is not the reality for those who are physically and psychologically abused in their homes. The housing literature indicates that the deeper meanings of home are largely ignored in policy development and practice. So too are multicultural issues (Llewellyn-Smith and Watson, 1992) and any concerted attempts to ameliorate the gender inequities identified by feminist geographers and academic planners (Little, 1994; Rose, 1993a).

The literature on home indicated that it was possible, and often preferable, to use non-positivist approaches in order to uncover holistic, contextual and interdisciplinary understandings. Feminist researchers argue for alternative inquiry methods to value participants in the research process and to ensure that other ways of knowing (Gilligan, 1993; Franck, 1989; Belenky, et al., 1986) are heard and acknowledged. Such approaches are not widely used in planning.7

There are continuing calls for more research into the meaning of home. One of the most recent and comprehensive comes from Arias (1993a), who has edited a lengthy collection of papers focussing on the interaction between the meaning and use of housing. In fact, Canter (1993: xv) argues that the "creation of housing requires an understanding of its personal, social and cultural significance as well as its use". In other words, we cannot have satisfactory housing without a consideration of the meanings of home. Also central to this volume, is the need to examine non-traditional households, using "an enhanced range of methodologies" (Altman, 1993: xxvi).

My inquiry focus comes out of the planning and architectural discourse on home, initially motivated by my personal and professional interests, observations and

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7 It could be argued that many important decisions in planning are made on a "non-positivist" basis, especially at the political level. The problem is that such decision making is seldom grounded in careful qualitative research.
identification of unanswered questions. My research approach is situated in a postpositivist framework, suggested by both my feminist voice and conviction of the need for methodologies that value contextual and subjective knowledge.

THESIS STYLE AND APPROACH

Three major consequences for the research generally, and the thesis specifically, emerge from my personal stance. They are language, reflection and representation. It is important that these are discussed. My experience during the research process (see Chapter Four), suggests that it is also important to justify them, although this will be unnecessary for some readers.

Language

My use of personal pronouns throughout the text is deliberate and carefully considered. This approach has been adopted by other qualitative researchers. Richards (1990: x) rejected the use of terms such as the "respondent" and "researcher" because they imply a one way model of interviewing and a distancing of the author from the process of research. Swanson-Kauffman (1986) argues that use of the third person in qualitative work is inappropriate, given its philosophical base.

Not only did I value my informants' capacity to teach me about their reality, I also had to believe in my capacity to break into that reality, reflect on it, make it my own, and ultimately share my lived experience as a qualitative... researcher (Swanson-Kauffman, 1986: 59).

The use of the third person can give a misleading impression of the researcher as an unbiased, impassive observer with no influence on the research process or its outcome.
In choosing to write in the first person, I have also been influenced by Krieger (1991), who argues strongly for more of the self in both social science and its writing. In what I can only describe as inspirational and ground breaking, she relates her own personal struggle to do just this. She speaks in the first person, challenging the traditional view that the self contaminates research.

_The problem we need worry about is not the effect of an observer's inner self on evidence from the outside world, but the ways that the traditional dismissal of the self may hinder the development of each individual's unique perspective_ (Krieger, 1991: 30).

In writing this thesis I have tried to present my ideas clearly, and as much as possible, in plain English. Whilst this practice is being adopted within government, it is not a priority in the academy (National Ideas Summit, 1990). I have often felt pressure to conform to a particular style, but have resisted in the belief that it is important for academic work to be accessible to the broader community.⁸ I have also considered the subject of my thesis in relation to my decision here. I want my work to be read by non-academics, as well as practising planners and the communities that have taken part in the research.⁹

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⁸ Some of the pressure I have experienced has come from comparing my expression with that of so-called "postmodern" authors. I was concerned that my work would not be perceived as academically credible if it did not adopt this style. I was worried that clarity and ease of understanding would be perceived as simplistic and naive. My personal decision to reject this way of communicating was reinforced by Garreau's (1991: 485) impression of some postmodern writing: "Sadly, the term 'postmodern' is also all too often wrapped like a protective cloak around writing that mistakes incomprehensibility for profundity".

I was also inspired by Krieger (1991: 36):

_We are encouraged to speak in generally acceptable styles, rather than to speak in ways that are our own. The ability to speak from within takes nurturance. It requires the use of one's own words rather than the use of currently fashionable words in one's discipline..._

⁹ There are other ways of taking the material to these communities. In Chapter Ten I discuss my proposal for doing this.
Massey (1991a) advocates "democratic writing" and critiques text presented in the context of postmodernism.

_Much writing in and about postmodernism verges on the pretentious, and on occasions the virtually incomprehensible to those not in a [fairly small] group_ (Massey, 1991a: 34).

The irony of this, which is not lost on Massey, is the way in which such "postmodern writing" alienates and excludes the very groups that postmodernism claims to be bringing into "fuller appreciation" (p32). They are immediately marginalised in terms of their understanding, and the power inequities between researcher and researched are further reinforced. Plain English can be used to mitigate against this, although it is by no means a guarantee. Other methods of returning the research to the participants have to be employed (see for example, Roberts, 1984).

The reader will also note that I use gender neutral language. This choice is based on my own values as a feminist and the argument that language has power, which can perpetuate women's invisibility and inequity. In addition, the use of sexist language is now unacceptable in government and academic publications (AGPS, 1988).

**Reflection**

_I wish to suggest that the self is not a contaminant, but rather that it is key to what we know, and that methodological discussions might fruitfully be revised to acknowledge the involvement of the self in a positive way_ (Krieger, 1991: 29-30).
In this thesis, the process is part of the product (Wolcott, 1990: 7). This is not however, confined to a sanitised academic discussion of the methodology. It extends to every part of the process, in all its "messiness".

Although many people working in the social sciences privately discuss the idiosyncrasies, quirks and problems of doing research, public discussion and written accounts remain rare. The personal tends to be carefully removed from public statements: these are full of rational argument, careful discussion of academic points of dispute and frequently empty of any feeling of what the research process was actually like (Stanley and Wise, 1979: 360).

Reflecting on the process of research is often seen as something that is best done apart from the rigour and "objectivity" of the academic treatise. Accounts of the research experience are available (for example, Bell and Encel, 1978), but they are rarely included as part of the research document itself. I believe that the two can go together. For me, and I acknowledge that it is personal, the process has been instrumental to my understanding of the complexity of the issues with which I have been grappling. In addition, developing qualitative, feminist approaches in urban planning is a central focus of the thesis.

My story is about the struggle for legitimacy of qualitative research in urban planning, as much as it is about my individual path in undertaking this project. The fact that my method has been such an issue means that it is important to ask why this is the case.

When I read this type of account, I am left with feelings of inadequacy about my own process. Why isn't my research this neat and tidy? Unlike me, the researcher depicted never had any doubts or was not confronted with acerbic criticism. Indeed, there is often no hint of critical feedback in accounts such as these. Endemic within the academy is the unwritten law that one does not admit hesitancy or any inkling of doubt. Indeed, the doctoral candidate who does this can be seen to be inviting failure. Clearly, I do not hold this view!

The reactions to my work from a small number of academics and practitioners have been very informative. There have been, however, occasions when my research, and that of students working in similar areas, has been patronised. Comments such as "Women and the suburbs, how nice dear", and "What has this got to do with town planning?", readily spring to mind. Reflecting on these responses helped me to achieve a much greater understanding about who and what delineates the
So why have I decided to use the process of reflection in the thesis? There are several reasons.

1. To understand the process better. Specifically, why has the method been challenged and the topic seen as marginal by some? What are the power structures behind this? Who defines what is a "legitimate" urban planning study in a changing world? Who dictates what methods can and cannot be used? Who determines what sort of knowledge is valued over any other?

2. To stand back and evaluate the approach in light of the critique. To ensure that the method stands up to the challenge;

3. To give others encouragement to undertake qualitative research even though it is still regarded with suspicion in some areas;

4. To learn from the experience so that we become better qualitative researchers.

The problem of representation: how can I speak for these women?

Currently, there is a considerable and long over-due debate about representation, or the ethics of being able to speak for the other. This is very pertinent to my research given that I am a non-migrant, white, Anglo-Celtic woman researching migrant women from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB).

boundaries of my discipline, how research should be carried out and what knowledge is acceptable. I encountered people in seminars using positivist research, who were never required to justify their approach, nor questioned about their method or the assumptions upon which it was based. Indeed, there was no acknowledgment that they were dealing with assumptions; these were given. Conversely, I was often grilled about my method and its philosophical base. In some forums this heralded a healthy debate, whereas in others, all eyes were on me to stand up and be counted! Throughout these experiences I have been encouraged by fellow qualitative researchers also struggling for legitimacy in their field (see Chapter Four).
Writing on the politics of making films about Aborigines, Marcia Langton (1993), an Aboriginal woman herself, offers a timely reminder that "prescriptive notions of who has a 'right' to say what about whom" should be abandoned. Although specifically addressing Aborigines, her message is applicable to other writers genuinely grappling with the issues of appropriately representing difference and complexity in the postmodern era.

There is a naive belief that Aboriginal people will make 'better' representations of us, simply because being Aboriginal gives 'greater' understanding. This belief is based on an ancient and universal feature of racism: the assumption of the undifferentiated 'Other'. More specifically, the assumption is that all Aborigines are alike and equally understand each other, without regard to cultural variation, history, gender, sexual preference and so on. It is a demand for censorship: there is a 'right' way to be Aboriginal, and any Aboriginal film or video producer will necessarily make a 'true' representation of 'Aboriginality' (Langton, 1993: 27).

Problems occur when the person making the representation (in Langton's case, the film maker; in mine, the researcher) objectifies that which is being studied, distancing and separating researcher and researched; film maker and filmed. Langton argues that it is representations presented in this way that shape white Australian's notions of Aboriginality.

This thesis can only represent my interpretation of these women's stories. As much as I have tried to be true to their lived experience as told to me, there is a point where I have to take the data, essentialise themes and interpret inter-relationships through my perspective as a middle class, educated, feminist woman.

...we have to be willing to work across all our differences... our work must necessarily address the issue of intersubjectivity with the explicit recognition of two points.

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12 This comment is quoted from Dennis O'Rourke to be found on the back cover of Langton's book.
Women’s Stories of Home

Introduction

1. ...we are engaged in an interpretive act... the double hermeneutic of interpreting others’ interpretations of what they are doing.

2. ...we enter into this interpretive act from what has been variously referred to as a ‘politics of position’ or ‘politics of location’... that is, those places and spaces we inherit and occupy which frame our lives in very specific and concrete ways, which are as much a part of our psyches as they are a physical or geographical placement (Geertz, 1973; Jackson, 1989 & 1991; Borsa, 1990 in Peake, 1993: 420).

FOCUSSING THE INQUIRY: THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Within the non-positivistic framework, the research question focuses the inquiry, but does not exclude the possibility of other issues becoming important and subsequently explored as the data collection and analysis proceed. The research is not driven by hypotheses, rather the focussed collection of data, from which theoretical insights and understandings are drawn.

The central research question in this project is:

What are the meanings of home for established women migrants living in the middle ring suburbs of Sydney?

Over time, I developed a number of related questions, which are addressed in this thesis:

1. Do established migrant women from the identified ethnic groups have a multi-dimensional meaning of home? What is it and how does it accord with the literature on home?

2. What are the women’s meanings of home in their original country? How can this inform meanings of home in Australia?
3. What is the women's migration story? Can this help to inform their present meanings of home?

4. Is there a relationship between multi-dimensional meanings of home and the physical manifestation of the dwelling?

5. What role does the neighbourhood play in the meaning of home?

6. How can women's stories and their ways of knowing be heard in planning research? Can I develop a methodology that empowers and values women who have been marginalised in traditional research?

7. What theoretical understanding of the meanings of home emerges from the women's stories?

8. How can this theoretical understanding inform housing policy both generally and specifically?

9. How can multicultural values be incorporated into housing and planning policy?

As the research progressed, other questions emerged focussing on migration and the way in which this process influenced the women's meaning of home. In particular, the issue of loss emerged as critical and became a central concern.

REASONS FOR UNDERTAKING THE STUDY

This thesis provides an understanding of meanings of home for established migrant women living in Sydney. Contemporary housing policy is limited because of its failure to consider the deep personal significance of home for men and women. It
has also tended to ignore multicultural issues. Both of these factors justify the present study. The need to incorporate women’s lived experience in planning research, using methodologies that value this, is another important justification for the project. In addition, it is an example of qualitative research in planning, demonstrating the usefulness of this methodology in uncovering deep personal meaning of, and relationship with the physical environment.

In terms of outcomes, the aim is to develop a theoretical understanding of meanings of home for the women migrants studied and explore the relationship that this has to both housing and planning policy. The study will add empirical knowledge to the growing body of research and writing in the area, and will contribute to the development of a theoretical structure for further work.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The thesis is divided into five parts.

Part One - Setting the framework;

Part Two - The women’s stories;

Part Three - Interpreting meanings of home;

Part Four - Bibliography;

Part Five - Appendices.
Setting the framework

Part One establishes the broad focus of the research, both in terms of content and methodology. In the first two chapters, I present an overview of the literature that initially guided me in determining where the major gaps in knowledge exist. Chapter One focuses on home and Chapter Two examines multiculturalism and its impact on Australian planning and housing policies. In turn, this provides the justification for the present study.

The theoretical underpinnings of the methodological approach are discussed in Chapter Three. This puts the study into perspective and explains why the qualitative approach, within a non-positivistic paradigm, was selected. Chapter Four specifically outlines my journey through the research process. Personal reflections are included here, reinforcing the importance of the process and the need for critical analysis.

The women's stories

In Part Two of the thesis, I shift the focus to the women and present their stories of home - here, there and in transition. In order to privilege the women's voices, I quote liberally from the interview transcripts. Set against the broad canvas of these narratives, are issues that specifically inform us about meanings of home that emerge as a result of the migration experience. The three ethnic groups that took part in the study are dealt with in separate chapters - Greek women in Chapter Five; Arabic women in Chapter Six; and Vietnamese women in Chapter Seven. This breakdown enables me to highlight disparities between the groups as well as individual characteristics that emerge within each one. The issue of difference is critical to the qualitative researcher's quest for understanding. Rather than shying away from exceptions to the general trend, it is vital to flesh out such deviations, exploring possible explanations (Silverman, 1993).
Women's Stories of Home

Understanding meanings of home

The third part of the project explicates the theoretical development of major insights emerging from the data. In terms of my focus, it is here that I look closely at the most important aspects of meaning across the different ethnic groups. What is it that makes the migrant women's meaning of home special? What delineates her meaning from those discussed in Part One? What theoretical discourses can be used to explain and understand the meanings that I have found?

I deal with this in relation to two notions of home that are central to the migration process. Firstly, in Chapter Eight, I examine the macro concept of homeland, focusing on the notions of belonging and not belonging. Secondly, in Chapter Nine, I discuss the notion of home as atoning for the losses sustained in the migration process. The importance of the physical dwelling in representing success is highlighted. The house is a powerful place where it is safe to be different and to represent another culture.

In the final chapter of the thesis, I discuss the implications of the research for urban planning and housing policy. I draw on both the research content and methodological approach in order to do this.
The logic of the thesis organisation reflects my journey through the research. The diagram below illustrates this process and the inter-relationships between each phase.
Chapter One

The Meaning of Home

Literature Informing the Research: Part One

The house... is a privileged entity for a phenomenological study of the intimate values of inside space, provided, of course, that we take it in both its unity and its complexity, and endeavour to integrate all the special values in one fundamental value (Bachelard, 1964: 3).
INTRODUCTION

The literature review presented here can only touch on the vast and rich material I encountered in my work. In coming to terms with the meaning of home, I consulted fictional sources as well as an array of academic research across planning, architectural, geographical and sociological disciplines. I wanted to find out if others shared my interests and understandings of people and place. I also needed to refine my focus of inquiry, identify gaps in current knowledge and examine how a cross section of researchers had tackled similar questions.

Accordingly, in the next two chapters, I summarise the major concepts that informed the initial conceptualisation of the research. Chapter One focuses on the meaning of home. While acknowledging the arbitrary nature of any categorisation, I group the literature under the following headings:

The philosophical meaning of home

The personal meaning of home

The multi-dimensional meaning of home

The physical meaning of home

The cultural meaning of home

The changing meaning of home

The gendered meaning of home

1 It is important to note that I quote from sources published before and after I started my research. The concepts are nevertheless those that informed the inquiry at the outset.
I touch on methodological issues under these headings. The notion of home in the Australian context is then briefly examined. The chapter concludes by positioning the current research in relation to the literature.

**THE RESEARCH ON HOME: EMERGING PERSPECTIVES**

The philosophical meaning of home

*To dwell implies the establishment of a meaningful relationship between man [sic] and a given environment* (Norberg-Schulz, 1985: 13).

A place of residence, be it a house, flat, townhouse or caravan, is a physical structure. A home is much more. It has cultural and psychological significance for its inhabitants. It frequently extends beyond the dwelling into the surrounding neighbourhood and may include attachment to special places² or objects like automobiles. Home is usually the centre of important human relationships and fundamental learning experiences. It can impart a sense of belonging and personal worth. It is a place where individuality is expressed and familial ties and links with society are played out. A home embodies symbolic meanings which reflect societal and cultural norms. It is a place of memories, childhood dreams and yearning. A place that is, for most, familiar and safe.

Throughout the literature there are countless attempts at defining "home". Sopher (1979) provides a brief linguistic analysis of the English word. Brink (1995) argues that it is necessarily ambiguous given the expression's long use over history and its reference to an abstract concept. "Home" can be defined in relation to the word

² Bale (1993) declares that one such place is the football stadium.
"house". Casey (1993: 175) refers to "intimate cultivation" as the process which makes a physical dwelling "home". Karjalainen (1993: 65) wonders how the materiality of a house transforms itself into the experience of home. For Bachelard (1964: 5) this is the process of really inhabiting a space. "Home" can also be understood in terms of the journey that takes one away from it (Tuan, 1971: 188). In this context, home represents everything that the outside world is not - security, refuge and belonging, as well as a place to dream, be free and one's true self (Dovey, 1979). Homelessness can be interpreted similarly as a state without the comforting qualities of home life (Huttman, 1993; Neil and Fopp, 1992; Veness, 1992; Dovey, 1985).

Whilst the differentiation between house and home varies between individuals, social groups and cultures, there are common attributes (Lawrence, 1991). Houses are associated with economic, exchange, aesthetic and use equivalents. Conversely, home takes on much more, including sentimental and symbolic values. These accompany the domestic roles, rituals and routines communicated between individuals in different social settings. It is this interplay that makes the concept of home a complex and intriguing one. Lawrence suggests that for us to understand them we need to examine "...a range of cultural, societal and individual human factors...historically, as well as in relation to extant residential environments" (Lawrence, 1991: 92).

Day dreaming and memory are central to Bachelard's notion of home, whereas comfort is fundamental to Rybczynski's (1986) schema. Related to comfort is the idea of "homeyness" - a way of personalising the dwelling, creating a unique and

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3 Rapoport (1995) is critical of the differentiation between the terms "home" and "house". He argues for an abandonment of the former. "... a concept that is both the physical object and the ways people use it, feel about it, relate to it, and so on is potentially confusing, and its use potentially dangerous" (p32). It is ironic that Rapoport's stinging critique appears in a book that is devoted to a better understanding of the term "home".
distinctive environment (McCraken in Kron 1990: C6). To bring this about, care and attention to detail are required. In turn, this can contribute to the meaning of home.

*We experience a sort of consciousness of constructing the house, in the very pains we take to keep it alive, to give it all its essential clarity. A house that shines from the care it receives appears to have been rebuilt from the inside; it is as though it were new inside* (Bachelard, 1964: 68).

Caring within the house may be focussed upon the objects imbued with meaning that adorn its rooms and spaces (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). Nurturing can go beyond the interior of the dwelling (Casey, 1993). The work of Relph (1976; 1970), Tuan (1977; 1975) and Norberg-Schulz (1985; 1980) show how human involvement, no matter how humble (Tuan, 1977: 143), negates the neutrality of physical space. "Topophilia" is the term given to our affective ties with place. A multitude of aesthetic, tactile and emotional responses govern the strength of this relationship (Tuan, 1974: 93). The act of building on a loved place, and then in turn, looking after the dwelling that is constructed, is another way of facilitating this special relationship (Heidegger, 1971).

Stefanovic (1984) ponders the relationship between physical design and human response. She does this within the context of phenomenology. Reflecting on Bachelard’s concepts of imagination and daydreaming, she wonders what "... makes a space intimate; what makes it impersonal or sterile; what is it that inspires a feeling of belonging within spaces which we love?" (p376).

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4 Duruz (1994a) sees this notion of comfort as a gendered construction. Who is this faceless person who lovingly cares for this special place? Who shines its very intimate corners? She is woman, silently and uncomplainingly ordering the domestic territory.

5 Stefanovic’s focus on phenomenology was very influential in shaping my early thoughts on an appropriate methodological approach.
Philosophical reflections on home are often intensely personal, embodying physical components as representations of the biography and history of home. The symbolism of Carl Jung's home parallels his own spiritual and psychic development (Jung, 1967: 250-252). Jung's concept of home provides a perfect bridge between philosophical and personal meanings.

The personal meaning of home

Fiction can be used to powerfully articulate personal experiences that help us understand the significance and meaning of place.

_Literature is of course not life; it is a picture or an articulation of life. Its value ... is that it makes certain basic human experiences visible and public_ (Tuan, 1976b: 260).

Jill Ker Conway's (1989) account of growing up in Australia portrays the significant events that shaped her meaning of home in terms of dwelling, family, rural/urban divide and homeland. The connection that Malouf (1986) had as a child with the physicality of his house, illustrate the power that objects have in developing a strong attachment to home. Personal relationships take second place in this account. Perec (1988) offers his reader an encyclopaedic epic of the daily interactions of Parisian apartment dwellers. This is set against the backdrop of different floors, interlinking stairways and rooms where inhabitants live out their relationships amidst memory, passion and tragedy. Forster's (1989) Edwardian novel of upper middle class English life fuses emotionality with place in the intense feelings of attachment to the family's idyllic rural retreat. In contrast, is the house that provides the setting for Patrick White's (1985) play "The Ham Funeral". Images of darkness, retreat and squalor typify a home that is negative, abusive, tragic, disrespectful and unrewarding.

Representations of home on film also provided inspiration for the present project. Fooke's (1987) animated musings on living in cosmopolitan Melbourne present a rare
glimpse of city tranquillity within the hustle and bustle of a transitory neighbourhood. "Fences" (Caesar, 1994) delights its audience with intimate glimpses of suburban homelife across Sydney. Dreams realised and hopes dashed are juxtaposed to challenge our concepts of home and a sometimes, harsh reality.

The multi-dimensional meaning of home

Empirical research in a variety of settings has identified a multi-dimensional model of home. The emphasis is on its positive nature and the importance of personal relationships. Hayward (1977; 1975) provided the first such schema. The primary dimension of interpersonal relationships extends out from the private dwelling to the neighbourhood beyond. Notions of belonging, caring, security and refuge, as well as continuity over time, dominate this multi-dimensional model. The physical aspect in terms of architectural styles and building structure, is the least important dimension, although differences were found between men and women (Hayward, 1977). Males were more likely to see home as a physical structure compared with females. Their meanings tended towards self expression, relationships and the notion of personal space.

Sixsmith (1986) conceptualised a similar model in her phenomenological investigation of everyday experiences of home. Swenson (1991) theorised multi-dimensional meanings for the aged woman in her phenomenological and hermeneutic study. She concluded that home centred on the self, care giving to others and the immediate environment beyond the home.

Despres (1991) has usefully drawn together general categories of meaning from mainstream empirical research reinforcing the notion of a multi-dimensional model. The principle themes she identifies are material security and individual control; reflection of self; permanence, continuity and familiarity; personal relationships; centre of activity; refuge from the outside world; and material structure.
different studies focus on particular themes, Despres shows that cumulatively, multidimensional meanings have been identified in the research on home.

The physical meaning of home

The physicality of the dwelling encompasses more than the provision of shelter. Interior and exterior design patterns are used to symbolise individual status and community identity. Rapoport (1969) and Oliver (1987) use observations of dwellings and ethnographic data from across the world to describe and interpret the symbolism found in vernacular architecture. Religious beliefs, family structure, social organisation and methods of gaining a livelihood are among the socio-cultural forces influencing the physical form of a house. Climate, construction techniques and available building materials are the modifying or secondary forces which impact on the dwelling. Within the house, the arrangement and use of rooms, as well as the placement of functional and aesthetic objects, symbolise cultural norms, valued practices and interpersonal relationships (Muller, 1984; Hess, 1981). Lifestyle is also a powerful force in shaping such forms (Benincasa, 1956).

Symbolism is also found in western housing, with the freestanding cottage idealised as the most desirable architectural form (Cooper, 1976: 438; Rapoport, 1969: 133). Dovey (1979: 113-117) conceptualises the highly visible space at the front of the dwelling as the public domain. The functional areas, where domestic work is carried out, are kept private and are generally located at the rear. This differentiation mirrors Goffman’s (1959) notion of front and back regions and the performance of public and private behaviours respectively. Social status, both achieved and ascribed, are symbolised in the furnishings displayed in the public spaces of the dwelling (Laumann and House, 1970). More than just social status, Cooper (1976) suggests that the interior of the home is a reflection of the intimate "self", revealed to only a few. The exterior reflects the public "self" that is displayed to others. Personalisation is important here, something which architects and builders are urged
to accommodate in their domestic designs (Cooper-Marcus and Sarkissian, 1986: 63). Korosec-Serfaty (1984) takes the notion of symbolising the self further in her phenomenological investigation of attics and cellars as hidden residential spaces. These secret places not only symbolise self, they also enable the development of personal identity.

Nasar (1993; 1989) examines the meanings of house styles and the differences between public and professional perceptions. He found that particular architectural styles convey degrees of friendliness and status of residence as well as the desirability of the styles. Sadalla et al. (1987: 586) comment that "... houses are employed in self-presentational performances and function to symbolise and display the self". The physicality of the size and arrangement of the rooms in a dwelling is also related to making it a pleasant place in which to be (Pennartz, 1986).

The point of transition between home and neighbourhood is a particularly significant symbol. Physical boundaries such as fences, curtains, front doors and burglar alarms mark out the house and its interface with the outside world (Saunders and Williams, 1988). Social rules also govern this public/private relationship. The entry door is the "...fundamental divide between the small area of controllable physical space (home) and the outer world of less-controllable space" (Porteous 1976: 390). Cooper (1976) draws an analogy with the threshold of a temple and the entrance to a house. Various rituals are performed around the dwelling entrance (Lang, 1985; Eliade, 1959: 25). This is the point where the world is brought in and shut out at the same time. As Bachelard (1964: 222) states, "At times it is closed, locked, padlocked. At others it is open, that is to say, wide open". In this way, the door is an ambivalent symbol (Dovey, 1979: 95), displaying conflicting messages (Mezga, 1993). In its most extreme representation, the door can be a distorted symbol shutting in the bad of domestic violence and keeping out the good.
Saunders and Williams (1988: 83) acknowledge the importance of the physical home, but argue that it must coexist with the social to constitute home.

*The physical and spatial aspects of the home are important in structuring household activities in that they both enable and constrain different patterns of action.*

Holdsworth (1993) agrees, asserting that the form and type of housing has been overemphasised at the expense of more complex social, economic, political and cultural meanings.

**The cultural meaning of home**

Researchers have examined the physical presentation of the dwelling, attitudes to different residential forms, as well as domestic activities of inhabitants and interpersonal relationships, to develop a greater understanding of the cultural meaning of home. Some work is confined to a particular society, with other research taking on a cross cultural perspective.

Much of the inquiry centres on the interior arrangement of rooms and their decoration. Bonnes et al. (1987) compare living rooms in Paris and Rome, finding an interesting "national style" which provides the template for expressions of individual and group differences. Bernard, Bonnes and Giuliani (1993) also provide a comparative analysis. Their examination of dwelling interiors in France, Italy and Sweden, reveals differences and similarities across the three cultural groups. Disparities were identified in spatial organisation, furniture placement and the role that colours, shapes and materials play. Similarities were found in the way that social status is displayed, enabling group affiliation to be communicated to both insiders and outsiders. Research by Laumann and House (1970) and Duncan and Duncan (1976a; 1976b) confirm these findings.
Saunders and Williams (1988) identify interesting patterns cross culturally. Metropolitan France for example, appears to have less emphasis on individual houses and gardens and a greater propensity towards collectivised living in the form of parks and cafes. This contrasts with the individualistic nature of home in the British context. Swedish households live in apartments with fewer rooms and more mixed living areas than is common in Britain. Australian and North American houses are typically detached and eschew the individual as supreme. Different representations of home are also related to historical factors which contribute to the reproduction of distinctive cultures, both regional and national (Saunders and Williams, 1988: 87-88).

Altman and Gauvain (1981) use societal and individual expressions to analyse cross cultural representations of dwelling exteriors and interiors. They contrast characteristics of traditional and western architectural forms in an attempt to broaden cultural understandings. Lawrence (1982) compares British and Australian domestic situations focussing on food preparation. He shows that it is impossible to rely on standard nomenclature to denote the use of interior dwelling spaces. Usage depends on a complex interplay of social and historical factors, despite shared cultural origins. Even within the same community, "lexical behaviour" is inconsistent (Giuliani, 1987). Italians not only use different words to describe the same room, but vary its functionality.

Examining daily domestic activities is a useful measure of interior space usage. Giuliani, Bove and Rullo (1993) identify consistent patterning in the designation of space within the Italian dwelling. Needs are prioritised in terms of space allocation. The separation of the parents' and children's bedrooms is a high order priority, followed by daily activities, as opposed to those at night, down to the practice of incorporating dual dining settings for both formal and informal eating.

Bernard (1991) examines constancy and change in French domestic life, particularly around the issues of privacy and eating rituals. The results reveal that while there
is some homogenisation of particular behaviour, there are important differences in both areas. In general, the more conservative practices are found in the less educated, rural and ageing households. Carlisle (1982) links French personalities with their homes, finding a psychological distance between people reflected in the fortification and internal demarcation of public/private rooms in the dwelling.

Gaunt (1991) looks at inter-household contact and cooperation in Sweden. The focus is on extended families across two or more generations, household composition and geographical distance in rural and urban areas. Despite the tendency for family break-up, social isolation did not necessarily result. In an earlier study, Belcher and Vazquez-Calcerrada (1972) find that the dwelling plays an important role in rural family life in Puerto Rico. Rather than just a physical shelter, so often assumed to be its sole purpose when planning for poor people, family relationships and function are greatly enhanced when appropriate dwelling space is provided.

Studies which illuminate cultural preferences for different dwelling forms reveal somewhat unexpected outcomes. Churchman and Ginsberg (1984) uncover positive attitudes to high rise housing in Israel, despite the negative image it has in many other cultural contexts. In Japan, there is a preference for detached dwellings (Narumi, 1993). Prohibitive costs, particularly in urban areas, are demanding creative solutions such as cross generational investment. This has interesting cultural ramifications for inter-personal family ties and belonging.

Finally, cultural and religious values are a powerful force in shaping meanings of home. For orthodox Jewish families living in Israel, religious doctrine influences interior decor and usage more than individual preferences (Ginsberg, 1990). Muslim women in Egypt try to adapt western dwelling spaces to accommodate their religious role in a rapidly changing society (El-Rafey and Sutton, 1993). Patriarchal domination is made more constraining because of culturally insensitive residential styles.
The changing meaning of home

The meaning of home can change during the course of an individual's life span and over time in terms of societal and cultural shifts. Saunders (1989) emphasises the importance of life cycle in sociological analyses of the home, stressing that this is just as important as differentiating gender and class issues.

For older people the home is a special place (Christensen and Carp, 1987), central to everyday life. Strong emotional attachment and special memories make it hard to leave. The dwelling's value in economic terms declines as "use value" and quality take priority (Saunders, 1989). Home provides an ongoing sense of continuity and can be a powerful symbol of independence at a time of life where bodily changes usually mean greater reliance on others (Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 1991). For those who cannot remain at home, specialised accommodation provides an alternative means of support. Nevertheless, issues of locational disruption and loss of personal autonomy resulting from a regimented living environment have important implications for those living in hostels and nursing homes. For the active retiree, proximity to services, ease of dwelling maintenance, physical security and dwelling quality have been identified as important (Hassell Planning Consultants, 1992).

The changing ideology of the family is reflected in the development of meanings of home over time. Rybczynski's (1986) history of home identifies the development of privacy and the family as a central concept. Increasingly home has become a private sphere for family life, removed from the working world. Within the dwelling itself, Munro and Madigan (1993) discuss the changing needs for space and privacy. Over the last century, children have been given more private space in the dwelling than adults. Sons and daughters are considered first in the allocation of separate bedrooms. Sharing is acceptable for the very young but once puberty is reached, separate bedrooms are highly desirable. If this is not possible, then same sex sharing is permissible. Tension between adults and children emerges at different stages of
family life as the need for individuality clashes with the ideology of a united, sharing and cooperative family. The young child’s bedroom becomes a site of containment as recreational and study related activities are confined to this one room. As independence and separation are sought, the teenager willingly seeks refuge in this place.

Nevertheless, parents still maintain significant power over the entire dwelling as they dictate the ways in which children can use their private space (Munro and Madigan, 1993). Saunders and Williams (1988) see parental power in the home in more absolute terms, with older children finding its constraining and oppressive nature untenable, forcing them to seek alternative places such as the street, car, disco or pinball parlour. Barbey (1993: 111) asserts that a more individualised lifestyle is contributing to the home becoming a less meaningful place. The romantic notion of the family gathering around the kitchen table is seen as something that is absent from the contemporary home.

The notion of home can also vary historically. Dovey’s (1992) analysis of domestic interiors and the arrangement of the backyard highlights an interesting relationship over time. Using model house advertisements between 1969 and 1989, he found a growing division in the recreational and productive components of the back yard. The clothes line, garbage area and workshop have been increasingly screened from the house and formal sections of the yard, where the swimming pool, outdoor dining setting and landscaped gardens are sited. These are visually and physically linked to informal living rooms within the dwelling.

A feminist reading of British house plans between the early 19th and mid 20th centuries shows an interesting relationship between physical design and family ideology, with the reinforcement of woman’s central role at home. This can be linked to the growing move toward "privatisation of family life" (Matrix, 1984: 55), as well as illuminating many of the assumptions that designers made about women,
domestic labour and the family (Roberts, 1991). A more recent reading of middle class plans (mid to late 20th century), reveals larger shared couple bedrooms, open kitchens integrated with other uses and additional rooms. It is hypothesised that these trends reflect changes in how men and women work in the domestic environment (Hasell and Peatross, 1990).

Focussing on the kitchen, Craik (1989) shows how physical alterations to this space have mirrored changes to women's role within the domestic sphere. Following the demise of the servant, women took on the tasks of running their homes with household management becoming a powerful and skilled profession. As women emerged from this role, the physical qualities of the kitchen changed, becoming smaller and part of the informal living room. Domestic work was reduced to a "... set of chores that anyone can do, but against a backdrop that promotes the ideal of mother in her domestic bliss" (p63).

Reiger (1985) sees the early skilling of woman in a more sinister light; a refinement of her natural capabilities, designed to reinforce the sexual division of labour and entrench the public/private dichotomy of neighbourhood design. Home was constructed in a nostalgic and moral vision of family life, divorced from the often experienced reality of domestic violence, economic hardship and constant labour.

Greenbaum (1981) and Maglin (1981) illuminate strong but ambivalent attitudes to the kitchen.

*The kitchen is simultaneously a prison of drudgery, a place for mother-daughter conflict, a space for dreams, and a setting for intense connections among women from which blooms a special female culture* (Maglin, 1981: 42).

Although design solutions changed over time, they are linked by an ideological thread that served capitalism and patriarchal values well (Greenbaum, 1981: 61).
Weisman (1992) traces similar developments in the changing design of the house, declaring its physical form "to reflect the separate worlds and identities of women and men" (p91).

There are many indications that the importance of the home as a constituent of the private sphere is increasing. British studies indicate that privatism or "home-centredness" is growing (Saunders and Williams, 1988). As more and more time and money are spent on and within the home, there is a tendency toward "...social exclusivity and withdrawal from collective life..." (p90). This has particular implications for women already feeling isolated and trapped at home (Roberts, 1990: 266). Increasing use of technology is reinforcing the privatisation trend as it becomes possible to work from home, pay bills and in some cases, do the shopping. Growing fear of criminal activity has also resulted in the rise of privatism. Residential enclaves, some exclusive, others catering for poor households (Popovic, 1995), provide communal recreational facilities and a seemingly secure environment (Davis, 1990).

Over time, changes in technology have altered the meaning of home. The Industrial Revolution heralded the separation of home and paid work. Contemporary computer technology is seeing a return to home based work, although it is hard to predict the impact on the meaning of home. Ahrentzen (1992; 1990; 1989) identifies a mix of positive and negative feelings. Home can mean isolation, a place of entrapment or prison, with the local neighbourhood providing an important opportunity for temporary escape. Gurstein (1991) concludes that home based technologies will not result in the eventual abandonment of collective life. The vision of an ever increasing home-based work environment fails to account for cultural, demographic, societal and individual differences as well as human values in relation to home and places of paid employment.
Another interesting side to technology and home is the increasing use of sophisticated surveillance techniques to incarcerate criminals. Watts (1993/94: 155-156) describes how western governments are using the home as a prison cell to overcome the high cost of institutional detention. Technology allows constant surveillance of the convicted. A microchip is inserted under the skin to enable the authorities to control, confine and punish. Home detention is being considered for Australia in an effort to cut the cost of large prison populations (Lagan, 1995).

With the emergence of more people working at home, bringing the private and public spheres together once more, Barbey (1993: 111) suggests that those who spend more time at home may find that it is of greater relevance in terms of meaning. But here one has to ask whose and what meaning? Will extra time spent at home reinforce individual lifestyles as children sit in their bedrooms fixated by their computers, television sets and CD players? Will meal times be fragmented and dispersed events, where individuals phone up for take-away pizza and McDonald hamburgers or simply reach for instant, microwave noodles that are quickly prepared and consumed in front of the computer?

Karjalainen (1993) ponders the future of home in a technologically advanced world where physical boundaries mean less and less, and time and space continue to shrink. Will home become "... only a bit of nostalgia or a remnant whispering sombre past that finally melts away in this age of postmodernism?" (p72). Two possible visions are countenanced. A world where distance is negligible will not necessarily bring nearness. Alternatively, our reality may be timeless and placeless as we inhabit a world of simulations and hallucination. Karjalainen leaves us with the thought that perhaps home, both physically and psychologically, will become even more important.
The gendered meaning of home

_The gendered meaning of home_

"Men invest money in their homes: women invest their lives" (Weisman, 1992: 114).

Feminist analyses of the environment focus on women’s lives and experiences, challenging the long held view of a "male norm" (Little, 1994: 3; Rose, 1993a: 53). Geographers questioned the "taken-for-granted" gender stereotypes in the built environment (Fincher, 1990), although as Hayden (1981) shows, feminists have long been concerned with the inequities of women’s public and private lives. Researchers were initially concerned with women’s invisibility (Little, 1994: 4; McDowell, 1983a), but soon moved to other analyses, particularly the structural impediments to women’s full participation in all aspects of the city (McDowell, 1983b; Saegert, 1980). This also focussed attention on the failure of policy makers to account for the implications of women’s dual roles as paid worker and homemaker (Bondi, 1992: 161; Saegert, 1980). The poor representation of women in the design professions was another important site of analysis (Rose, 1993a: 1-3; Weisman, 1992; Roberts, 1991; Matrix, 1984). The complexity of the debate was gradually realised as differences between women were acknowledged and the notion of gendered relations theorised in the broader context of patriarchal power (Little, 1994: 5).

Understandings of gendered meanings of home emerged from analyses of suburban life, which reinforced the centrality of the domestic sphere for women (Little, 1994: 6 Hayden (1981) chronicles attempts by the "material feminists" to collectivise homelife, ensuring recognition for domestic labour. Designs for communal kitchens, child care centres and cooperative housing emerged from their work in the years between the American Civil War and the Great Depression. Hayden’s treatise ensures that their ideas are not relegated to history, although some commentators have tagged them as extremist (Hayden, 1981: 4). The analysis also provides another stark illustration of the complex interplay between ideology and the changing nature of home. The socialist ideals advocated by the feminists did not support capitalist values. They also threatened the moral imperative of the nuclear family and the subordinate position of women.
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57). Feminists have also rejected a romantic notion of home as a caring, nurturing and conflict-free place (Duruz, 1994a; Rose, 1993a: 56). This is not to say, however, that home is all bad. Rather, it is a complex and contradictory notion (Matrix, 1984: 2) imbued with feelings of belonging, stability and security (Barclay et al., 1991).

Home ownership is an important concept for women, a pre-requisite for financial and emotional security, physical safety, security of tenure and feelings of control (Russell, 1995; Barclay et al. 1991: 39). It is "perceived as permitting more control and choice than other tenures" (Cass, 1991: 4). And yet ironically, ownership is tenuous for many women. Because of the high cost of home ownership, women in relationships (both heterosexual and homosexual) are the most advantaged. The dissolution of the couple in separation or divorce means the loss of the income base to support a mortgage (Barclay et al., 1991: 49; Cass, 1991). Women are further disadvantaged because of their strong emotional commitment to the home. This means taking on a greater responsibility for unpaid domestic work, thereby reducing their paid employment prospects (Cass, 1991: 4). Women’s caring role in the household also precludes them from taking on further education and training, reinforcing their inferior position in a competitive job market. In the event of a relationship breakdown, financial crisis inevitably results (Barclay et al., 1991: 62).

Cass (1991) asserts that owner occupation does not necessarily mean positive things for women. If affordability is traded for accessibility, then home ownership may mean few job opportunities. It may also mean loneliness and alienation in suburbs poorly serviced with public transport, distant from family help and with few community support networks. This can be the reality for women who, with their families, purchase housing on the city fringes because of its lower capital cost. In

7 It is important to note that home ownership would not be so positive if the attributes of other housing tenures were not so negative (Watson, 1988).
her study of an outer Melbourne suburb, Richards (1990) found that owning was a fundamental given, synonymous with the ideology of family. The vulnerability of two incomes needed to support a mortgage and the necessary compromise of family closeness and companionship were never mentioned by research participants (Richards, 1990: 123).

Home as a site of labour is a focus for its negative meaning. The positive images of comfort, refuge and escape do not consider women’s role in the domestic. Feminist analyses debunked this myth by actually examining what was happening at home. For many full time working women, home can be tyrannical. It is a stopping-off point between the outside world of paid work, childcare and shopping and the private domain of meal preparation, washing, child minding and spouse support. In this scenario, home is an unlikely refuge. When media images of glamorous women managing their homes and work places with composure and apparent perfection are added, the mythology is perpetuated and negative feelings about self and home, reinforced. Nor is home necessarily positive for the woman in whose life it is central. She may be involved in competition between her friends for the finest decorated home, the neatest and the most authentically restored.

There are some indications that domestic labour trends are changing as women move more into the paid workforce. One study found an increasing preference for open plan kitchens that enable two people to work side-by-side (Hasell, Peatross and Buno, 1993); another links multipurpose domestic space with changing gender relations (Peatross and Hasell, 1992). But the general pattern is that women continue to do most of the house work (Ripe, 1995a; Riley, 1994a; Munro and Madigan, 1993). Richards (1990: 135-139) found that women associate home with work,
whereas men tend to see the domestic sphere as a refuge, an escape from their paid labour. Friberg's (1993) study of Swedish women reveals a range of adaptive strategies, taken on in an attempt to balance outside employment and domestic roles. Home is very much a central focus, but for those with long term career aspirations, outside influences demand more radical adaptations.

Saunders and Williams (1988) argue that both men and women work at home, although the latter do spend more time on these tasks. Men’s involvement tends to be outside, low energy when inside, and high on information (p85). Tognoli (1979) suggests that men's socialisation as children instils this outside-inside dichotomy of domestic work. Sommerville (1989) critiques this spatial differentiation as superficial. The central issue is the social symbolism of the duties involved. He concludes that Saunders and Williams are preoccupied with the "dominant ideology of the home as a sanctuary and safe haven" and accordingly, "fail adequately to appreciate that the reality of the home may be something quite different" (Sommerville, 1989: 117).

Similar criticisms have been levelled at Saunder's (1989) challenge to feminist research on home and his assertion that ideological positions have clouded reality. Saunders found that both men and women view home as positive. Even though women do more domestic work than males, it does not necessarily follow that home is a place for female subordination. Indeed, women "may exert considerable control and autonomy over the home at the same time as working within it" (p180). In his study, this was demonstrated by women’s control over household finances. Saunders also found that both men and women expressed positive sentiments about home.

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9 The outdoor shed has been identified as an important part of Australian male culture (Casimir, 1993). Not only does this place accommodate "men's" activities, it reinforces their identity and gives them a sense of purpose especially in retirement (Earle, undated in Jobson, 1995).
emphasising its relationship with family, children, love and affection, as well as relaxation, comfort and attachment.

Roberts (1990) questions such a conclusion, declaring the issue is not whether "women derive enjoyment from home life but whether home life is structured in such a way that it perpetuates inequalities between genders" (p 258). Munro and Madigan (1993) concur, arguing that there needs to be a differentiation between collective and individual privacy within the dwelling.

To say as Saunders does that most people have positive images of 'home' is true, but unhelpful as an indicator of how they actually live their lives. In our view it profoundly underestimates the role of ideology in shaping not only how individuals respond to questions about 'home', but also in shaping their daily activities. The concepts of 'home', 'family' and 'community' are all closely linked and carry a heavy ideological weight (Munro and Madigan, 1993: 43).

Munro and Madigan identify ideology as important in shaping relationships of women towards other members of their households, but caution against perceiving individual behaviour at the mercy of ideological force. Their findings indicate a complex and ongoing negotiation between the women and their families as they juggle their personal needs for privacy away from the rest of the household with the needs of their partners and children for their attention.

Even more negative is home as the site of violence, abuse and oppression. Pinn (1991a) in her discussion of the metaphor of "home" and "journey" states that "our image and experience of home in this century, for many reasons, has in many ways become oppressive, undervalued, and toxic; typified in its extreme as domestic violence". Stanko (1988: 75-76) suggests that a male construction of crime perpetuates the myth of the safe home. Similarly, the often held and expressed belief that a woman is safer with a man, rather than living on her own, defies the reality of violence and abuse against women and children in the home (Barclay, et al. 1991:
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Leunig (1992) jettisons the ideology of "happy families" with her disturbingly powerful images of domestic life gone haywire.

The notion of home as dangerous and uncertain is exemplified in the incest survivor's experience. For her the outside world is a refuge from the terror of home.

'It felt really safe out there - out on the streets, or out anywhere, away - but it didn't feel safe at home' (Ward, 1985: 35).

Negativity can also emerge as a response to unsuitable and inflexible physical forms, as well as women's perception of their role in relation to the dwelling. Popular magazines still portray the heterosexual home-maker as the ultimate goal and pinnacle of achievement. Career is important but for those determined to do both, home must come first (Thompson, 1992b). Having a baby can herald the beginning of an uncomfortable relationship with home as a new mother negotiates the mythology of this state and its contrasting reality (Matrix, 1984: 120-136). Feelings of imprisonment assuage her as she struggles with society's message that this should be a wonderful and enriching experience, the pinnacle of womanhood.

Barclay et al. (1991: 136) uncover women's dissatisfaction with the dysfunctionality of domestic spaces. Given their central role in the labour at home, women should have a greater say in housing design. As one research participant stated, "If a man had to work in the house there'd be a place for everything".

Madigan and Munro (1991) examine the impact of gender relations and roles, professional power and ideology on dwelling design and use. British and North American house design reinforces women's subordinate role, thereby perpetuating social myths about gender relations and the interpretation that the dwelling is the domain for women's work. This continues despite the many changes to female
participation in the paid workforce, although most studies indicate that this has not altered women's role in the domestic environment (Weisman, 1992: 99).

Johnson (1993; 1992) undertakes a semiotic reading of exhibition home plans and accompanying promotional material to expose a physical design that structures gender relations. And yet in her analysis she finds room for challenge. Although constraining, the form does not preclude change, allowing "individual expression within recognisable limits" (Johnson, 1992: 46). Other readings look more closely at the minutiae of domestic life, focussing on household appliances (Duruz, 1995; Goodall, 1990; Cowan, 1974).

HOUSING AND HOME IN THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

The meaning of home literature was my focus in the initial conceptualisation of the project. Given my Australian context, I was also interested to know whether these meanings had been considered in this country's housing research.

Studies examining home environments in Australia have concentrated on the physical form of the residence and the reasons for stated preferences. The freestanding house on its own block of land is consistently reported as the most desired type of accommodation (Wulff, 1993; Jamrozik, 1992; Green Street Joint Venture, 1991; Mueller et al., 1991; Thorne, 1991a). It seems that flats are viewed as inferior, with the dwelling on its own land offering "... privacy and control which no other house type can provide" (Thorne 1991a: 56-58). The reasons for relative stability in housing preferences over time, despite demographic and social change, is linked to the fundamental point that housing is more than shelter but also a "source of wealth, indicator of social status, and means of self expression and identity" (Stevens, Baum and Hassan, 1992: 19).
An important aspect of the house is its surrounding garden. The usefulness of this is well documented in Halkett’s (1976) study of Adelaide backyards. Rather than wasted spaces, he found a multiplicity of utilitarian and recreation activities. The backyard also has cultural significance (Fiske, Hodge and Turner, 1987). So too the verandah. Hudson (1993) goes beyond its functionalism in an attempt to uncover meaning. He uses Appleton’s theory of prospect-refuge to this end. There is a deep human drive to seek shelter from both the dangers of the outside world and the harshness of its physical elements. Similarly, being able to keep a watchful eye on this alien, outside environment, is central to human survival. Hudson argues that these needs are met by the verandah.

*The verandah is a border zone between two worlds, one of family security, the other of unlimited horizons. The sense of freedom in emerging from the safety of the inner house is balanced by the need to observe the rites of the tribe* (Baird, 1984 in Hudson, 1993: 75).

Brown (1991) attempts to unravel the historical roots of the Australian predisposition to the separate house on its own block of land. Ferrier (1987) examines classic Australian narratives for similar understandings. She finds a close relationship with the freestanding dwelling and the notion of claiming the land. "Building signifies settlement, the establishment of a relationship with the land, usually an assertion of ownership..." When this is uncertain, "building confirms one’s claim on the land" (p43). She reveals a preoccupation with the physical house including its procurement and adornment. The suburban ideal is even re-created in the harsh physical environment of remote mining settlements (Neil, 1982).

As well as the physical form, tenure is a focus for housing research (Paris, 1993: 6). Australians are prepared to go to enormous lengths to achieve home ownership, including enduring extreme financial hardship. Government policy has supported the ideology but this does not fully explain its dominance (Singleton, 1994). Ownership is perceived as providing economic security, safety and autonomy. It is equated with
family life and a natural part of adulthood (Richards, 1990). Beer (1993) argues that present high levels of ownership are unlikely to continue as economic growth slows and the population ages.

Although the focus of Paris (1993) is the social and economic context of housing policy, he does introduce the notions of home and house. He also alerts the reader to the importance of feminist critiques of house and home. In particular he highlights Watson's (1988) work as raising many "... important questions about gender and housing" (p33). Hillier and Wood (1992) take a phenomenological position in an attempt to uncover complex meanings as well as more traditional attitudes to housing styles.

Australian housing policy has nevertheless, tended to disregard the profound personal meanings that our domestic environments carry. Even the extensive work of the National Housing Strategy (1992a; 1992b) ultimately pays very little attention to the meanings with which people imbue their lived spaces and the significance of this for housing policy.

There are three reasons for this neglect (Thompson, Susan 1993a). Firstly, planning has relied on scientific and technical knowledge (Sandercock and Forsyth 1992), ignoring other ways of knowing (Sandercock, 1995). Secondly, the house as a physical entity and an economic commodity has taken centre stage in housing policy. Planning has been slow to explore gender and minority issues in relation to policy and practice. When we consider this in the light of women's close association with domesticity, the reason for the neglect of home becomes clearer. And thirdly, the issue of home is frequently and inextricably bound up with attitudes towards suburban life, traditionally maligned by planners.10

10 With a few exceptions (for example, Stretton, 1989), the suburb has only recently become a respectable site for academic inquiry.
RESEARCH AGENDAS: POSITIONING MY WORK

We know a lot about what different political and ideological interests say and believe about the home, but we know surprisingly little about how millions of ordinary people, men and women, black and white, young and old, owners and renters, live the reality of the home (Saunders and Williams, 1988: 91).

So where does this literature overview lead? I would like to suggest three current and over-arching agendas for research. In doing so I am identifying where current gaps in knowledge exist and consequently, where my work is positioned.

Firstly, there is a growing awareness of the need to focus on lived experience. We must look much more to empirical work rather than relying too heavily on ideologically based beliefs to understand the true nature of home (Saunders and Williams, 1988: 91). There are many different ways in which lived experience can be considered. Lawrence (1991) suggests that the Sixsmith and Sixsmith (1991) model of transitions via the life history, can be usefully applied to other groups. Rubbo (1981) uses a similar approach to piece together social and personal meanings of the domestic. Stefanovic (1984: 376) advocates phenomenology as the key to understanding.

What phenomenology can reveal about the imaginative meanings of our lived spaces is not nothing; it is potentially the greatest something which has been offered to those of us who wish to remain sensitive to the needs and desires which will make our settlement truly human.

Barbey (1993: 105) echoes these sentiments in his argument for research that takes as its focus the daily lives of people. "... the life world dimension is an integral part of the understanding of home".

Secondly, we need to differentiate between members of the household. Munro and Madigan (1993: 30) argue that it is necessary to distinguish between individual
and household privacy. If home is viewed as "...a collective retreat from public life", it is not surprising that both men and women view it positively. Madigan, Munro and Smith (1990) identify women specifically as requiring further study.

Despres (1991) suggests that we now have to focus more on the meaning of home for the non-traditional family, exploring the broader social, political and ideological considerations that impact on individual perceptions.

In his review of contemporary research, Thorne (1991a: 54) posits that many studies still "... do not produce hard data about the meaning and/or attachment the individual occupiers and owners have for these items". Until recently, most work emphasised the positive aspects of home, reinforcing the dominant discourse that it is a safe and secure sanctuary. It is also clear that the meaning of home for migrants has not been a focus of inquiry.

Thirdly, the methodological approach that will lead to the greatest understanding is holistic and generally, qualitative. This is based on the understanding of housing as a complex notion, comprising architectural, cultural, demographic, economic, societal, psychological and political factors which change over time (Lawrence, 1989: 44). The isolation and assessment of cause and effect relationships are of limited use in such a complex environment (Lawrence, 1993: 78). Quantifiable approaches provide limited understanding, although there is an argument for integrating them with qualitative methods (Lawrence, 1991). In his considerable writing on home, Lawrence (1993; 1991; 1989; 1987a; 1987b) consistently advocates a comprehensive, contextual approach. There is also an emphasis on the case study, which is often wrongly criticised as not being generalisable.

"the basis for generalisation from a real case study is not the typicality of the units of analysis, but how that study illustrates the operation of general principles in a precise context. Thus, 'problems of choosing a typical case study in this approach disappear, and the uniqueness and particularity of
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each study is explicitly recognised. ‘The key element in this interpretation of case studies is the level of theoretical interpretation’ which is intended. One becomes concerned with the ‘use of case material to penetrate beyond the surface correlation to detect the more fundamental and general processes involved’ (Dunleavy, 1981 in Lawrence, 1989: 46).

Despres (1991) also advocates an integrated perspective, taking into account both individual factors and societal dimensions over time. Given the complex nature of cultural and societal variables, a qualitative approach is much more appropriate. Barbey (1993: 104) asserts that research on home has taken an increasingly multidisciplinary focus. This reinforces the need for a holistic, comprehensive and qualitative research perspective.

CONCLUSION

The home is, then, a relatively neglected yet rich empirical research agenda to which those of us working in urban studies should be directing serious and open investigation (Saunders and Williams, 1988: 91).

In this chapter I have summarised major trends in the literature on home that informed my initial research conceptualisation and focus. There is no doubt that the "meaning of home and neighbourhood are clearly established subjects on the agendas of researchers in several disciplines from numerous countries..." (Lawrence, 1991: 95). I have demonstrated this assertion in my review of the literature, as well as positioning my discussion in the broader context of housing research in Australia. The latter has generally taken a macro view, neglecting the individual connection with the domestic. The chapter has located current gaps in knowledge, particularly around the issues of gender and, to a lesser extent, migration. There is very little work on meanings of home for people who establish a new residence in another country. These gaps in understanding further reinforce the need for continued inquiry, as do calls for a more qualitative approach focussing on lived experience.
I now turn to a consideration of contemporary multiculturalism, migration and their relationship to the meaning of home and consequently, my project.
Chapter Two

Housing, Home and Planning: The Australian Multicultural Context

Literature Informing the Research: Part Two

We do have multicultural Australia, and as part of that you do have people with ethnic backgrounds in business, administration, in politics, in commerce generally, in the arts... you can’t remove it. If you were to remove it, Australia would be well and truly stuffed (Bolkus in Alexakis and Janiszewski, 1995: 84)
INTRODUCTION

As well as the meaning of home, multiculturalism and its impact on housing and urban planning strategies, have also informed the current research. Just as I have positioned my work in relation to the literature on home, in the following chapter I locate the study in the context of contemporary Australian multicultural and migration settlement policy.

I begin with an historical overview of multiculturalism. In addition to defining the term, I contemplate the theorisation of gender to encompass a more expansive understanding of difference and diversity. I then examine the housing situation for migrants, focusing on those from NESBs. This provides the framework for an assessment of equity issues in housing policy and government response. The broader notion of home is considered in relation to major Australian studies. The chapter concludes with a discussion of multiculturalism and planning policy.

MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT: THE TAPESTRY OF DIVERSITY

Historical overview

Multiculturalism is a significant social and political force in Australian society. It is incorporated in policy statements across the political spectrum. The consequences of multiculturalism are constantly reported upon in the electronic and print media.\(^1\)

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\(^1\) Pettman (1992: 42) has alerted us to problematic constructions of the expression "migrant women", particularly the tendency to make generalisations which disguise "... the variety of their backgrounds, identities and social interests". Lozanovska (1994) offers a similar caution. My use of the term "migrant" does not imply homogeneous groups, categorised by their country of origin or stereotypical images of oppression, exploitation or disadvantage.

\(^2\) While undertaking my research, I have kept a close eye on the Sydney media. Multicultural reporting has been considerable. It ranges from policy discussion (Chan, 1995; Humphries & Sharp, 1995; Millett, 1995c & d, 1993a; Steketee, 1995; Totaro, 1995; Wainwright, 1995b; Garran, 1994).

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Multiculturalism is now a major component of academic inquiry, with a "veritable explosion of publication on immigration and settlement issues" (Hugo, 1994: 1). There is a wealth of material on the economic, environmental, social and political impacts of multiculturalism (Adelman et al., 1994; Wooden et al., 1994; Freeman & Jupp, 1992). The Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research (BIMPR), established in 1989, has been the driving force behind the growth in research and the subsequent key role that Australia currently plays in this area.

It is often said that Australians have an exemplary multicultural policy, which underpins a nation of tolerant and accepting individuals. Moss (1993: 5) argues that cultural diversity has brought great benefits to Australia. "The vigour and commitment of immigrants to their new country, and the contribution of the many different cultures from around the world, have resulted in the unique multicultural society that is Australia today". Others declare Australia to be the most successful multicultural society the world has known (Henderson, Gerard 1993). White Australia has come a long way from its roots in the British empire. It is now seen as an "independent nation in the Asia-Pacific region, whose citizens come from 140 different cultural backgrounds" (Moss, 1993: 6).

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legislation (De Mayo, 1995; Button, 1994; Rubenstein, 1994; Rubenstein & Kapal, 1994; Yaman, 1994a) and analysis (Mellor & Coulton, 1995; Dusevic, 1995; Millett, 1995a & b; Greenlees, 1994-5), debates on national identity (Cockburn, 1995; Fitzsimons, 1994; Stephens, 1994a,b & c; Turner, 1994; Signy, 1993b) and racism (Riley, 1995a; Cant, 1994; Legge, 1994b; Robbins, 1994; Sandham, 1994; Silberberg, 1994; Smark, 1994) to personal accounts of migration (Tran, 1996; Byrne, 1995; Freeman, 1995; Glasscott, 1995; Mellor, 1995a,b & c; Scott, 1995; Verrender, 1995; Kenneally, 1994; Sexton, 1994a & b; Signy, 1994a; Browne, 1993), displays of the exotic (Dale, 1995; Deen, 1995; Luxford, 1995; Constance, 1994, 1993 & 1992; Dell'oso, 1994; Lenthin, 1994; Saunders, 1993) and explorations of the richness that diversity means for Australian society (Armitage, 1995; Mellor, 1995a,b & c; Wainwright, 1995a; Burbury, 1994; Fife-Yeomans, 1994; Gill, 1994; Harari, 1994; Jopson, 1994; Brown, 1993; Harford, 1993; Signy, 1993c; Stephens, 1992).

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3 A major international conference on global diversity was recently held in Sydney. The occasion was heralded as an opportunity for Australia "to show off multiculturalism as practised peacefully" (Mellor, 1995c).
Although migrants have come to Australia since "the first white invasion and settlement" (Watson and McGillivray, 1994: 206), it is only since 1946 that the country has had an "active immigration policy" (Moss, 1993: 6). This has resulted in a significant demographic impact, with more than 40 per cent of the population either born overseas or born here of at least one overseas born parent (Hugo, 1994: 2).

In the early 1970s, multiculturalism replaced assimilation policies, which up until then had shaped attitudes to immigration. Prime Minister Whitlam’s socially progressive government abolished the White Australia Policy, championed the value of ethnic diversity and expanded the welfare state (Dorais, Foster and Stockley, 1994: 383). Under the successive conservative government, the 1978 Galbally Report was tabled. It "legitimated underlying principles of multiculturalism such as social cohesion, cultural identity, equality of opportunity and access and equal responsibility for commitment to and participation in society" (Dorais, Foster and Stockley, 1994: 384). Over time, these concepts have been enshrined in policy, reinforcing the bipartisan nature of political commitment to multiculturalism.

The Hawke Labor administration which followed, abandoned its proposal to cut spending in migrant education, language training and broadcasting services after strong lobbying from the ethnic community (Dorais, Foster and Stockley, 1994: 385). This government nurtured multicultural policy in a variety of ways. The Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) was established in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Representatives of the OMA were located in each state to liaise with their respective Ethnic Affairs Commissions. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, antidiscrimination and racial vilification legislation and a comprehensive network of settlement services such as language assistance, housing support, employment programs and social services, augmented the work of the OMA (Dorais, Foster and Stockley, 1994: 385-6). During the Hawke era there were three significant inquiries into immigration, population and multiculturalism. The ensuing
reports have since set the agenda for multiculturalism in Australia and are likely to continue to do so.

**Defining multiculturalism**

Although Australia is generally accepted as a culturally and ethnically diverse society (Jordens, 1995: xiii), "...there is considerable popular confusion about its meaning and consequences" (McAllister, 1993: 71). Different surveys have revealed significant community ambivalence toward the concept of multiculturalism (Riley, 1995d; Vournard, 1994). Mackay's (1993) research indicates that we still have a long way to go to reach cultural harmony.

As part of Australia's current quest for a national identity, informed debate around the issue of multiculturalism has intensified (for example, Neill, 1995b). It has been claimed that the ability to build a strong collective national identity from a base of difference and diversity is doubtful (Hirst, 1993). However, this is not necessarily problematic (Kukathas, 1993c). A new, more fluid concept of identity is demanded if difference is to be recognised and accepted. As Weeks (1990: 92) cogently argues,

> If ever-growing social complexity, cultural diversity and a proliferation of identities are indeed a mark of the postmodern world, then all the appeals to our common interest as humans will be as naught unless we can at the same time learn to live with difference.

Even though the debates around multiculturalism have become more sophisticated, the media is often accused of presenting biased and simplistic images in portraying ethnic communities (Hall, 1995; McClelland, 1995). The tenuous nature of multiculturalism is also easy to see in the Australian community. When the Gulf War erupted, Muslim women were ostracised and verbally abused.¹ The

¹ This emerged in my interviews with some of the Arabic women.
assassination of the politician John Newman in the Sydney suburb of Fairfield, where the Vietnamese have established a strong community, heralded general disquiet about perceived ethnic concentrations (Dennis, 1994; Henderson, 1994). The announcement by the French government to resume nuclear testing in the Pacific resulted in many French Australians experiencing racism (Condren, 1995; Masson, 1995; Pitt, 1995).

"The National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia" (OMA, 1989) defines the term "multiculturalism" as embodying the following three principles:

**Cultural identity**: the right to express and share cultural heritage, language and religion;

**Social justice**: the right of all Australians to equal treatment in all spheres of life; and

**Economic efficiency**: the need to capitalise on skills of all citizens, regardless of background.

These three principles are directed at all Australians and imply both obligations and rights (Dorais, Foster and Stockley, 1994: 388).

The Report of the Standing Committee on Multiculturalism of the Canadian Parliament (in Hindess, 1993: 33) acknowledges that the recognition of diversity in a plural society needs to be officially supported. It is also assumes that everyone has an ethnic origin and that all cultures deserve respect.

Currently, Australians are grappling with notions of identity that challenge historical links with Britain. There is an urgency to adopt a much more relevant concept of
citizenship which values and affirms all Australians, no matter what their racial origins (Jordens, 1995: xiii).

Multiculturalism is taken into all areas of policy development. As I have stated, there is a wealth of material on its economic, environmental, social and political impacts. It is not my role to assess this here, but I do want to say something about the silent voice of the woman migrant.

Multiculturalism: a gendered construction?

*A focus on gender relations in immigration should redress the lack of attention paid to the specific circumstances of women migrating in all their complexity* (Fincher, Foster and Wilmott, 1994: 4).

Until fairly recently, there has been an assumption that migrants have similar experiences regardless of gender. Men have traditionally spoken on behalf of their communities, providing a misleading unity (de Lepervanche, 1992). Women were viewed as the "appendages of either protective males or the patriarchal state" (Fincher et al., 1994: 150). Commissioned by the BIMPR, Fincher, Foster and Wilmott (1994) challenge these essentialising assumptions. They assess the degree to which Australian immigration policies take gender differences into account. Their study examines immigration flows and status, marriage, labour market position and settlement issues for women.

In their comparative analysis of gender and migration policy in Australia and Canada, Fincher et al. (1994) uncover a recent transformation in the international literature. The previous paucity of interest in women and their relationship to the migration process is changing as gender blind policy is exposed. Nevertheless, there are areas that need particular attention. Alcorso (1991 in Fincher et al., 1994: 153) identifies the following:
Theoretical development;

Detailed case studies of particular immigrant communities;

Focus on the social, cultural and economic contexts of women’s migration;

Presentation of a variety of situations in the host society where immigrant women participate.

Clearly, the inclusion of gender specific research in this area is more than justified. "A growing number of Australian academics are studying demographic, social, educational and cultural aspects of groups of female immigrants ..." (Fincher et al., 1994: 154). My work is part of this movement. In addition, the work on gender and migration has still not addressed the deep emotion central to the migration experience and the way in which this impacts on meanings of home. 

Class, ethnicity and gender: intersecting concerns

*The dynamic nature of gender, class and ethnicity complicates research. The meaning of ethnicity, gender and class is being constantly created and recreated by immigrant women. They are not passive recipients of culture* (Fincher et al., 1994: 155).

Fincher et al. (1994: 152) identify research which is attempting to unravel relationships between ethnicity, race, class, gender and culture in the migration and settlement experience. Significant contributions to this debate have been made by others (for example, de Lepervanche, 1992; Bottomley, de Lepervanche and Martin, 1991; Misztal, 1991; Kalantzis, 1990; Bottomley and de Lepervanche, 1984).

5 Personal migration narratives bridge this gap (for example, Henderson, Anne 1993a; Thompson, Liz 1993; Herne, Travaglia & Weiss, 1992). In many ways my work is an attempt to connect the two streams of intimate understanding and academic inquiry.
I can only flag this as an important site of research. It is an area of which I am aware and consider in the interpretive section of the thesis (Part Three). I also considered class differences in my selection of interviewees and accordingly, talked with women from a range of socio-economic groups. Nevertheless, I do not pretend that mine is a class analysis of the migrant woman’s experience of home.

ACCOMMODATING THE MIGRANT

Tenure arrangements

I now turn to an overview of housing tenure for NESB migrants. Junakar et al. (1993: 55) confirm Sommerlad’s (1988) conclusion that after initial hardships, migrants reach high levels of home ownership. This is illustrated in Table One, which compares home ownership rates of Australian born to those from non-English speaking (NES) countries. The figures include dwellings owned outright and those being purchased.
Table One

Home Ownership Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birth Place</th>
<th>Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1976 (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>68.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NES Country</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Overseas</td>
<td>68.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


NA = Figure not available

These high figures can be misleading. As Table Two shows, ownership rates are uneven across different ethnic groups (Kee, 1992: 12). Recent immigrants have the lowest levels of home ownership (Junakar et al., 1993: 47).
Women’s Stories of Home Chapter Two

Table Two

**Variation in Home Ownership Rates for Selected Groups**
**1986 and (1991) Census**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>Own %</th>
<th>Purchasing %</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>35.1 (40.8)</td>
<td>37.6 (27.6)</td>
<td>72.7 (68.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>63.1 (65.9)</td>
<td>20.9 (17)</td>
<td>84.0 (82.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>4.9 (13.3)</td>
<td>33.8 (37.2)</td>
<td>38.7 (50.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>33.6 (32.9)</td>
<td>29.2 (26.1)</td>
<td>62.8 (59)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


1991 Census (in brackets): Personal Request, ABS

Ownership rates also vary across Australia, with lower levels in capital cities (Junakar, et al. 1993: 47). This may be attributable to higher costs of housing. Sommerlad (1988: 8) suggests that the high ownership rates of long term migrants are related to factors such as the drive to establish security, a commitment to ownership and the resultant financial benefits, large household size, including extended families, ease of purchase in the 1950s, '60s and '70s and availability of cheap inner city houses.

The proportion of NESB households accommodated in public housing has increased from 3 per cent in the 1981 census to 5.2 per cent in 1991. This contrasts with a decline of Australian born households over the same period from 6 per cent to 5.5 per cent (Antonios, 1994: 3). Although these figures indicate an improving situation, they mask regional differences, with the states of New South Wales (NSW) and
Women's Stories of Home

Chapter Two

Victoria, where most migrants settle, not doing as well as the rest of Australia (Antonios, 1994: 4).

There is a disproportionately high number of NESB people on public housing lists. In NSW, 34 per cent of the applicants waiting for accommodation in 1994 were born in NES countries and this situation may be even worse (Antonios, 1994: 15). Annual renewal of an application is compulsory to maintain its currency and dwelling stock does not often meet the spatial and locational requirements of migrants. NESB allocations for public housing need to be made considering the geographical availability of community support. Issues of racism, although extremely difficult to deal with, cannot be ignored. Despite Sommerlad’s (1988: 31) recommendation for more effective strategies, NSW has been the only state to respond with a transfer policy for public housing tenants subjected to racial harassment (Antonios, 1994: 18).

Both public housing and private ownership affords security of tenure, unlike private rental housing (Moss, 1993: 208). The latter is expensive and provides little autonomy for its occupants as there is no scope for dwelling modification. Of NESB persons renting privately, the highest proportion are those who have recently arrived in the country, either as migrants or refugees (Junakar, et al., 1993: 46; Sommerlad, 1988: 13). This group also faces the highest level of housing poverty.

For migrants or refugees with limited English language proficiency, renting in the private sector is fraught with difficulties. Ignorance of their rights as tenants, coupled with the complexity of the rental market, further exacerbate the problems. Issues of racism and discrimination are prevalent, especially for extended families trying to secure large dwellings. Those seeking public housing face extended

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6 From 1983 to 1989 I was on the Board of Canterbury Community Housing, an initiative of the NSW Department of Housing. I had first hand experience of this issue. Given our ability to subsidise rents, we were able to find appropriate housing for large migrant families. Without this financial assistance, these tenants would have been in an impossible situation.
waiting lists. The whole process of acquiring accommodation can intensify the trauma already experienced by the refugee (Moss, 1993: 208).

Community housing programs, which have increased in importance over the last few years, have the potential to provide strong grass roots support as well as appropriate and affordable accommodation. Nevertheless, they are not serving the NESB community well (Sommerlad, 1988: 35-36). There are some ethno-specific housing cooperatives in Australia, but the overall participation of migrant communities is minimal. The NSW Community Tenancy Scheme has been criticised for its lack of ethnic focus and sensitivity to the special needs of NESB groups (Ovadia and Spafojevic in Sommerlad, 1988: 36). Sommerlad (1988: 36) concludes that much greater attention needs to be paid to enhancing NESB access to community housing and cooperative programs.

**Addressing equity issues in housing provision and policy**

In 1993 the NSW government put in place its "Charter of Principles for a Culturally Diverse Society" (Pers. Comm., Department of Housing, 1995). This document sets out four principles focussing on the rights of citizens to participate in every aspect of public life and the responsibilities of government to accommodate cultural, linguistic and religious difference. As a consequence of the Charter, every state government department has had to prepare a "Statement of Intent". This sets out the department's policy for serving people from different ethnic backgrounds.

The Department of Housing and the Ministry for Housing, Planning and Urban Affairs both have "Statements of Intent". The former focuses on the practical aspects of its service delivery for customers from NESBs. The emphasis is on equal access to housing programs, respect for all cultures and religions and practical assistance with language difficulties when making inquiries, filling out forms or during interviews. The Department's commitment to community consultation, as well as
recruitment of NESB staff at officer and committee level, is detailed. Feedback on service provision is encouraged (Department of Housing, 1994).

The NSW Ministry of Housing, Planning and Urban Affairs is responsible for major policy initiatives and broad strategic direction. In relation to housing policy, the Ministry's "Statement of Intent" emphasises the importance of publicising its work and ensuring accessibility to NESB communities. Housing needs research is a priority, as is data collection of characteristics of NESB clients. The Ministry's "Statement of Intent" outlines its commitment to an awareness of NESB issues in both its consultative role and committee responsibilities (Ministry of Housing, Planning and Urban Affairs, 1993).

It is encouraging to see the concerns of NESB communities now a standard inclusion in all NSW government policy. Nevertheless, a "Statement of Intent" does not guarantee that housing requirements will be met. Indeed, the "single most important avenue for housing policy", the Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement (CSHA), still fails to specifically address the needs of NESB groups (Antonios, 1994: 6). In 1988 Sommerlad reported that many states had Ethnic Affairs Policy Statements (EAPS), but seldom dealt with the implementation, timing and monitoring of housing policy. In 1994, some improvement is apparent, but there is still no special consideration given to migrants who apply for public housing (Antonios, 1994: 17). NSW has made progress with the implementation of an access and equity policy, the formation of a multicultural unit and information in different community languages. However, ethnicity data are still not collected about tenants and cross-cultural training does not occur (Antonios, 1994: 18). The other Australian states have even less services in place. Consequently, Sommerlad's recommendation for each state

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7 The NSW Department of Housing has several information booklets available in community languages. Specific tenancy issues such as rent payments and dwelling maintenance are addressed, as well as more general issues of domestic violence and the Department's cultural diversity policy. There are between 18 and 20 community languages included in the brochures, which also advertise the availability of an interpreter service.
housing authority to develop a specific strategy for multicultural housing programs funded under the CSHA is yet to be realised (Antonios, 1994: 19).

Although now some years old, the most comprehensive overview of housing policy for NESB migrants establishes principals for access and equity to housing, focussing on secure, affordable and appropriate accommodation (Sommerlad, 1988: 5). Migrants must be able to share equally in public housing, as well as participate in the design and operation of government policy. Equitable access to appropriate housing for disadvantaged groups and programs, which facilitate antidiscrimination, are also enshrined in the principles. Migrants need to have access to housing that affords the opportunity of cultural expression, religious practice and the maintenance of preferred social patterns. Equity is not about equal provision of the same housing, but rather equality of opportunity to gain access to appropriate and affordable housing (Sommerlad, 1988:5).

**Equity issues for special needs groups in the NESB community**

Sommerlad (1988) identifies physical, emotional and cultural difficulties facing disadvantaged NESB groups. He considers the plight of young teenagers without family support or secure housing. He highlights problems for the disabled. They may be over protected by families or hidden away so that their needs are not known, let alone met. The aged also require special attention. It is estimated by the year 2001, the proportion of people aged over 60 years from NESBs will rise to 25 per cent (Sommerlad, 1988: 38). Similar to the rest of the population, women make up the majority of this group. The elderly in ethnic communities face particular problems if their reunion with younger family members breaks down (Weekes, 1993; Carbon, 1992). Even if they are welcome in their children’s homes, they face...
isolation within their own geographical communities, limited opportunities for social interaction and low proficiency in English (Moss, 1993). There are various support networks and special accommodation provided for the NESB aged. Nevertheless, there are problems within institutions that are not sensitive to the cultural and social needs of ethnic residents. Language problems are a significant issue, as are unsuitable food and a lack of understanding of different religious practices and leisure pursuits.¹

Women from the NESB community face particular difficulties. While they share concerns with other women about housing affordability, equitable access and ensuring children’s needs are met, they have special requirements (Barclay et al., 1991: 199-200). These include a garden for produce and recreation, sufficient internal space, security and community facilities. Problems such as language difficulties, cultural isolation, accessible information and discrimination act as significant barriers in attaining housing equity.

Pressures associated with living in a new country where different social and cultural customs dominate daily life, can contribute to an increased incidence of domestic violence. Although this is relevant to all women, the unique problems facing NESB women have only been recently identified.¹⁰ Unreported violence means that the available data are not reliable, thereby masking the extent of the problem (Moss, 1993: 86). Given that domestic violence is associated with issues of power, it is not surprising that NESB women are reluctant to report incidents. They generally enter Australia as dependents of male applicants (Mistzal, 1991: 16), work in low paid

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¹ An inner suburban Sydney council has initiated a service for elderly residents who are cared for in their own homes. Weekly gatherings are organised for particular ethnic groups where traditional food is served and culturally appropriate activities conducted. This helps to give at-home carers a break, as well as providing support for the elderly within the community. As part of my research, I attended this group on a number of occasions.

¹⁰ Dang and Alcorso (1990) have contributed understanding about the situation of domestic violence in the Vietnamese community.
jobs, and have few opportunities to learn English because of family and household responsibilities (Henenberg and Morris, 1993 in Moss, 1993: 87). Fear of family and community rejection, as well as the possibility of deportation have inhibited women's reporting of violence (Moss, 1993: 88).

Even women who are not confronted with domestic violence face problems because of "cultural attitudes to marriage and separation" (Sommerlad, 1988: 33). It may be impossible to continue to obtain support from family or community members after a relationship breakdown. The result is considerable isolation and vulnerability. A refuge is often the last, and only alternative for accommodation. However, such services are unevenly distributed across Australia and there are few centres in rural areas (Moss, 1993: 89). Culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate services are not generally available in mainstream centres, although there is growing awareness that they are essential (Moss, 1993: 89-90; Dang and Alcorso, 1990: 31; Sommerlad, 1988: 34). There is the added problem that ethnic communities are often unable to understand the role of a refuge, perceiving it as interfering in what is essentially a "family" or "community" matter (Sommerlad, 1988: 33).

Sommerlad (1988: 14) consistently reports difficulty finding information about NESB housing issues. This situation has improved with the publication of research by authors such as Junakar et al. (1993) and Kee (1992). Kee was motivated by the lack of attention paid to migrant housing access, whereas Junakar et al. wanted to establish if migration had increased housing costs. However, Sommerlad's major recommendation that uniform data on ethnicity be collected, is yet to be implemented (Antonios, 1994: 4). This information is vital to determine the extent of disadvantage and in turn, justify the need to change government policy.
UNDERSTANDING BROADER HOUSING NEEDS: MEANINGS OF HOME

I now turn to consider the inclusion of deeper meanings of home for the migrant in Australian housing research. The National Housing Strategy examines housing issues for a variety of special groups. Women, children, Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, the aged and disabled are given special consideration. The Strategy does not however, isolate NESB groups. "It is generally preferable to address problems of housing access through mainstream programs and policies rather than to 'marginalise' the needs of any particular group" (National Housing Strategy, 1992a: 39-40).

NESB people are the focus of two major studies which highlight cultural and lifestyle issues and their implications for housing. This work was useful in the conceptualisation stage of my project, both in terms of direction and identifying gaps in knowledge.

The Australian Housing Research Council (AHRC) (1985) conducted a major study of Polish, Turkish and Indo-Chinese housing preferences. The Melbourne based project focussed on the response of public housing authorities to meet the physical housing needs of the target groups. A variety of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies were used. 391 household heads\textsuperscript{11} were interviewed by bilingual workers on a wide range of housing issues. As well as background demographic data, information was collected about housing tenure, satisfaction and future preferences. Opinions about the influence of culture and the impact of family obligations on housing were also canvassed. Indepth interviews were conducted in discussion group forums.

\textsuperscript{11} These household heads were predominantly male (AHRC, 1985: 18).
The findings emphasise the provision of public housing which satisfies universal needs. It concludes that "... there is no need for a specific multicultural housing policy. Practical, private, comfortable housing is needed" (AHRC, 1985: 217). Such preferences are similar to those of Australian born residents. The study did find, however, that there is "a much greater tolerance of higher densities", as well as an acceptance of renting (p217). Such an outcome is not surprising given the sample of people either in, or waiting for public housing.

Religious requirements do differentiate the ethnic groups from Australian born residents. The provision of an altar in a Vietnamese house or special washing facilities in a Muslim dwelling can be provided without difficulty (AHRC, 1985: 218). Locational preferences are similar to Australian born residents, with participants wanting to live near employment, children's schools and community and retail amenities, including public transport. Access to the support provided by other members of the same ethnic community is highly valued, especially by the Vietnamese. The Poles and Turks are more satisfied with living in ethnically mixed neighbourhoods.

Stanley (1972) carried out a significant study of middle eastern and northern European migrants living in Sydney. Focussing on family adjustment, she "examined different ways in which Australian houses are used by various migrant groups: how prohibitive design affects their way of life, how they modify their houses themselves, and the amount of choice that they have within the present housing situation" (Stanley, 1972: 5).

Through a series of six case studies, information was collected so that individual households could be compared. Stanley focused on housing history in Australia, especially the initial response to local conditions. She also examined alterations to the physical dwelling and interactions with neighbours, friends and relatives. Daily activities within the dwelling were detailed, specifically how the home and areas
outside it were used. Research participants were also asked to describe their ideal house.

Contrasting with the AHRC study, Stanley (1972) found significant differences between the requirements of NESB and Australian born households. She concludes that housing needs to be more flexible to meet these differences. Design features are recommended that will facilitate change. She also discusses tenure arrangements, making the point that renters have less choice and flexibility than owners. If a dwelling is being purchased, it can be altered to accommodate specific cultural needs much more readily. Financial commitments are the most obvious limitation here.

Both of these studies emphasise the physical, albeit within the complex and contextual situation of different communities. As a result, recommendations about culturally appropriate dwelling space are the main contributions to emerge. What the studies have failed to do is to grapple with deeper meanings of home. Individual household members are not differentiated (Stanley, 1972) and there is a preoccupation with male views (AHRC, 1985). These specific omissions provided further motivation for the current study. So too did the failure of planning policy to consider the implications of multiculturalism.¹² This is addressed below.

PLANNING RESEARCH AND MULTICULTURALISM

To date there has been no specific attempt at a policy or theoretical level, to unravel the extent to which urban policy in Australia responds to the different needs of this population (Watson and McGillivray, 1995: 165).

¹² When I was formulating my research brief, I could find very little written about multiculturalism and planning. Nevertheless, I knew about the situation from my practical experience as a planner. Over the course of the research some material has been published, which is discussed here.
Australian urban planning operates under a complex legislative framework. Environmental, social and economic issues are considered in the plethora of plans and policies which guide future development. It is only recently however, that any attention has been paid to the responsiveness of the planning system to the needs of NESB communities.

At the national level various programs influence housing and subdivision design as well as urban redevelopment. The Australian Model Code of Residential Development (AMCORD) regulates medium density housing in an attempt to achieve better design solutions. This is also a major objective of the Review of Residential Regulation Program. Commonly known as the Triple R Program, this NSW state based initiative is focussed on assisting the government to realise its urban consolidation objectives (Antonios, 1994: 49-50). It does not however, specifically address the different housing needs of NESB communities.

The Building Code of Australia (BCA) sets down detailed standards for all residential and commercial construction across the country. In reaching agreement on the Code, some local variation has been overlooked and there are cases where culture-specific differences cannot be accommodated (Antonios, 1994: 39). The national Building Better Cities (BBC) program has a broader brief, covering economic, social and ecological objectives in major urban redevelopment projects. There is a commitment to a multicultural society, although "the implementation of the program apparently has not explicitly addressed cultural diversity as a dimension of social justice" (Antonios, 1994: 41).

In Australia, urban planning legislation is principally the province of State and Local government. In NSW, where my research is geographically based, the planning system operates under the Environmental and Planning Assessment Act, 1979 (EPA Act). This sets out objectives which guide planning policy and practice at both State and local level. At the time of its inception, the legislation's focus on public
consultation was heralded as innovative and far-sighted. Community involvement was written into the Act, not only as a specific objective, but also in clauses relating to development applications and the preparation of Environmental Planning Instruments (EPIs) (Antonios, 1994: 43-44). There are different levels of EPIs, some having jurisdiction over state wide matters, others covering a region and those concerning local issues. Plans can also relate to a specific site or land-use, as well as policy direction and implementation. There is an hierarchical relationship between EPIs, further complicating the system. Such a labyrinth of legislation does not encourage novice involvement, and coupled with a welter of jargon, the system is not very user-friendly. Accordingly, it is difficult for any member of the community to actively participate in the planning system, especially if their first language is not English (Antonios, 1994: 45).

Constituted under the EPA Act, the NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning (DUAP)\(^3\) is responsible for a wide range of planning activities (Antonios, 1994: 46). Given the EPA Act’s objective to promote consultation, DUAP clearly has an obligation in this area. The Department’s "Statement of Intent" recognises this duty, stressing its "ability to resolve complex planning issues and find constructive solutions in partnership with... customers, which include the ethnic community" (Department of Planning, undated).\(^4\) The "Statement of Intent" highlights DUAP’s commitment to encouraging NESB staff, providing equitable service to all community members, ensuring that committee membership and decisions are sensitive to NESB issues, and supporting feedback from NESB individuals and organisations.

\(^3\) Formerly, the Department of Planning.

\(^4\) In order to obtain a copy of DUAP’s "Statement of Intent" I phoned a personal contact who holds a middle management position in the organisation. It was interesting that he did not know about the document. Given that the Statement should be considered at every level of policy making across the Department’s wide charter, it is somewhat disturbing that it is not well known!
In order to involve NESB people in the planning process, some information is
provided in different languages. Multicultural projects have received direct funding
and a variety of brochures, mostly about the planning system, have been translated
into 12 community languages. The ethnic media is used to advertise development
applications. Multilingual displays are mounted and bilingual staff assist NESB
clients. And yet, translating material into different languages is only a first step. A
much greater focus is required on disseminating information to provide a better
understanding of the planning process and its relationship to local government
(Watson and McGillivray, 1995: 177). Cultural sensitivities have to be developed
to counter a bureaucratic culture previously dominated by Christian, white, middle
class and male values.

As well as its functions in researching state and regional planning policy and
monitoring the overall operation and efficiency of the planning system, DUAP has
an important coordinating role across the state. This has significant implications for
local government planning, which also operates under the provisions of the EPA Act.
Watson and McGillivray (1995; 1994) show that while local government has made
some attempts to respond to the different needs of multicultural communities, there
is still a long way to go. They present results of qualitative work in Western Sydney
where many migrants live. Community conflict is immediately apparent in the siting
of religious facilities and social clubs as well as the "domestic/public interface"
where residential properties are used for commercial activities (Watson and
McGillivray, 1995: 169). The homogeneity of the urban form in these outer suburbs
does not reflect the enormous diversity of its population, indicating a non-responsive
planning system and approach. Local councils' adherence to rigid physical land-use
planning and regulatory development control are perceived as major impediments to
a more flexible and multiculturally appropriate system.
Rather than physical planning being conceived as the provision of land, housing, roads, and urban infrastructure for clear social ends, physical planning sometimes becomes an end in itself (Watson and McGillivray, 1995: 173).

The separation of physical and social planning also contributes to this unsatisfactory situation. So called "high powered" and economically important issues are the mainstay of physical planning (Watson and McGillivray, 1994: 208). In this culture, social planning comes a very poor second, dealing with soft options that are added on, rather than included from the outset. Watson and McGillivray (1995: 176) conclude that planners "recognise the homogeneity of housing form and land subdivision, but do not seem to be taking a next step". Including social planners at the beginning of the planning process is an obvious way to overcome this apparent inertia.

The Eurocentric focus of heritage control and protection has been exposed by Armstrong (1994) in her ground-breaking research with migrant communities. Rather than working on the basis of long held assumptions about what is "worth preserving", the migrant community has to be asked about its priorities (Armstrong, 1994: 105). Lived experiences have to be heard and different cultural ideologies valued. The same principle applies to other planning policies. In trying to facilitate urban consolidation, DUAP is consistently focused on Anglo lifestyles. Assumptions are made about the size of households which do not account for the importance of extended family living in NESB communities (Antonios, 1994: 51).

Planning policy and practice have been slow to accommodate multicultural issues. There are examples where this is changing (Watson and McGillivray, 1995; Antonios, 1994: 55-58) but significant areas of disadvantage remain. The complexity of planning legislation is a major barrier for NESB communities who do not have equity within the system, especially its participatory aspects. Not only is information in appropriate languages essential, culturally sensitive planners have to be educated
The Eurocentric assumptions that have driven planning in the past have to be acknowledged and current regulatory practices questioned in order to determine an appropriate response to an increasingly diverse community.

**POSITIONING MY WORK**

Policies which encourage acceptance of difference are slowly impacting in every sphere of Australian life. There is a wealth of material on the economic, environmental, social and political impacts of multiculturalism and an increasing array of personal migration narratives. The media constantly reports both positive and negative stories, keeping multicultural issues firmly on the agenda. While support for multiculturalism is evident across the political spectrum, there are significant pockets where much more needs to be done. This is true of both planning and housing policy. Although the latter has addressed access, equity and physical needs of NESB groups, deeper meanings of home remain a mystery. Multiculturalism has not fared much better in the realm of urban planning. There is a growing awareness that community change cannot be ignored. Dropping its exclusive Anglo-Celtic value base is long overdue in both planning policy and action. A broader based perspective is imperative.

The need to hear women’s voices in this discourse is also compelling. For too long NESB groups have been seen as one, with differences of gender and class only recently considered. Under the rubric of feminism, migrant women have often been marginalised by their white sisters, too quick to essentialise experiences and responses.

...ethnic and migrant women are sick of being characterised by feminist analysts as kitchen-slaves, mute factory fodder, baby-machines whose lives are supposedly totally dominated by their patriarchal husbands (Gunew, 1991 in Curthoys, 1994: 26).
My work is positioned at this juncture. I want to bring greater cultural sensitivity into housing and planning policy by privileging women's voices, using appropriate methodologies, as I uncover deeper meanings of home.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have highlighted current concerns in multiculturalism, focusing on housing and planning policy. In doing this, contemporary gaps in knowledge have been revealed. Together with Chapter One, the material presented here further justifies my study. I now turn to the research itself, starting with methodological considerations.
Chapter Three

The Methodological Framework: Theoretical Underpinnings

Much feminist discourse is constructed in a plural way. Arguments are juxtaposed, many voices solicited, in the way that feminists speak about their own scholarship. There are no central texts, no definitive techniques; the deliberate transdisciplinary enterprise plays with context (Strathern, 1987, in Reinharz, 1992a: 245-246).
INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the theoretical and philosophical issues central to the methodological framework. I justify the choice of the qualitative paradigm as well as outlining the specifics of the approach used. The chapter also makes explicit the feminist values that lie at the heart of the project.

Qualitative and feminist research provide the overarching framework for my approach. Within this structure, I have drawn from the tenets of phenomenology and hermeneutics to arrive at an appropriate methodology which honours the principles of the broader framework. The relationship between these elements is illustrated below.

1 Wolcott (1990: 26) declares that it is no longer necessary to defend qualitative research. My experience, detailed in Chapter Four, suggests otherwise. I am nevertheless, aware that an obsession with methodological issues can overwhelm the central story being told (Janesick, 1994: 215). I have endeavoured to strike a balance here.
Having established my theoretical position, I show how this has been actualised in terms of data collection, management and analysis. Finally, the issue of methodological rigour is addressed, highlighting contemporary theoretical debate.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: THE BROAD CANVAS

Rocking the boat of tradition

*The foundation of postpositivism is the cumulative trenchant, and increasingly definitive critique of the inadequacies of positivist assumptions in the face of the complexities of human experience. As the orthodox paradigm for inquiry in the human sciences proves obsolete, new visions are required.* (Lather, 1986: 63)

These are exciting times in which we live and work. No longer are we governed by the illusion of certainty. Nor can we rely on one truth or a "grand narrative" to understand the world around us (Lyotard in Lather 1991: 5). This is an age of increasing complexity, divergence and difference. Multiple realities are emerging to challenge the traditionally held orthodoxy in every aspect of contemporary thought and action.

Nowhere is this felt more keenly than in social science research. The philosopher Gadamer (1975) talks about the rejection of positivism as the sole source of knowledge having long disappeared.

*While the serious scientist knows the restrictive conditions of his [sic] thematization of social appearances and givens, the makers of public opinion can distort the real work of scientists in view of the inner needs and expectations of society exhibiting an increasing lack of orientation* (Gadamer, 1975: 307).
Gadamer believes that the authoritative position of science evolved because of its historical separation from philosophy. Following the breakdown of the Christian tradition in the early part of this century, there was a "... new desire and inner longing" within society "... to find in science a substitute for lost orientations" (Gadamer, 1975: 307). Accordingly, science became the lay persons' religion; the methodology to gain the understanding and the mechanism with which to bring about solutions to all problems.

Slavish adherence to this methodological approach has limited knowledge to the observable, the tangible and the verifiable. It has stunted our understanding (Dovey, 1979:12). Positivism is increasingly difficult to justify in a multitude of research settings.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) identify five stages in the development of qualitative research. In the "Traditional Phase", prior to World War I, significant ethnographic studies were conducted. Inquiry was nevertheless, governed by positivist principles of validity, reliability and objectivity (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 7). In the second moment or "Modernist Phase", qualitative research was formalised. Texts appeared between the post war years and the 1970s as researchers grappled with epistemological questions and interpretive frameworks. "The pivotal point for much of the controversy was the appropriateness of a natural science model to the social sciences" (Bryman, 1988: 3). The philosophical discourse of phenomenology informed much of this debate. It was argued that in order to understand human behaviour, research methods had to acknowledge the special character of people.

The third phase (1970-1986) heralded a consolidation of the qualitative paradigm (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 9). Not only were many different methods used, applied research was undertaken and the long held belief of ethnographic objectivity, exploded. Interpretive, open-ended perspectives emerged, as did new approaches such as poststructuralism and deconstruction (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 9).
The fourth moment, the "Crisis of Representation", meant new uncertainties in the field. Writing became more reflexive and "called into question the issues of gender, class and race" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 10). Previously settled arguments around validity and reliability were challenged and continue in contemporary discourse (see discussion later in this chapter). Indeed, aspects from all previous phases are found today. Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 11) conclude that,

...the qualitative research act can no longer be viewed from within a neutral, or objective, positivist perspective. Class, race, gender, and ethnicity shape the process of inquiry, making research a multicultural process.

Qualitative techniques involving indepth interviews with groups and individuals are used increasingly across a wide range of fields (for example, Duruz, 1994b; Mackay, 1993; Burgess, Goldsmith & Harrison, 1990; Winter, 1990; Burgess, Limb & Harrison, 1988a & 1988b). However, unlike geography, planning researchers have been slow to take up qualitative research. Gaber (1993: 140) points out that by pursuing a quantitative orientation the link between researchers and the people for whom they are planning, is lost, as are quality of life issues. Nevertheless, his suggested approach is cautious, advocating combined qualitative and quantitative methods. Jacobs (1993) offers a comprehensive overview of qualitative approaches to the city. She acknowledges their broad scope and the opportunities that they provide in facilitating deep understanding.

Landry and Bianchini (1995: 54) argue for a dramatic shift in the way we research and conduct urban planning.²

² In 1994 and 1995 I attended two national planning conferences in Australia. At each the focus was on developing new ways of learning and understanding. Papers not only employed qualitative techniques, there was a concerted effort to challenge the traditionally narrow definition of planning. These were exciting gatherings, attended by a broad cross section of academics and practitioners.
‘instrumental rationality’. This is a way of reasoning grounded in science, governed by logic and resulting in a rational model for decision making. This paradigm connects compartmentalised, separate branches or boxes of knowledge, and imposes order and control over ‘nature’ without letting our direct experience of ‘messy reality’ get too much in the way.

Today we have come to realise that through narrowly focused instrumental rationality it is simply impossible even to formulate the right questions to address the problems which are dominant in every public policy agenda from health, to employment, to education, including of course urban policy, which by its nature is multifaceted.

Characteristics of qualitative inquiry

Qualitative inquiry encompasses several ways of actually doing research. Methodologies have the ability to deal with "...multiple (and less aggregatable) realities" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 40). Whilst there are different techniques, all qualitative inquiry is based on unifying characteristics or themes. These are fundamental to the current research.

1. Research is carried out within real-world or natural settings (Patton, 1990: 41). They involve whole and complex systems, rather than isolating and separating component parts.

2. The researcher gets close to, and involved with those she/he is studying. The values of the researcher are acknowledged as influencing and indeed, informing the research (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 11). The qualitative researcher assumes that empathy and sympathetic introspection, which are central to personal involvement, bring about a greater understanding of human behaviour (Patton, 1990: 47).

3. Purposeful or theoretical sampling is generally used in favour of representational or random sampling. The objective is to select "...information rich cases for in-depth study" (Patton, 1990: 169) This is to increase the range of data exposed and the
chances of uncovering a "...full array of multiple realities" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 40).

4. The research starts with genuinely open questions about the issue to be studied. Theoretical bases and concepts emerge from the data, rather than forming an initial guiding parameter. This approach is based on the premise that "...no a priori theory could possibly encompass the multiple realities that are likely to be encountered" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 41).³

5. The research design is flexible and responsive to change as the field work proceeds and understanding develops. This rests on the assumption that it is not possible to know enough about what will be found, nor how the various value systems will interact. Such flexibility permits an ongoing research process, informed by both emerging theory and appropriate data gathering techniques (Wolcott, 1990: 32).

6. Meanings and interpretations of the data are taken back to the research participants for their feedback. Respondents are in the best position to judge the contextual implications of the interpreted data.⁴

7. Qualitative research is generally written up in case study format, rather than the impersonal style of a technical report. Direct quotations are used to illustrate unique personal and multiple realities.⁵ Use of the first person captures and demonstrates

³ Nevertheless, it is possible to use qualitative inquiry informed by theory and as a way of testing hypotheses. This approach is not used here.

⁴ Negotiating outcomes can be difficult and is currently being debated in the feminist methodological literature (see for example, Nast, 1994). I outline arguments later in the chapter.

⁵ Silverman (1993: ix) rightly cautions against the use of supportive quotes without the researcher showing that contrary evidence has been considered.
the researcher’s relationship with the material. There is frequently authorial reflection on both the emerging theory and the research process.

8. The depth and detail of qualitative data derived from a small number of case studies means that broad generalisations are rarely able to be made. Research findings are contextually bound in terms of their social, historical and temporal setting (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 42).

Having established the broad parameters of my approach, I will now discuss the particular orientation taken in the research.

**HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGY: THEORETICAL ORIENTATION**

Hermeneutics provides one way of finding multiple expressions of meaning or interpretation and can be considered an extension of the phenomenological method (Emden, 1991b: 21).

Within the qualitative framework, phenomenology and hermeneutics provide an appropriate theoretical orientation for my methodology. While acknowledging the dangers of oversimplifying an enormous body of complex philosophical discourse, phenomenology "...was from the very beginning a hermeneutics of both expression and of life-world experience" (Edie, 1984 in Bergum, 1991: 56). Put another way, phenomenology focuses on the description of experience and hermeneutics interprets this experience (Bergum, 1991: 56).

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8 Lincoln and Guba (1985: 110-128) challenge the notion of generalisability in any research. The notion of generalisability has been so highly valued that we have not critically looked at our ability to do this within the positivist framework. In attempting to generalise, one may disregard the unique experience of the individual. Therefore, to be generalisable is sometimes to be highly inaccurate.
Spiegelberg (1970 in Bartjes, 1991: 252-253) identifies hermeneutic phenomenology as one of several modifications of phenomenological philosophy. He defines it as "...interpreting the concealed meanings in the phenomena that are not immediately revealed to direct investigation, analysis and description" (Bartjes, 1991: 253). In their philosophical writings, both Gadamer (1975) and Ricoeur (1973a) "...infused the phenomenological project with a concern for hermeneutics" (Bergum, 1991: 56).

Accordingly, this approach overcomes the critique that phenomenological inquiry is only descriptive and cannot lead to social action (Leonard, 1984 in Darlington, 1993: 79).7

Having established the link between phenomenology and hermeneutics8, I will now outline their basic characteristics, focussing on appropriateness for the present research.

**Phenomenology**

*At the start, one must understand that there is no one correct way of doing phenomenology* (Seamon, 1982: 119).

There are differing interpretations of how contemporary phenomenology has evolved, as well as varying applications of the method.9 Polkinghorne (1989: 44) distinguishes between the epistemological principles of positivism with those of phenomenology. And yet, there is a connection in that phenomenologists and positivists alike are "expected to share a commitment to scientific values and the search for truth. They engage in systematic and rigorous searches seeking a depth

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7 It is useful to note that a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective has been used in other studies about the meaning of home (for example, Swenson, 1991).

8 The actualisation of my theoretical orientation, discussed later, extends this link further.

9 Phenomenology may be categorised as "pure" in the tradition of Husserl; hermeneutical in the tradition of Ricoeur and Gadamer; and existential as described by Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger and Schutz (Seamon, 1982: 119-120).
of understanding that extends beyond a cursory view and commend their findings to the scientific community for review and critique" (Polkinghorne, 1989: 44).

Phenomenology has both informed the philosophical basis of qualitative inquiry and provided specific methodologies for the phenomenologist (Bartjes, 1991). Initially developed by the German philosopher Husserl, it was not until the writings of Schutz that phenomenology began to influence the social sciences (Patton, 1990: 69). Principally, Schutz argued that positivism was an unsuitable vehicle for examining people and their social setting. "Any attempt to understand social reality must be grounded in people’s experience of that social reality" (Bryman 1988: 52). The phenomenologist tries to see the world through the eyes of those being studied in order to understand the interpretive process of that world. A phenomenological study focuses on the essence of shared experience and uses methodological techniques to bracket, analyse and compare so that unifying essence/s can be identified. Alternatively, research can take a phenomenological perspective which denotes an allegiance to qualitative methodologies that explore people’s experience of the world (Patton 1990: 71).10 For geographers, it has also become a "...paradigm offering a humanistic perspective on the problems encountered by traditional objective research" (Mezga, 1993: 67).

Controversy surrounding the interpretation and application of phenomenology is very evident in the burgeoning methodological literature in academic nursing (for example, Anderson, 1991; Bartjes, 1991; Neyle and West, 1991; Wilkes, 1991). There is still considerable discussion on practical applications in research, as well as a growing acknowledgment that "...to speak of ‘phenomenology’ is not to speak of a single, unified body of thought" (Giddens, 1976 in Anderson, 1991: 25). Human geographers have also contributed to the development of phenomenological methods

10 This is my position here.
Women's Stories of Home

Chapter Three

(for example, Seamon and Mugerauer, 1985; Buttimer and Seamon, 1980; Buttimer, 1976a; Tuan, 1975, 1971 & 1965; Relph, 1970).

Applicability to the current research

Although there are different applications of phenomenology (Mezga, 1993; Thompson, 1990), for my purposes three concepts are central. These are lifeworld, intentionality or intersubjectivity and the phenomenological attitude or reduction. Lifeworld is the "taken-for-granted pattern and context of everyday life in which people routinely conduct their daily affairs without having to bring each gesture, behaviour and event to conscious attention" (Seamon, 1979a in Seamon, 1982: 124). The phenomenologist's preoccupation with individual experience has been critiqued, but as Eichelberger (1989 in Patton, 1990: 70) points out, this focus is only partly true. The phenomenologist must also search for the commonalities within unique human experience.

The concept of the phenomenological attitude or reduction recognises that it is impossible to approach any phenomenon without preconceived ideas. "Through the reduction, the phenomenologist puts aside prior standards of reality in order to let ordinary experience speak for itself" (Darlington, 1993: 72). In practice this means that the researcher must reflect on the values that he or she brings to the inquiry.\(^\text{11}\) Researchers must recognise their ethnocentric biases, as well as "the gendered and 'raced' construction" of knowledge (Peake, 1993: 419). This is difficult because the researcher lives in the world that she or he is trying to understand (Merleau-Ponty, 1962 in Darlington, 1993: 73).

Intersubjectivity relates to the way in which knowledge is embodied, such that the social world becomes a "domain of typifications" (Schutz, 1973 in Anderson, 1991: 111). In my case, this is done in the Introduction.
Knowledge is based on experience and our embodied interpretation of that experience. The focus of phenomenological inquiry is "on the subject's experienced meaning instead of on descriptions of their overt actions or behaviour" (Polkinghorne, 1989: 44). These experiences are put together in order to develop a world view that makes sense to the individual. "There is no separate (or objective) reality for people. There is only what they know their experience is and means. The subjective experience incorporates the objective thing and the person's reality" (Patton, 1990: 69). In this way, humans have a set of rules and relationships which must be followed if communication is to be sustained. "For the individual to find his [sic] way in the social world he [sic] must come to appreciate the order of its typical procedures and the typified manner in which those procedures are to be followed" (Natanson, 1970 in Anderson, 1991: 29). Thus meaning is constructed and can only be uncovered by revealing the social and personal contexts which are brought to the situation being examined.

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics may be defined as... the science of interpretation, or the determination of the meaning of mental productions... As such it is a transempirical discipline, for no amount of analytic-empirical-scientific data, no matter how complete, can totally establish meaning... Rather, meaning is established, not by sensory data, but by unrestrained communicative inquiry and interpretation (Wilber, 1981a in Reason and Hawkins, 1988: 82).

Grounded in the philosophy of hermeneutics, this methodology was originally concerned with the interpretative meaning of texts. The qualitative researcher applies hermeneutic principles more broadly to ascertain context and meaning for human behaviour. The central assumption is that the researcher constructs a particular reality from her/his interpretation of the data with input from the research participants. Interpretative meaning is embedded in the researcher’s perspective and purpose. A different researcher coming from another situational context would likely develop alternative interpretations (Patton 1990: 85).
Hermeneutics is the "...study of interpretive understanding, or meaning, with special attention to context and original purpose" (Patton, 1990: 84). Working at the turn of the century with the German philosopher Hegel, Freidrich Schleiermacher's interpretation of biblical texts heralded the beginnings of the hermeneutical approach. It was later taken up by Dilthey who argued that "...all texts and human activities should be subject to rigorous interpretation on the basis of their intrinsic meaning" (Emden, 1991b: 21). Heidegger's understanding of time as a human construct, extended these ideas further. It led to his assertion that objective knowledge is impossible, given that "...embodied human beings are born into an already existing world of traditions, cultural practices, artefacts, and shared meanings and relationships. They are thrown into this temporal world, but initially come to an unreflective understanding of themselves and their world because they apprehend the meanings of their world directly through their embodiment" (Parker, 1991: 291).

Heidegger's understanding about the linear nature of time was a significant breakthrough in the development of hermeneutics. He argued that humans have constructed a linear notion of time and in turn, used this to explain human events in a causal way (Parker, 1991: 291). This position recognises the impossibility of objective knowledge and causal certainty. Hans-Georg Gadamer's lifelong study of hermeneutics provided an enormous contribution, especially his explication of the implications of Heidegger's concepts for the social sciences (Emden, 1991b: 21; Parker, 1991: 292).

In practical terms, the "hermeneutical circle" is used to interpret the meaning of texts by understanding the individual parts within the context of the whole. The objective is to reach a point where a "sensible meaning, a coherent understanding, free of internal contradictions" is achieved (Kvale, 1987 in Patton, 1990: 84).
Positioning the researcher's context is also central to the hermeneutic approach. Data are interpreted from a particular stance that reflects the researcher's construction of "reality".

*If other researchers had different backgrounds, used different methods, or had different purposes, they would likely develop different types of reactions, focus on different aspects of the setting, and develop somewhat different scenarios* (Eichelberger, 1989 in Patton, 1990: 85).

I will now turn to a consideration of the feminist research framework as the second, over-arching paradigm within which my theoretical stance is positioned.

**Feminist Research: The Broad Canvas**

**What is feminist research?**

Reinharz (1992b) traces the development of feminist research, which emerged from a growing dissatisfaction with the inadequacies of positivism. Because of a shared origin with qualitative research, feminist inquiry is frequently defined as such (Stanley and Wise, 1983). However, the conflation of feminist and qualitative methods has since been dispelled (Reinharz, 1992a; Fonow and Cook, 1991; Stanley, 1990; Stanley and Wise, 1990).

Feminist research proposed a new set of research principles. As well as women actually undertaking inquiry, there was an emphasis on empowering research participants, valuing experiential knowledge (the phenomenological connection) and seeking out causes of oppression (Reinharz, 1992b: 426). Reinharz (1993: 72) has established principles guiding the feminist researcher. These elements are at the core of the current project and may be summarised as follows.
1. Feminism is a philosophical perspective, not a specific research method.

2. Feminist researchers engage in an ongoing critique of non-feminist scholarship.

3. Feminist theory guides research.

4. Feminist research is transdisciplinary in nature.

5. Feminist research has a social change objective.

6. Feminist research attempts to represent human diversity.

7. The researcher is referred to as a person.

8. There is an interpersonal relationship between the researcher and researched (Reinharz, 1993: 72).

Contested territory: the ongoing debate

In the end, even ‘feminist’ research too easily tends to reproduce the very inequalities and hierarchies it seeks to reveal and transform. The researcher departs with the data, and the researched stay behind, no better off than before. The common observations that ‘they’ got something out of it too - the opportunity to tell their stories, the entry into history, the recuperation of their own memories, perhaps the chance to exercise some editorial control over the project or even its products etc - even where perfectly accurate, do not challenge the inequalities on which the entire process rests. Neither does a sisterly posture of mutual learning and genuine dialogue. For we continue to function in an over-determined universe in which our respective roles ensure that ‘other’ people are always the subject of ‘our’ research, almost never the reverse (Patai, 1991 in Gilbert, 1994: 95).

Feminist research has continued to develop, with methodological appropriateness, as well as techniques, being widely debated. It is important to recognise that research
driven by feminist ideology is not without problems. There has been a tendency in the past to adopt such methodologies naively and without question. It is necessary to understand the current issues in this debate as they have influenced my use of the feminist paradigm.

Concern has been expressed about the essentialising force within feminist research and the extent to which the "urge to essentialise" can be suppressed (Kobayashi, 1994: 77). There may well be more women conducting research, more women publishing and writing and greater use of methods that enable participants to use their own voice (Reinharz, 1992b: 428), but in terms of how we understand the relationship between class, race, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation and gender is open to question. Rather than naively assuming that because we share gender, our differences are irrelevant, the new voices in this debate are urging researchers to acknowledge and address differences that exist between them and those participating in a particular project (Gilbert, 1994: 92).

The issue of essentialising the nature of woman is also linked to the "insider"/"outsider" problematic. Shared gender is just the starting point. As Gilbert explains,

> My lived experiences were so completely different from the women that I interviewed that I would not consider myself an "insider" despite the fact that I was doing research on women who lived in the same city as I (Gilbert, 1994: 92).

The issue of objectification of the researched must also be examined. The subjects of feminist inquiry are not immune from researcher exploitation or manipulation (Gilbert, 1994: 93). The necessary human relationship and engagement that is required in this type of research may ironically, put the researched at greater risk.

12 Essentialising refers to the practice of giving "...essential and immutable qualities to a category of persons on the grounds of "race" or "sex"" (Kobayashi, 1994: 77).
There can be an overwhelming sense of obligation to the project, which could put the participants under greater stress, especially in refusing a request from the researcher. Gilbert is not arguing for a rejection of an empathic relationship in the interview situation. Rather, she is urging a less naive position about this relationship. In her experience, the interview process was positive for the women. However, she did not form lifelong friendships with her interviewees and walked away from the interview situation, unsure of whether she had done anything different than the positivist in objectifying the researched.

My experience suggests that the researcher inevitably has more power over the process (Ribbens, 1989). I was aware of an unequal relationship, given my role as a university educated, Anglo woman interviewing NESB women, many with much lower levels of education. Although I had good reasons for selecting interviewees with English language competency (see Chapter Four), my use of English as a first language was potentially problematic. However, by establishing rapport through "being accepted and trusted" (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992: 106), the women felt sufficiently relaxed and valued to be open about intimate details of their lives.

I had an interesting experience when I asked one of the women if I could return to her house and take photographs. At the time of the interview she agreed to this request, saying that it would not be a problem. Some time later, I phoned her to arrange an appointment to photograph the house. We agreed upon a date, but when I arrived, she was not at home. I called her later and she told me that unfortunately her husband was not comfortable about me taking the photos. Given that she had my telephone number, I wondered why she had not simply cancelled our appointment. Perhaps it was embarrassing for her, especially if she felt a degree of obligation after our lengthy and cordial interview. She may have found it too difficult to initiate the refusal. By just not being there, it may have been an easier way to say no.

In some communities being an outsider can be an advantage in research. A member of the same community may be perceived as a potential informant to others within the group, resulting in the respondent being less open and honest. An outsider does not present the same threat. Nevertheless, the insider/outsider issue remains controversial (Minichiello, et al. 1990: 216-220).
Egalitarian cooperation is more likely than researcher domination to allow participants to talk about what is important to them, express emotions in a spontaneous fashion, and act in ways that have meaning for them rather than in ways perceived to be desired by researchers (Hall and Stevens, 1991: 25).

Staeheli and Lawson (1994: 99) assert that "we cannot fully understand others' subjectivities and speak with authority for them". Nevertheless, they do not advocate abandoning research topics where the researcher is an outsider. Rather, there is a need to recognise the differences and the tensions inherent in the process.

Gilbert (1994: 94) points out that in her research she would not have received the same information had she used a standard survey instrument. Similarly, she would not have been in a position to develop an understanding of the reasons driving the women’s decisions and actions. This parallels my experience. Like her, I believe that the women in my study did enjoy the interview experience and felt positive about the process. The length of interviews and their empowering nature as expressed to me by the women, further reinforced my impression that the interview was not wholly for my benefit. And yet, I am aware that I walked away from the interview situation with the women’s life stories. It is I, not they, who will use this work to further my career. It is I who have poured over the interview transcripts, extracting themes, interpreting ideas and theorising understandings. Although I did take initial interpretations back to my respondents, at the end of the day it is my interpretation of their stories which is presented here. I ultimately had the power to define and interpret the data (Acker et al., 1983 in Gilbert, 1994: 94).

Nevertheless, I have engaged in a form of feminist research. I have used a methodology that acknowledges women’s ways of knowing (Gilligan, 1993; Franck, 1989; Belenky et al., 1986); I have not assumed the boundaries of women’s concerns in relation to the topic being examined; I have encouraged the women to speak about issues that they see as important; and I have selected a topic for investigation that has, to date, very few women’s voices within it.
Turning to another aspect of contemporary debate, Reinharz has considered unrealistic expectations in feminist research. In particular, "...exaggerated notions of bonding between researcher and subject" (Reinharz, 1993: 72). Reinharz does not deny that rapport is important. Time and shared interests are both required. However, the imperative for researchers to strongly identify with their women subjects as if they were sisters and agree with everything they say, is simplistic. Feminist methodology is still driven by the presumption that at some level women researchers are insiders and share the same views as their research participants (Gilbert, 1994: 92). There may well be similarities, but differences of race, age, class, educational background, ideological stance and the very individual nature of life experiences, inevitably set researcher and researched apart, whether male or female. Recent contributors to the debate echo the caution against essentialising the notion of woman (for example, Harkess and Warren, 1993; Herod, 1993). A reflexive attitude is advocated in terms of how the interviewer generates meanings from the interview situation and the role that she/he plays in structuring the research process.

Reinharz (1993: 74) argues that non-exploitative relations in the research process are possible without an intense and enduring relationship. The issue here is one of non-exploitation and a research ethic that honours the participant. In other words, "...relations of respect, shared information, openness and clarity of communication".

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15 Oakley (1986) has fuelled this debate by advocating that the researcher maintain intense relationships with women interviewees for many years.

16 Harkess and Warren (1993) debate the degree to which strangeness between interviewer and interviewee affects the rapport in the interview situation and validity of results. Their analysis of different intensive interview research leads them to conclude that it is not necessary to "preserve strangeness in an interview". This would eliminate snowball sampling, as well as the development of rapport, because of the role that conversation plays in promoting friendship.
In my work, it was absolutely critical to develop rapport in each interview situation. Rapport was a shared interest with the women in the details of their stories, as well as the process of disclosure. Several indicated that they were pleased that someone was prepared to listen and to take their stories seriously. It had never happened before. In sensing my interest and empathy, the women slowly opened up, privileging me with intimate accounts of their lives, which often revealed painful memories. I have continued to keep the research participants informed of my progress through the project, thereby further reinforcing my gratitude and their centrality to the process. I discuss this more fully in Chapter Four.

Reinharz is optimistic about the current debate around pluralist feminist research methods. She believes that both participants and researchers stand to benefit from engagement in the discourse. The debate is coming of age. There is a rejection of naivety as part of the ongoing "...criticism, restlessness, and dissatisfaction with the status quo and a commitment to work for change" (Reinharz, 1992b: 433). This constant questioning is, in itself, an essential element of feminism.

**THE INDEPTH INTERVIEW: ACTUALISING THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Having established the theoretical foundations of my methodological position - phenomenological hermeneutics within a qualitative and feminist research framework - I will now outline the actualisation of this stance. How did I put the theory to work so that my practical approach was consistent with the principles to which I aligned myself? Kvale (1983) provided the link here. Motivated by the desire to clarify the methodological status of the "qualitative research interview", Kvale uses the philosophical traditions of phenomenology and hermeneutics to approach description and interpretation. Twelve aspects of the indepth process are detailed in order to provide a "mode of understanding". I use this as a guiding template for my
methodology. Its purpose is to "gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena" (Kvale, 1983: 174). It also honours the principles of feminist research. I briefly outline the approach below and how it relates to the present project.

1. Life-world: The initial purpose of the interview is to elicit descriptions of interviewee's experience of the phenomena under study. In my case, this is the meaning of home - how home has been experienced throughout the women's lives.

2. Meaning, Qualitative, Descriptive: Ultimately, the aim of the interview is understanding. Rich, personal and detailed qualitative description is critical, but understanding is the key. This comes about with the interviewer registering and interpreting what is said as well as the manner in which it is communicated. I adopted this procedure in the interviews, taking it into the interpretive phase of data analysis (see Part Three).

3. Specificity: The research interview focuses on the interviewee's personal experience of the phenomenon under investigation. General opinions are not sought, although it is my experience that they are sometimes offered.

4. Presuppositionless: The interviewer comes to the qualitative interview without ready made categories or schemes of interpretation. This does not imply, however, a value free position. Curiosity, sensitivity to what is said and not said, and the ability to critique her values are the hallmarks of a good qualitative interviewer.

5. Focussed: Although the in-depth interview is semi-structured, it has direction. At the same time, it is not constraining in terms of what the interviewee sees as important. In my case, I had an extensive list of questions to focus the

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17 The critical issue is being aware of one's values. I outline my position in the Introduction.
conversation, but I was guided by the interviewee's process and her particular emphasis. I tried not to judge what was relevant in terms of my schema and only returned to the prepared questions in order to move onto another topic when this failed to happen automatically.

6. Ambiguity: Sometimes there are ambiguous or seemingly contradictory statements given in the interview. These can result from communication difficulties or reflect genuine inconsistencies or ambivalences in the interviewee's experience. It is the interviewer's task to ascertain the nature of any inconsistencies and in the analysis stage, ensure that these are drawn out, rather than ignored (Silverman, 1993: IX). I have taken this approach in Part Two.

7. Change: During the interview a respondent may come to realisations that change initial descriptions and meanings. The process provides opportunities for reflection and new insights often emerge. Accordingly, it is not always easy to confirm material with respondents post-interview. I endeavoured to strike a balance with member checks (see discussion later in this chapter and Chapter Four).

8. Sensitivity: Interpersonal interaction in the interview has important implications for its outcome. Varying ability and sensitivity of interviewers, as well as their gender, race and age, will result in differences in the depth of the interview. In my case, being a woman was an advantage talking with women in their home. In the case of Muslim participants, my gender enabled access. In relation to racial differences, it is difficult to say what impact this had on the process. As an outsider, I was not in a position to talk about the women in their communities. Knowing this, they may have been quite open with me. Nevertheless, there may have been other instances where they were less open. The use of English throughout the interviews

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18 This list altered over the course of the interviews in order to incorporate emerging themes that I had not initially envisaged.
may have also been an inhibiting factor for some. However, as I undertook them all, this overcame the problem of having different people conduct the interviews.

9. Interpersonal Situation: Any interview situation involves an interaction between two people. In the qualitative interview this is likely to be significant given the emphasis on establishing rapport and spending considerable time together. The interview may be positive or negative, or more commonly, have elements of both. These experiences need to be monitored as the interview proceeds. "The reciprocal influence of interviewer and interviewed on both the cognitive as well as an emotional level is, however, not primarily a source of error but a strong point of the qualitative research interview. Rather than just to seek to reduce the importance of the interpersonal interaction in the situation, what matters is to recognise and apply the knowledge of this interaction in the interview" (Kvale, 1983: 178).

My evaluations after each interview enabled me to reflect on the interpersonal dynamics that were apparent. I considered the level of comfort achieved between myself and the woman as the interview evolved. These evaluations contributed to data analysis, especially the selection of most and least informative interviews.

10. Positive Experience: The qualitative interview provides an opportunity for an enriching experience for both interviewer and interviewee.¹⁹ The focus of attention and desire to understand another’s experience provide conditions for a positive experience. Indeed, the interview experience can be empowering.

¹⁹ This does not necessarily mean that sad memories will not emerge. My experience revealed this to be the case and sensitivity in handling these situations was very important. I discuss the ways I did this in Chapter Four.
RIGOUR

*Validity is a 'limit question' of research, one that repeatedly resurfaces, one that can neither be avoided nor resolved, a fertile obsession given its intractability* (Fraser, 1989 in Lather, 1993: 674).

In the final section of this chapter, I consider theoretical discourses around rigour. While this aspect of qualitative research continues to be debated in the literature, there is no question that inquiry must withstand critical evaluation, assessment and be trustworthy (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). However, in showing that I have taken this matter seriously, I do not wish to undermine the qualitative principles at the core of my project. As Sandelowski (1993: 1) cautions,

*There is an inflexibility and an uncompromising harshness and rigidity implied in the term 'rigor' that threaten to take us too far from the artfulness, versatility and sensitivity to meaning and context that mark qualitative works of distinction.*

The very nature of qualitative research means that it does not stand up to the traditional measures of validity, reliability and objectivity. Accordingly, different ways of ensuring rigor in qualitative research have been developed (Hall and Stevens, 1991; Lather, 1986; Sandelowski, 1986; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). I have taken from these ideas. I have also considered the issues raised by Silverman (1993), Wolcott (1990), Bryman (1988) and Kirk and Miller (1986). The approaches taken are presented below.

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20 The test of internal validity fails because it implies a causal connection between independent and dependent variables. It does not meet the test of external validity because generalisations are not research outcomes. Reliability fails because the research cannot be replicated. Objectivity fails because of the centrality of the researcher in the process and the importance of values (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).
Dependability

*Dependability is ascertained by examining the methodologic and analytic 'decision trails' created by the investigators during the course of the study itself.* (Sandelowski, 1986 in Hall and Stevens, 1991: 19).

In Chapter Four I document the "rationale, outcome and evaluation of all actions related to data collection, sampling, analysis, and dissemination of results" (Hall and Stevens, 1991: 19). I also discuss my use of a systematic analysis process to further enhance the reliability of the data.

Member checks

Member checks have been used in formal and informal situations. However, I am mindful of Sandelowski’s (1993) analysis of the complexities, including moral and ethical dilemmas, of this practice. She identifies various difficulties in returning to participants with abstract syntheses of all members’ experiences. The reality of the individual’s life is lost in such a document and accordingly can be off-putting and disappointing, leading to denials and misunderstanding. Another potential problem is that participants may reject the narrative presented to them because in telling that very story, they have come to new realisations and a reconceptualisation of their own reality. There are also difficulties in presenting sad and distressing memories (a considerable concern in my research). And what is the researcher to do if the participant declares that the transcript is not a true record of what was said, even if it does accord with the taped version? So while member checking may be based in both methodological concerns for rigour and feminist concerns for research empowerment, the reality can be a far cry from these lofty ideals. My compromise was a balance, which I explicate in Chapter Four.
Triangulation

Triangulation is the use of multiple-data-collection methods to enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992: 24). However, while this sounds like a good idea, it is not without its problems (Wolcott, 1990: 27; Yllo, 1988: 48).

Some researchers combine qualitative and quantitative methods, whereas others use different approaches within the one paradigm. I adopted the latter course of action as I considered it the most fruitful approach for my purposes. I did, however, use several data collection techniques, which are detailed in the next chapter.

Reflexivity

Hall and Stevens (1991) argue for the use of reflexivity. This is a potent way for the qualitative researcher to ensure dependability and "authenticity" of findings. They argue for an ongoing reflexive stance, claiming, along with feminists, that it brings feelings and values into the research. I have attempted a reflexive position throughout my work. I make explicit the values I bring to the study. I use footnotes to reflect on different issues and in Chapter Four, I consider at length my process in the research. This was central to the inquiry and has had a major impact on the course of the project.

Reflexivity is closely related to the qualitative researcher's stance of empathic neutrality. The subjectivity of the research paradigm is acknowledged and the researcher's involvement in the process is used as a strength. However, the view that complete objectivity is possible, or indeed desirable, in any research is gaining currency. What is important is the credibility or rigour of the methodology. In terms of qualitative work, this means that the researcher adopts a stance of neutrality. The investigator has to be committed to understanding, taking into account the
multiple complexities and perspectives as they emerge in the data, reporting in a balanced style (Patton, 1990: 55). The stance of neutrality does not however imply detachment. Empathy and insight are important tools for the qualitative researcher and facilitate understanding in the data gathering stage. Neutrality or an ability to stand back from the data is employed in relation to the findings.

Data analysis

Considerations of rigour do not end with data collection. Analysis must also be handled with care. Increasingly, qualitative researchers are being urged to use specialist computer programs to manage their data. Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 141-145) present both sides of the argument, concluding that "the products of computer-assisted analysis are only as good as the data, the thinking, and the level of care that went into them" (p145). Wolcott (1990: 35) cautions against using computers given the machine's "gargantuan appetite" for mountains of data. He argues that this can result in an over-accumulation of material, which then becomes nightmarish to manage. Sandelowski (1995: 371) finds that qualitative researchers turn to computerised text management programs in an attempt to "bypass the painstaking labor involved in analysis".

Fielding and Lee (1991) have edited a volume solely devoted to this issue. In Australia, Richards and Richards (1990, 1987) have dominated debate with their computer software NUDIST. I have been invited to various seminars advocating the use of this product and seriously considered its potential for my work. I have also talked at length with colleagues using the package.

The turning point came when one of the women in my co-supervision group lost six weeks of work using NUDIST. Whether this was due to personal error or the software itself, is unknown. However, the result of this experience, her dilemmas around it and our shared reflections persuaded me to look elsewhere for an
appropriate way of text management and analysis. Nevertheless, I still used my computer extensively.\textsuperscript{21}

In coming to the final decision about employing a specialist computer package\textsuperscript{22}, I was mindful of the following.

1. The potential for computer analysis to de-contextualise data as well as its searching capabilities to facilitate ease of data sorting by key words and phrases.

2. The problem of data accumulation instead of a focus on the essence.


4. The inherent motivation behind much of the arguments for computer analysis - the need to justify qualitative research in terms of quantitative measures.

5. Inappropriate use of data because of the ease of counting with computers (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992: 142).

It is interesting to note that an outcome of my decision not to use specialist software was the development of a different approach to data analysis (see Chapter Four).

\textsuperscript{21} The NUDIST package is aggressively marketed by a commercial computer company. My disquiet with this package was further reinforced when I read a footnote in Richards (1994) which intimated that unless rigorously analysed using this particular program, qualitative data were suspect.

\textsuperscript{22} It is important to note that I did use a powerful word processing package in the transcribing and analysis of data and writing of the thesis. This facilitated project management.
CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have outlined the theoretical and philosophical issues central to my methodological approach. I have adopted a dual framework of qualitative and feminist research. I have chosen an orientation of hermeneutic phenomenology, taking on Kvale's (1983) actualising schema. I have highlighted contemporary issues that have been influential in my methodological decision making. In Chapter Four I develop the specificities of this philosophical and theoretical position by carefully auditing my research actions and reflecting on the process.
Chapter Four

The Research Process: A Personal Journey

This is a both exciting and dizzying time in which to do social inquiry (Lather, 1991: 14).
INTRODUCTION

Qualitative research is frequently criticised for its lack of attention to methodological detail (Richards, 1993: 39). In this chapter, I systematically review the progression of the study, describing and justifying what I did (Sandelowski, 1986: 34). This process is an important contribution to rigour.

I also critically reflect on my experience throughout the project. Academic inquiry is rarely straightforward, nor is its progress easy to predict or personally painless. My reading in the methodological literature revealed very few texts that tackled the day-to-day problems that inevitably face the qualitative researcher. I discovered these issues through my own experience. For me, research is a journey which needs to be revealed publicly. In being more honest about the reality of the process, we will contribute to its demystification, as well as learn from each other.¹ My reflections on the complexities and disorder that I encountered are grounded in my philosophy as a feminist researcher.

...feminist research coming from within a tradition which expressly supports self examination and sharing should reflect these two qualities... a recognition of the importance of the personal is fundamental to feminist philosophy (Stanley and Wise, 1979: 360).

The chapter flows in the form of a narrative journey - how I came to this research and how I dealt with each phase. On occasions throughout the text, I pause to contemplate the process and how my experience of it actually became an important part of the investigation. As I stated in the Introduction, this work did not occur in

¹ In undertaking this project, I have had many private conversations over coffee and camomile tea. I have contemplated both my own process, and that of my friends as we have struggled to make sense of a complex and at times daunting task. We have talked at length about the technicalities of doing research as well as the emotional issues that have emerged during the process. This has encompassed our own doubts, fears and difficulties, as well as negative reactions and unsupportive challenges from outside. Important as these private discussions have been, it is imperative to take them out into the public arena so that we can learn more from each other.
an intellectual vacuum, isolated from my personal life or value system. Rather, it emerged from this intimate space as well as being influenced by my academic and professional interests, concerns and fascinations. The process involved a synthesis of these elements, which I reflect upon in the following pages.2

My journey has also been significantly influenced by external responses to the work, initially from colleagues and co-researchers, the women participants and, over time, seminar and conference audiences. These responses have contributed in different ways, enabling me to reflect on my methodological approach, topic of investigation and feminist value system. As well, the reactions have illuminated important belief systems about the epistemological and definitional boundaries of urban planning.

COMING TO THE TOPIC: THE JOURNEY BEGINS

My decision to undertake a doctorate was largely personal and had a lot to do with my employment situation at the time. My job was not satisfying. I craved absorption in a demanding intellectual endeavour as well as wanting to contribute to my profession of planning.3 At the time, I only had the vaguest notion of what I would study.

In the search for an appropriate topic, I reflected on my personal and professional interests in planning, my academic training in human geography and my philosophical position as a feminist. Given the commitment demanded of any doctoral student, particularly if studying part-time, I wanted a research topic that

2 In reflecting, I am persuaded by Glesne and Peshkin’s (1992: xiii) thoughts on the matter. "Learning to reflect on your behaviour and thoughts, as well as the phenomenon under study, creates a means for continuously becoming a better researcher".

3 I am conscious that this could sound rather noble, which is not entirely true! There was ego and ambition bound up in my decision. Although I did not have specific plans at that point, I wanted to broaden my employment options and higher education seemed an essential component.
would not only fascinate and intrigue me over several years, but would enable me to make a contribution to women in their ongoing struggle for equality. I discussed these initial ideas with a supportive academic, who later became my supervisor. He advised a period of six months in which to read, think and talk about possible topics before officially enrolling.

I was soon drawn to work in the area of housing; here I felt comfortable, having spent many hours as a local government planner writing and researching housing policies. My involvement with different agencies in the delivery of accommodation also gave me a good working knowledge of many pertinent issues. During this contemplative stage, I recalled an inspiring lecture on the relationship between the inner psyche and home (Cooper-Marcus, 1983). The ideas presented during this talk had always fascinated me and when I looked back on my notes, I realised that I had found the direction in which I wanted to go.

Having recalled this source of inspiration, my topic came increasingly into focus. My work as a town planner at Canterbury Council, a multiculturally diverse area in Sydney's west, provided me with an interest in ethnicity and its implications for planning. I eventually found myself drawn to a housing topic based in this region.

I then spent several months reading about home and exploring methodological approaches. I talked with a wide variety of people with expertise in different areas. I spoke with academics about the research. I engaged with people in the field about their knowledge of housing and experience with different ethnic groups. I questioned housing officers, community workers and real estate agents. As well as seeking

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4 I recalled feelings of excitement and total absorption as I sat in this lecture, transfixed by the ideas and images presented. I remembered thinking at the time that this would be a wonderfully rich and worthwhile area of study for a doctorate, if ever I undertook one!

5 These meetings were formal interviews, which I taped and either transcribed or summarised in note form. As a result of these discussions, my personal network broadened and I gleaned ideas, different perspectives and references. There was a richness in this interdisciplinary information that
information about my topic of study, confirming identified gaps in knowledge and identifying appropriate migrant groups to interview, I wanted to establish a network in the field for initial selection of research participants. Appendix One lists the different people I contacted and a brief summary of what was discussed. It was during this period that I enrolled as a PhD candidate.6

Although these interactions were informal, they were guided by my aim of determining whether I had a worthwhile area of inquiry. My discussions confirmed that I did.7 At this point I decided to examine the meaning of home for migrants, eventually shifting my focus to women. This came out of considerations about their absent voice in both urban planning and multiculturalism, as well as my personal commitment to feminist research.

I returned to the literature on home, confirming my initial suspicions that men and women could experience the notion differently. I also found that the migrant was largely ignored. Having selected my area of concern, I prepared a series of questions about the issues that I wanted to investigate. These focussed the study and are listed in the Introduction (page 15-16).8 I then spent the next twelve months further surpassed my initial searches in the library. I did spend many hours scanning book shelves and searching on-line information sources. However, I want to emphasise the importance of verbal interaction in this phase of my research process. My experience of the academy is that talk, other than critique and challenge, is devalued. I wonder if this is related to the way in which women have traditionally used conversation to share information and to support one another?

6 I should also add that I changed my employment situation during this period. I left local government to work for the state planning authority. About 18 months later I took up an academic appointment at UNSW.

7 Not all interactions were affirming and nurturing. One academic expressed his cynicism about my ability to make contact with suitable informants. Another raised doubts about interviewing people in their own homes. These were valid issues which I considered in identifying suitable interviewees and in deciding to offer an incentive. This is discussed later in the chapter.

8 These research questions did not magically appear. They evolved as I read in the area and talked informally with many people. I lived the project day and night. If I went to a party I inevitably found someone who was interested in my work and had something insightful to offer. If I went to the theatre, images of home always came forward as well as issues about women and their
defining the topic and coming to terms with an appropriate methodology. Increasingly I was drawn to phenomenology as the best point of entry. It enabled me to value the women’s lived experience without imposing a theoretical template on their knowing. Hermeneutics facilitated interpretation and theoretical development.

FOCUSSING THE RESEARCH

Geographic focus

Canterbury was chosen as the geographical focus for the project, although I did interview several women living to its immediate east and west. Canterbury local government area (LGA) is situated about 10 kilometres (km) to the west of Sydney’s central business district (CBD) and is classified as a middle-ring suburb. See following map. I selected this region because of its large concentrations of established migrant communities. I also have significant personal knowledge of the area, having both lived and worked there.

relationships with domesticity. It was not that I specifically sought out these encounters. I did not restrict myself to plays about home or only accept invitations to dinner on the condition that at least one guest would be a migrant! To this day I am not quite sure how it happened. Perhaps it was related to my obsession, but I like to think it had more to do with my openness to ideas and my thirst for understanding during those early stages of topic formulation and focus. Concerts were times to reflect on where I was going. The music was the vehicle which transported me to a different plane of consciousness where my thoughts could run free and unfettered. My daily swim was always given over to meditating about the project, the next problem to solve as well as the practical aspects of my ongoing work program. I reflect on this at greater length in Appendix Two.
The Study's Geographic Focus

Source: After ABS (1994) "New South Wales - Enlargement Statistical Divisions, Statistical Subdivisions and Statistical Local Areas", ABS Area Classification, Australia.
Ethnicity focus

I decided to study the three largest ethnic groups living in Canterbury, namely the Greek, Arabic and Vietnamese (ABS Census, 1991). Table Three shows the percentages of these groups over three census periods and compares the figures with the Sydney Statistical Division (SSD). The percentages of each ethnic group in Canterbury are much greater than for the whole of Sydney.

Table Four shows the 1991 Census figures for the selected groups in adjoining LGAs where some of my interviewees lived. With the exception of Italians in Bankstown (1.85 per cent of the population) and the Portuguese in Marrickville (4.14 per cent of the population), the Greeks, Lebanese and Vietnamese are the largest ethnic groups in these areas. Bankstown adjoins Canterbury in the west and Marrickville adjoins its eastern boundary (see map above).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year and Population Data</th>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>Vietnamese</th>
<th>Lebanese #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981 Census Number in Canterbury</td>
<td>7048</td>
<td>1351</td>
<td>8021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Population of Canterbury *</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>6.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Population of SSD **</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986 Census Number in Canterbury</td>
<td>7212</td>
<td>4814</td>
<td>8975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Population of Canterbury</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>6.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Population of SSD</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991 Census Number in Canterbury</td>
<td>7396</td>
<td>4668</td>
<td>9649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Population of Canterbury</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>7.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Population of SSD</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Women’s Stories of Home

Chapter Four


Notes: # Figures here are for Lebanese only, rather than Arabic.

* % Population of Canterbury = total number of people of the identified ethnic group living in the Canterbury local government area as a percentage of the total population of Canterbury

** % Population of SSD = total number of people of the identified ethnic group living in the Sydney Statistical Division as a percentage of the total population of Sydney

Table Four

Percentages of Selected Groups in Two Adjoining Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Bankstown Number</th>
<th>Percent of Population</th>
<th>Marrickville Number</th>
<th>Percent of Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>2663</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>4590</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanese</td>
<td>7649</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>2059</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>6279</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>3837</td>
<td>4.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS Census Tables, 1991

INTERVIEWING THE WOMEN

Making contact

During the latter half of 1991, I talked to community workers about the possibility of contacting women to be interviewed. I specifically sought out professionals who worked for organisations servicing the needs of the selected ethnic groups. I thought
that these people would be receptive to my request and in a good position to make recommendations. I also had some contacts in the community sector. See Appendix Three for workers approached.

I phoned the community workers, explained the nature of the project and that I needed women to interview in their own domestic environments. They then sought out potential interviewees on my behalf. If a woman agreed to participate, the workers gave me her name and telephone number. I then made contact, explained what I was doing and why. If the woman was agreeable, an appointment was scheduled for the interview.⁹

As the research progressed, I asked individual interviewees if they could recommend a friend or relative who would satisfy my criteria and be willing to participate in the study. This is called purposive (Patton, 1990: 169-183), snowball (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 233) or network (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992: 27) sampling. The aim of this technique is to obtain information rich participants who will be able to inform the researcher about the topic under investigation. This procedure is widely used in qualitative research.

In relation to sample size, I was guided by Patton’s (1990: 184) comment that "there are no rules for sample size in qualitative research". Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 27) declare similarly that there are "no magic answers" in the determination of sample size when indepth understanding is the ultimate research goal. I used Lincoln and Guba’s (1985: 234) concept of "information redundancy" in determining when to stop interviewing. A sample "is sufficient when the amount of new information

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⁹ I felt quite nervous on first approaching the women. I was very grateful to the community workers for making the initial contact. This established my bona-fides, but I still had to negotiate participation.
provided per unit of added resource expenditure has reached the point of diminishing returns".\textsuperscript{10}

The sample size is indicated in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Interviewees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I reached information redundancy at this stage. I found that the last few interviews were less and less informative in terms of providing new understandings. Nevertheless, it was useful to have initial ideas confirmed. Of course I enjoyed meeting the women and hearing their individual stories, even though no new themes emerged. My experience with the interviews influenced my decisions in relation to data analysis, which is discussed later in the chapter.

\textsuperscript{10} Given the practical problems of negotiating agreement for a research project without any idea of sample size, Patton (1990: 186) recommends specifying a minimum sample based on a "...reasonable coverage of the phenomenon given the purpose of the study and stakeholder interests". Flexibility can then be introduced as the study progresses. If the initial proposal changes, resultant sampling details must be clearly set out and justified, particularly in relation to the interpretations of findings and the strengths and weaknesses of the study.

\textsuperscript{11} The quality of one of the Vietnamese interview tapes was very poor and unable to be transcribed. There was a lot of ambient noise which tended to drown out my respondent's soft voice. Accordingly, I only used ten Vietnamese interviews in the formal data analysis stage. Nevertheless, the rejected tape still provided useful insights and confirmed previously identified themes.
Seeking suitable participants

In seeking out suitable participants, I determined the following criteria for selection.

1. Resident in Australia for more than two years.
2. Geographically based in or adjoining the Canterbury LGA.
3. English speaker.
4. Sharing in some form of close family relationship.
5. Living in an established domestic situation.

Given their length of residence, the respondents had been afforded the opportunity to take from their own and the prevailing dominant culture as they established themselves in Australia. The majority had made firm links with their local communities. Ages ranged from twenty five to sixty years of age. The women came from a broad cross-section of socio-economic groups. I interviewed owners and renters of flats, houses and town houses, some owning businesses and holiday homes, with others depending on employment benefits and subject to the vagaries of the private rental market. My respondents have either migrant or first generation status. Specific details about each respondent are included in Part Two.

Ethical considerations

Confidentiality

A confidentiality agreement was given to each participant (see Appendix Four). One signed copy was retained by the interviewee and another by myself.

12 In reviewing this document now, I find it inadequate. My signature should have appeared on the agreement, as well as it being more comprehensive in terms of the information provided to the woman.
Women's Stories of Home

Chapter Four

My purpose in using a formal agreement was to reassure the interviewee that I respected her privacy. I promised not to reveal her real name in any documentation. I do use first names in the reporting of interview data, but in order to fully meet confidentiality assurances, I chose pseudonyms for everyone.

Token payment

When I first made contact with the interviewees, I informed them that I was able to provide a small fee of $50. This was an important way of saying that I valued the women, their stories and the time that they were prepared to give up. It helped to formalise the process, reinforcing that it was serious. It was also consistent with my feminist research principles of valuing the participants in a very tangible way. In addition, the payment made me feel more comfortable about my incursion into each woman's home and time.

Gilbert (1994: 93) rejected her original intention to pay participants because she felt it "contradicted the feeling of friendship and intimacy that had been created in the interview process". Even though I did not have this concern, the reaction of many of the women suggested that they were slightly uncomfortable about accepting the money. Many were concerned that it had come from my pocket and several expressed their desire not to accept. They insisted that the experience had been worthwhile and enjoyable and that they did not require payment. All the women eventually accepted after assurances that I was not the funding source.

I do not believe that any woman participated principally because of the money. Nevertheless, I did not specifically ask this question, although it is doubtful that

13 Only one woman requested that I not use a piece of information that she revealed to me on tape. Accordingly, I have not used the material in any way.

14 My employer, the Faculty of Architecture (now the Faculty of the Built Environment), UNSW, generously awarded me a small research grant to assist with the project.
anyone would have acknowledged such motivation. The poorer women, even if they expressed initial discomfort, admitted that the payment was welcome. Those comfortably off were generally more reluctant to accept.

There were many other ways in which I indicated my appreciation for the woman's participation. However, in a society where money is important I considered payment appropriate. Other feminist researchers have used this technique (for example, Bart and O'Brien, 1985 in Reinharz, 1992b: 426).

**Presence of the tape recorder**

I negotiated using an audio tape machine during the interview when I first made telephone contact. I explained that I needed to record the conversation to enhance data reliability (Minichiello et al., 1990: 134). Note taking would inhibit my ability to concentrate on the interview. I told the women that apart from myself, a transcriber would be the only other person to listen to the tapes.

The use of the tape recorder is not without controversy. Great care needs to be taken to avoid the pitfalls of equipment failure and excessive intrusion (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992: 74-75; Patton, 1990: 348-349). I handled this issue by always checking the machine prior to every interview. I carried an extension cord so that I could operate the machine from mains power, but always had supplies of batteries in case of emergencies. My interview kit contained ample quality tapes, unwrapped and ready to insert into the machine.

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15 Douglas (1985) recommends assuming that the respondent will readily accept the tape recorder. He suggests only mentioning it in passing, prior to actually starting the interview. I rejected this approach. Not only could this threaten an interview from going ahead at all, it could jeopardise the process of building trust. It is also ethically questionable in terms of negotiating agreement to participate without disclosing all the relevant information.
Once at the woman's house, I set up the equipment as quickly as I could. I did not try to conceal the recorder, but endeavoured to make its use an ordinary part of the interview. If possible, I would turn the machine on in the initial introductory phase of our conversation and casually suggest to my respondent that it was best to "forget about the tape recorder".16

ASKING QUESTIONS

Making the appointment

Once I had been given the name of a potential interviewee by either a community contact or research participant, I phoned the woman to explain the nature of the project generally, and the interview process specifically. The following issues were raised.

1. Likely length of the interview - I stressed being flexible and the fact that we could be together for several hours.

2. Confidentiality - methods to insure confidentiality were outlined.

3. Token payment - I talked about the payment, explaining its purpose.

4. Use of the tape recorder - I sought permission to tape the conversation, outlining the reasons.

16 A couple of interviewees mentioned that they were concerned about their competency in English as I set up the tape recorder. I did my best to reassure them that their linguistic ability was adequate. In both cases, the initial hesitancy was overcome once we settled into the interview.
5. Informality of the interview - this was emphasised, as well as my interest in hearing the woman's story from her point of view.

6. Focus of the interview - I told each woman that I wanted to hear her personal story of the homes she had lived in, both as a child and adult.

7. Venue - the woman's house was preferred. My request here was motivated by the following consideration:

When we found it easier to talk with people 'on their own turf', especially about the more 'intimate' issues of religious practice, body hygiene and privacy (AHRC, 1985: 85).

One woman wanted to see some documentation prior to consenting, so I sent her a letter explaining the above details (see Appendix Five). She subsequently consented to participate.

If the woman was agreeable, we then made a time for the interview.\(^\text{17}\) I always confirmed this date immediately prior to the appointment.

The interview procedure

After being greeted by the woman, I would ask if we could sit in a relatively quiet room away from other household members, television and radio. I then set up the tape recorder, switching it on as soon as possible. I pointed out the stop button and ensured my interviewee that she was free to press it at any time. I also emphasised her right to take a break if she needed a rest. The interview usually started at this point, although I was frequently offered refreshment, which delayed the formal proceedings. I reiterated my comments about confidentiality and the agreement was

\(^\text{17}\) Of all the women contacted, I only had three refusals. They were too busy to participate.
usually signed at that point. The token payment was given to the woman at the end of the interview. I tried to make this informal and part of my "thank you" as I was preparing to leave.

The interview schedule

I brought to the interview a list of open-ended questions (see Appendix Six).¹⁸

I started by requesting details of age, marital status, current accommodation situation and length of time in Australia. I then asked for a description of different aspects of the childhood home. At this point I tried to hand the interview over to the woman, encouraging her to reminisce freely. In some interviews this meant that I did not speak much at all and only interjected to verify an understanding. In other cases, I needed to ask questions to move onto another topic.

From the childhood home, we progressed to her migration experience and the most significant homes in transition, leading up to the present home and its meanings. The interview finished with a vision of a future home. In the case of first generation women, the legacy of their parent’s migration experience was discussed.

¹⁸ It is important to note that this is the final question schedule. Although the thrust of the first schedule remained the same, focusing on the childhood, present and transitory homes, specific items did change over the course of the interviews. When I first started talking with the women, I did not realise that loss would be central to their stories. I chose to explore this in greater depth in subsequent interviews and accordingly, amended the initial schedule.
THE INTERVIEW EXPERIENCE

I conducted 37 interviews over a period of six months. The interviews lasted between two and eight hours, with the average time being three hours. They were always cordial, friendly and relaxed, after some initial self-consciousness about being recorded. I found every session interesting and was often extraordinarily moved by the stories that I heard. I was humbled by the hospitality of the women and their generosity of spirit in opening their hearts to me, an outsider and a stranger. This has been experienced by others researching in similar areas.

We found many of the sessions to be deeply moving, largely because of the intensity of most people's relationships with their housing... many of the important details would not be revealed unless the participant believed that the matter was important to us and that we were really listening, careful attention was necessary (AHRC, 1985: 85).

Although I consulted various methodological texts as part of my preparation for interviewing, I found that I was often ill-equipped to meet some of the ensuing challenges. I learnt quickly through experience and adopted the following practices in conducting the interviews.

1. Length of interview - I soon realised that it was impossible to gauge how long an interview would take. I attempted to leave at least half a day. My ideal was a whole day. This allowed for a lengthy interview, as well as time to reflect on the process and recover if it had been emotionally exhausting. I had to rush off on a couple of occasions, which meant having to return to resume the conversation. Although this was satisfactory, I found it difficult to relax during the initial interview

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19 I confined the interviewing to this time period because I was awarded some teaching relief for one semester. Consequently, I had a large block of time in which to organise and conduct the interviews. I did not conduct any "trial" interviews as I had talked extensively about the issue of home with different people in the community. See footnote five.
because I knew that my time was limited. This could have adversely impacted on
the relationship between myself and the interviewee.

2. Interruptions - The literature emphasises the importance of finding a quiet room
to conduct the interview, free from interruptions. My experience of talking with
women in their domestic environment is that this is virtually impossible! Even
though I was able to set up the recorder in a room away from others, children, and
occasionally partners, came in to see what was happening and/or to seek assistance.
This inevitably resulted in the interview being interrupted. Nevertheless, I quickly
learnt how to remember where we were up to while my interviewee dealt with the
issue that had arisen.

3. Presence of other people - Apart from the type of interruptions described above,
in all but one case, the interviews were conducted without a non-participant
listening. In the one exception, the respondent asked if I minded her brother
sitting with us. I saw no reason to object, and proceeded with the interview. It was
only later, when we were out of earshot of her relative, that the respondent told me
she was only being polite and did not want him there. After that experience, I have
tried, as gently as possible, to ask a would-be listener to leave.

4. Establishing rapport - Rapport is discussed in the literature, although I found few
practical ideas about achieving it. Being genuine and warm are critical. Because I
enjoyed spending time with the women and found their stories personally interesting
and moving, it was not difficult to do this.

Casual and informal talk also played an important role in building trust. This meant
taking a break for refreshment. I often learnt other things about the person and her

20 I have conducted three interviews with both mother and daughter taking part. This is not the
same as having a non-participant "listening in".

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family when we chatted over a snack or meal. This time gave the respondent an opportunity to feel more relaxed too. The offering of food is important in most cultures and to refuse could be interpreted as rudeness or disinterest.

I found that physical proximity between myself and the respondent facilitated trust and rapport. If possible, I requested that we sat around the corner of a table, rather than opposite each other or in lounge chairs. If the lounge was the only available room, it was better to sit together on a couch rather than in separate chairs. I felt more comfortable sitting closer, maintaining eye contact and being able to reach out and touch the woman if something particularly moving was discussed. I was able to reassure her that in remembering, sad feelings often emerge and that she should not be concerned about crying. I acknowledge that this is a personal issue, but for me it was a powerful way to establish emotional closeness, trust and comfort.

I told the respondent that we could stop the interview at any time, no matter what the reason. This could mean pressing the stop button on the recorder, taking a break for refreshment or tending to a member of the household. Finally, I took the position that the interview was a relationship between myself and the interviewee. This meant answering the occasional personal question and not putting on a pretence of "objective" researcher.

5. Dealing with emotionality - Feelings of sadness and loss frequently surfaced in the interviews. On reflection, this was not surprising given that I was exploring a topic rich in personal attachment and deep meaning. In addition, the indepth interview technique facilitates and encourages different ways of knowing to emerge. Nevertheless, I was initially unprepared for the level of emotionality. In several interviews, I was moved to tears and found myself psychologically drained at the

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21 This was also informative about the importance of special foods in the woman’s culture.

22 In another interview situation I might well use a different tactic. The important issue is to find what is appropriate for the particular situation.
conclusion of such a session. Consequently, I sought out a sympathetic person to talk about my feelings as a way of debriefing myself. I also wrote about my reactions to the stories in post-interview observations.

6. Valuing the respondent - This was a priority throughout the interview process. I have already discussed the use of a token payment as a practical demonstration of my appreciation. During the interview itself, I used verbal affirmations and body language to show how much I valued both the woman and her story.23

At the conclusion of the main interviews, I invited all the women to an afternoon tea as a way of thanking them for participating. The gathering also played an important feedback role for initial data interpretation and for the women to meet each other.

Since that time I have kept in touch with the women, letting them know that I am still working on the project. I have received cards and phone calls to see how things are going. I have lost contact with two of the participants as they have moved, and some have not communicated with me since their interview. This may not mean they have lost interest. Once the thesis is finished I will be reporting back to them. The form of this feedback is discussed in Chapter Ten.

7. The interview process - For some women it was easy to talk at great length. Occasionally I would catch myself wondering if this was useful. I took the issue to qualitative discussion groups, where I was cautioned against indulging such behaviour. I was reminded that the purpose of the interview was to get certain information. Accordingly, I tried to take more control but found myself feeling very uncomfortable in doing so and seriously questioning my motivations. As a feminist researcher, I value the empowering nature of the interview process, yet here I was

23 During the course of the interviews, many respondents were concerned about the worth of their stories in terms of my research needs. Comments such as, "I hope that this has been useful", and "Are you sure this is what you want?" were common. This type of response has been identified by other researchers interviewing women about their daily lives (for example, Oakley, 1986).
trying to take this very power away. I was also directing the interview in the way that I thought it should go, according to the issues that I believed to be relevant. Once I realised this inconsistency between practice and philosophy, I learned to let go of my expectations and the need to be in control.

In every case, when I reviewed the interview, I found the information to be valuable, both in terms of its content and the woman's story telling process. I stepped back from some of the minute detail and asked myself, "Why is she telling me this?". This stance yielded important analytical insights and understandings that would not have occurred in a controlled interview situation.

At the other end of the spectrum is the experience of interviewing shy and hesitant respondents. For me this was not an issue, except in the beginning phase of a few conversations. It could be argued that shy people would not agree to participate. It could also be argued that older women, who do not speak English as a first language, would be reluctant. In a few cases I had to reassure a potential participant that her level of English competency was more than adequate. It was only then that she granted consent.

Finally, I found that I was initially unprepared to handle silences during the interviews. I soon learnt that they were important, to allow them and to trust that the interview would continue. No doubt this is elementary to an experienced interviewer, but it is something that is not widely discussed. Silences are times for the respondent to think, to remember, to reflect on what has been said and sometimes to take time to feel an emotion that emerges. I found it took confidence and courage to allow the silences.
DATA COLLECTION

At the interview

*Asking questions and getting answers is a much harder task than it may seem at first* (Fontana and Frey, 1994: 361).

Each interview was recorded on an audio cassette. This was the primary mode of data collection. In determining whether to tape the women’s stories, I considered both advantages and disadvantages. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 271-272) list the pluses as providing a true and complete record of everything that was said, which can be reviewed later for non-verbal cues such as pauses, lowered and raised voice and emotional outbursts. However, in their opinion the potential for respondent distrust and mechanical failure outweigh the advantages. Accordingly, they advocate note taking. Even though everything cannot be recorded, important issues can be highlighted and initial interpretive comments made as the interview proceeds. In addition, the interviewer is forced to be attentive throughout.

Conversely, Riessman (1993: 12), Minichiello et al. (1990: 134-135) and Patton (1990: 348-349) believe that the advantages of the tape recorder outweigh any perceived problems. In particular, "...the interactive nature of in-depth interviewing can be seriously affected by the attempt to take verbatim notes during the interview" (Patton, 1990: 348). Nevertheless, Patton cautions against the interviewer becoming less attentive when using a tape recorder. The need to be constantly reflecting on the interview process, seeking clarification, probing for extra detail and assessing whether a variety of questions are being answered in one response, necessitate absolute concentration. In fact, it is for these reasons alone, that the interview needs to be taped (McCracken, 1988: 41).
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Patton (1990: 349) suggests that note taking can be used to augment the taped record. This can assist in the formulation of new questions as well as commenting on significant responses to help with later analysis. However, it can be a cue to the respondent, indicating importance if noted and unimportance if not.

Although I decided to use the tape recorder, I did take occasional notes during the interview. I endeavoured to write these during refreshment breaks, which overcame the problem identified above. These notes, which often consisted of single words or phrases, then became important memory triggers for my post-interview comments.

The other data collection method used was physically observing the domestic environment. During the interview, as my respondent was talking about something in her current dwelling, she would offer to show it to me. This was usually left to the end of our conversation when I formally requested to see her place. The inspection took 30 minutes to an hour, depending on the extent of the tour. Walking through the garden took time, especially if special plants were pointed out and their significance outlined. I rarely made a written record of these inspections as it was at the conclusion of my visit. I did make notes as soon as I left and in some cases, recorded the house and garden on film, although I usually returned with my camera for the photographic sessions.

Post-interview

As soon as I left the woman's dwelling, I augmented any notes that I had made during the interview. I also reflected on the tour, noting important physical features as well as significant representations of culture highlighted by the respondent. I did this in my car before I drove off.
When I arrived home, I formally reflected on both the process and content of the interview, recording these remarks as post-interview observations. I used the following series of questions to guide my thoughts in completing this task.

1. How did the interview proceed - how did I feel in the interview? What about the respondent? Was the interview at all restrained; was it cordial and relaxed?

2. Were there any particular problems during the interview such as interruptions? How did I handle these? Lessons for the future?

3. How was the interview payment received? Were there any comments?

4. Did the respondent refer me to any other women? Is she willing to have her dwelling photographed? Are there particular features that should be recorded visually?

5. What was the dwelling like? House, townhouse or flat? Approximate age and significant features? What was the garden like? How did the woman respond to my request to inspect the dwelling?

6. What major themes emerged from the interview? What is different and what is the same about this interview? Are there new issues to follow up? Does this interview confirm or contradict emerging trends?

Examples of post-interview observations are included in Appendix Seven. I also wrote a thank you letter to each woman soon after the interview (see Appendix Eight).
Ongoing memo taking

As the interviews proceeded, and during the subsequent analysis phase, I regularly made notes as ideas, concepts, inter-relationships and new questions emerged. In many qualitative texts these are referred to as memos. Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 128) emphasise the importance that they play in developing the analysis process, no matter how preliminary the ideas. My memos were not formalised in the way suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1990: 197-223). Nevertheless, they have been instrumental in the development of my conceptual framework for the interpretation of the data.

Feedback: returning research outcomes to the participants

At the conclusion of the interviews I invited all participants to an afternoon tea (see Appendix Nine). There were several purposes for this gathering.

1. To thank the participants for their contribution.24

2. To report initial interpretations of the interview material.

3. To get feedback from participants on these findings.

4. To foster an ongoing interest in the project.25

5. To introduce the women to each other.

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24 This valuing is a core principle of my position as a feminist researcher.

25 Since the afternoon tea, I have kept the women abreast of my progress with an annual update. At the conclusion of the project each participant will receive an overview of the project (see Chapter Ten).
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Table Six

Attendance at Afternoon Tea

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Vietnamese</th>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends²⁶</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apologies for non-attendance were received from one Vietnamese woman, two Arabic speaking women and four Greek women. I followed up the meeting with letters thanking those who came, and informing the others that the event had been successful and encouraging their continued interest (see Appendix Ten). The afternoon discussion was recorded and subsequently transcribed.

A series of smaller forums and individual conversations were held with different women. The nature of these meetings is summarised in Table Seven. I decided against a series of formal feedback groups for the reasons outlined in Chapter Three (see page 101). The information gathered during these forums was useful in confirming and expanding upon initial data interpretation.

²⁶ Two women brought a friend to the afternoon tea.
Table Seven

Informal Feedback Forums

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Forum</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small Group</td>
<td>2 Vietnamese women</td>
<td>Taped conversations; transcribed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Group</td>
<td>3 older Greek women</td>
<td>Taped conversations; transcribed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>1 young Greek woman</td>
<td>Taped conversation; not transcribed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographic Session</td>
<td>1 Greek woman</td>
<td>Note taking after visit; samples of dried herbs and bottled tomato sauce given to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographic Session</td>
<td>1 Vietnamese woman</td>
<td>Note taking after visit; plants for my garden(^{27})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographic Session</td>
<td>1 Arabic woman</td>
<td>Note taking after visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographic Session &amp; 2nd interview</td>
<td>1 Arabic woman</td>
<td>Taped conversation; transcribed; note taking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DEALING WITH THE DATA

Transcribing

Immediately following an interview, the taped record was checked, labelled and transcribed. I decided not to undertake the latter task for two reasons. Firstly, there was the temporal reality of part-time doctoral study. I determined that the most efficient use of my time, immediately following the interview, was to reflect

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\(^{27}\) At this session, I was taken around the woman’s garden and met her elderly grandmother. Even though she did not speak English, she showed me various plants in the garden and insisted that I take a cutting of her favourite Vietnamese Lily. I now have this prolific plant growing in the garden and my husband frequently uses it in his cooking.
generally on its process and content, rather than undertake the mechanical task of typing the transcript. As I mentioned previously, I had been granted some teaching relief for a limited period. This enabled me to conduct the interviews. Had I undertaken detailed transcribing as well as my general reflections on each interview, I would have run out of time.

Secondly, the advantages of researchers doing their own transcribing are contested in the literature. Some recommend this practice as a way of immersing oneself in the data (Swenson, 1991: 28; Minichiello et al., 1990: 135). Others argue that this is not the case. "Investigators who transcribe their own interviews invite not only frustration but also a familiarity with the data that does not serve the later process of analysis" (McCracken, 1988: 41-42). Similarly, the need to undertake a full transcript as opposed to a selective summary is not universally agreed upon. Patton (1990: 349) asserts that full transcripts are desirable, whereas Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 74) are less adamant. I decided on full transcripts. I was also mindful of the need to inform my transcriber of exactly what was required (Riessman, 1993: 57; McCracken, 1988: 42). Words were not to be censored, grammar corrected, hesitancy expressions such as "umm" deleted or repetitions omitted. Decisions had to be made about setting out (leaving room for comments; notation for interviewee and researcher’s voices) and word processing programs. See Appendix Eleven for an example sheet from a transcript.

Confidentiality can also be an issue if tapes are being transcribed by someone other than the interviewer. This occurred in my case. I explained the confidential nature of the tapes to my experienced transcriber, who understood the situation and undertook to honour the participant’s privacy.
Standing back: reflecting on the interviews

The challenge is to make sense of massive amounts of data, reduce the volume of information, identify significant patterns, and construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal (Patton, 1990: 372).

Following each interview, I wrote up observations and general comments. Patton (1990: 353) stresses that failure to reflect and elaborate as data collection is underway seriously undermines the rigour of qualitative research. I tried to complete my observations immediately after I had met with the woman, preferably on the same day. On the rare occasion when this was impossible, I made rough notes which I augmented soon after. I have outlined the purpose of this exercise above, but it is important to emphasise the role that these reflections played in establishing an initial framework for analysis, as well as guiding subsequent interviews. I used a number of questions to direct my reflections.

1. What does this story tell me about this woman’s meaning of home?

2. What are some of the major themes? Do these confirm or challenge those identified in other interviews?

3. Do the identified themes fit within an existing framework or model of home? Is an alternative warranted?

4. How are the identified concepts of home translated into the physical dwelling and local neighbourhood?

As my perceptions changed over the course of the project, new ideas emerged, which in turn meant additions to my interview schedule. At the beginning of the field work, I was not aware of the centrality of loss to the women’s stories. It soon
became evident that this was significant and accordingly, I refocussed some questions to further explore the ramifications of this issue.

**Developing themes**

Themes and their relationships were developed in the following ways.

1. **Initial over-arching themes emerged from the post-interview observations.** This was done as the interviews progressed. The contextuality of the women's stories was honoured.

2. **Detailed, line-by-line content analysis of a sample of six interviews.** I selected two transcripts from each ethnic group. Van Kaam (1969 in Polkinghorne, 1989: 52) used this approach in a phenomenological study of "really feeling understood". I selected the most informative transcripts on the basis of my knowledge of each one. This came from my experience of actually conducting the interviews as well as reviewing the post-interview observations. In categorising the data I found the concepts of "open coding" useful (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 61).

3. 15 interviews were analysed using Summary Oral Reflective Analysis (see below). At this point, information redundancy was reached in terms of emerging themes.

4. The remaining transcripts were interrogated on the basis of the thematic schema. I read through the protocols, carefully looking for any contradictions as well as specific examples that further illuminated understandings.

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28 Open coding simply refers to "the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising, and categorising data" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 61). Strauss and Corbin use the concept in relation to grounded theory but it is useful for other forms of textual analysis.
Relationships between themes started to emerge at the outset, becoming more complex as the analysis continued. So too did the number of themes (see Appendix Twelve for the final thematic schema). I found the notion of moving to a higher level of generality (McCracken, 1988: 42) in grouping themes useful as I dealt with more and more codes.

The rationale for my thematic schema (Burns, 1989: 49) started with the childhood, adult and transitory homes and experiences. I then considered the pervasiveness of loss throughout the interviews. I built up a series of major themes in each area, adding sub-themes as new ideas emerged in the line-by-line analysis. Thematic development was constantly monitored by returning again and again to the data.

Summary Oral Reflective Analysis: a contextual approach

What is needed most is for practitioners to experiment with the new designs... methodological questions are decided in the practice of research by those committed to developing the best possible answers to their questions, not by armchair philosophers (Polkinghorne, 1983 in Lather, 1986: 77).

In this section I discuss the use of Summary Oral Reflective Analysis (SORA). This method of qualitative data analysis originated from my concerns about losing the contextuality of the women's stories in line-by-line analysis. Given that contextuality is a principle strength of qualitative research, I considered that its loss would undermine a major tenet of the approach. The woman's story as a whole, as well as individual themes, are both equally important.
I took my initial ideas about SORA to a fellow researcher. As feminists we collaborated on the development of the method, refining concepts and practical applications.\footnote{At this point, I want to acknowledge Penny Barrett for her contribution to the development of SORA. Both Penny and I used SORA in our respective analyses, although we individually modified the approach to suit our unique circumstances. We are writing an article on the technique's principles and our applications.}

**Principles**

1. Immediacy of reflection.

2. Contextuality.

3. Importance of the oral.

4. Importance of the narrative.

**Application**

1. The interview tape is played while reading the transcript. In my case, the length of the interview necessitated several sessions. Hearing the woman speak is a powerful way of bringing the moment of the interview into the present.

2. Using another tape, ideas and comments are immediately recorded about the interview, considering the thematic schema already in place and the overall context of the interviewee's story. The following issues were given special consideration.

   Major themes of interest (both in schema and those not included).

   Ways in which the themes interrelate.
Points of difference with other stories already analysed.

Any contradictions within the interview.

3. Thoughts about the interview being analysed, any special situations, communication through non-verbal cues and connections with other transcripts were recorded in a memo.

4. A written summary from both the taped comments and the memo was prepared. A record was completed for each interview analysed in this way (see Appendix Thirteen for a summary example).

RIGOUR

Rigour in feminist inquiry includes the degree to which research reflects the complexity of reality (Hall and Stevens, 1991: 23).

In Chapter Three I outlined the importance of rigour. Below I address how I handled the issue in practice.

Dependability

Both systematic data analysis and auditability come under the rubric of dependability. Chapter Four is an audit of the method. The process is audited in sufficient detail to enable the reader to follow the logic and rationale.

There were four methods of systematic data analysis.

1. Post-interview reflection of the content of each woman's story, including emerging themes, contradictions and differences.
2. Detailed content analysis involving line-by-line thematisation of a sample of the interviews.


4. Contextual readings of the remaining interview texts in light of the previous analytical steps.

All of these methods entailed returning to the data again and again to enhance dependability.

A qualitative analyst returns to the data over and over again to see if the constructs, categories, explanations, and interpretations make sense, if they really reflect the nature of the phenomena (Patton, 1990: 477).

Member checks

Feedback on data interpretation was obtained at various focus groups and informal discussion forums (see previous discussion in this chapter).

Triangulation

I used both triangulation of methods and data sources. Three principle methods of data collection were used - interviewing, observing and reflecting.

Various types of data were gathered as follows.

1. Interview data from community workers, specialist informants.

2. Interview data from individual women.
3. Group interview data as feedback on initial interpretations.

4. Photographs and observations of the dwellings as well as observations of the suburban settings.

5. Reflective comments on the interviews (ie post-interview evaluation data).

6. Reflexive memos about emerging themes, linkages and differences.

**Reflexivity**

Throughout the thesis I reflect on both the research process and various aspects of data collection and analysis. I have also been engaged in my own inner work during the course of the project. Krieger (1991) talks about the importance of this in relation to writing and research. This has helped me develop an inner strength, particularly contributing to my confidence and belief in the work.

**GOING PUBLIC: TAKING THE SHOW ON THE ROAD**

When I first embarked on this research, I had no idea that my project would be strongly contested and challenged. As I continued, I realised that this response was an important part of my data. The very fact that my topic and approach were constantly questioned told me a lot about the culture of my discipline and its epistemological hegemony.
There were occasions where I felt marginalised and following some presentations, I was subjected to derisive and patronising verbal comments. The underlying assumption in this critique was that positivist research is the only really rigorous path of academic inquiry. While other methods can be used, there is a sense that they are at best, fashionable, and at worst, threaten the very nature of serious research. This explains much of the difficulty that people have with qualitative research. It also helps to illuminate the level of antagonism that I experienced.

It has been interesting to see how this process mirrors my own development as a feminist qualitative researcher. I have moved from a position of uncertainty to one of increasing confidence and belief in my approach. This has been an enormously valuable learning experience, the result of going public and taking risks. I have these critical voices to thank.

Presenting my work at seminars, conferences and in discussion groups was an important part of the research. Not only was I able to test out my conceptual development, I was exposed to new ideas, as well as questions about my interpretations, assumptions and methodological stance. Preparing presentations and assessing feedback enabled me to evaluate the work from different perspectives.

30 It came as quite a shock to realise that questions in academic forums do not always emanate from a genuine desire to find out more! There are different agendas involved including displaying superior personal knowledge, the desire to put the presenter off-balance and the need to make a political statement. I have experienced these different modes of interrogation. I have learnt to recognise the purpose of the question and to deal with it on that level, rather than naively assuming that a better understanding is being sought.

31 This was confirmed again recently when I read a description of qualitative research as "quasi-scientific" in an internal faculty publication. Although the comments are by a professor with a successful research record, his description subsumes qualitative methods within a positivist framework, the latter being the bench mark from which all other approaches are evaluated. Even though it is acknowledged that qualitative methods can be appropriate for people-environment research, the impression conveyed is that such a choice is not to be taken lightly.

The status of this academic gives his opinion an authority that is difficult and risky for others to refute, especially if non-tenured and female in a majority male faculty. Equally concerning is the institutional power that such individuals hold in assessing proposals for research funding.
reassessing its direction and emphasis. In turn, this facilitated the growth of my confidence about what I was doing and where I was going. Table Eight sets out the different forums where I presented.
# Table Eight

**Going Public: Taking the Research into Different Forums**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Forum</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Postgraduate seminar</td>
<td>Formulating the topic; generally positive although concerns about methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Postgraduate seminar</td>
<td>Relevant literature presented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Postgraduate seminar</td>
<td>Conducting indepth interviews; I felt confident as I spoke about my experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Seminar/Lecture: Social Ecology Dept, UWS³²</td>
<td>Presentation to thesis students about the realities of my research process; an affirming experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Conference: Social Workers National Conference</td>
<td>Paper about early interpretations of data (Thompson, 1992c); useful questions raised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Conference: Post Modern Cities</td>
<td>Paper about postmodern context of my work (Thompson, 1993c); qualitative method challenged; confidence rocked; feeling disillusioned!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Lecture: Research students at School of Town Planning, UNSW</td>
<td>Presentation about the relevance of qualitative research in urban planning; stressful; I felt it was up to me to counter the negative impression that students had been given about qualitative research; still feeling vulnerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Postgraduate seminar</td>
<td>Discussed emerging themes; was surprised that only one person attacked my method! Audience defended me!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

³² University of Western Sydney.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Conference: Universities as Interpretive Communities</td>
<td>Paper in two voices - process and content (Thompson, 1993b); presentation was risky but overwhelmingly well received; I felt enormously encouraged!³³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Conference: A Sense of Place... A Place for People</td>
<td>Presentation about the women's stories and implications for planners (Thompson, 1994b); conference theme &amp; other presentations affirmed my research direction; building confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Radio interviews</td>
<td>Interviewed about chapter in book (Thompson, 1993a); enjoyed the experience³⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Postgraduate seminar</td>
<td>Reflected on the research process; well received; accepted as a qualitative researcher!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Conference: Portraits of Planning</td>
<td>Major speaker at conference; feeling very nervous; paper well received (Thompson, 1995); feedback was warm &amp; very encouraging; conference theme &amp; other presentations affirmed my research direction; a great boost!³⁵</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

³³ I received a wonderful letter from a postgraduate student in South Australia who read my paper. She felt encouraged by my going public about the difficulties I had encountered. She had been immobilised in relation to her own qualitative project. "Your insights, generously and bravely given, have helped lever me off the log and into my forest..." 

³⁴ I received a piece of "hate mail" after one of these interviews, which was broadcast nationally. This was quite a shock to both me and the book's publisher. In my talk I mentioned both the positive and negative meanings of home, emphasising the particular problems that women and children face. This incensed my listener. "Why did you have to throw in your stupid Domestic Violence when talking about... modern urban home?" He went on, "Well, look at you anglo-saxon/irish-bog [sic] frigid shit women what sort of females your culture formulates? I am not surprised if there are one or two husbands, males, blokes feel like putting the boot into you".

³⁵ The shine was temporarily dulled by a newspaper report slamming the conference and its focus (Ward, 1995). After my initial disappointment I realised that we still have a long way to go in convincing the traditionalists that change is inevitable if we are to embrace the complexities of contemporary urban planning.
Women's Stories of Home Chapter Four

Note: All postgraduate seminars were a requirement of my candidature. They were presented to fellow students and staff in the Faculty of Architecture, University of Sydney.

The role of criticism

In 1993 the critical voices were heard very loudly. They emphasised the subjectivity of the work and patronised what I was doing as possibly interesting, but of no use in contributing to academic debate in planning. The following is a quote from one such lengthy critique.

*I feel that in adopting whole heartedly 'the subjective approach', you become open to as many criticisms as a down the line positivistic theorist but for diametrically the opposite reasons - the abandonment of logic, the lack of defined terminology, the lack of comparative situations, the absence of rationality, of the use of inductive reasoning, of personal opinions which are difficult to substantiate.*

Although initially devastating, I found that this particular critique helped strengthen my argument considerably and sharpen my writing style. I returned to the very essence of my methodology and purpose. There were one or two times when I felt that it was all too hard and even entertained giving up in the face of such attacks. My energy was low and a very wise colleague suggested that I needed to develop my own understanding in order to really believe in what I was doing. I talked through my feelings of uncertainty with my support network. Eventually I came to the

36 These words were written by a senior academic reviewing a conference paper of mine (Thompson, 1993c). To be fair, the comments, which ran to almost 2000 words, were couched in terms of "a critique of your paper from my particular perspective", not intending to "undermine your confidence". Initially, this is precisely what happened! Eventually, though, I was able to use the critique positively. Ultimately, perhaps somewhat ironically, it served to reinforce my direction and belief in what I was doing.

37 A fellow doctoral candidate suggested that what I had here was wonderful data! Initially I did not share her enthusiasm, but once I acknowledged my fear and vulnerability around the attack, I was able to appreciate her insightfulness. I came to realise that the critique was about controlling both knowledge in urban planning, as well as its epistemological base.
conclusion that there was a gap of understanding that I could not bridge in relation to the differences between the positivist and qualitative paradigms. Accordingly, not everyone would like what I was doing.

This period of criticism was a major turning point. The challenges sent me in all directions, including a return to the literature where I found confirmation for my approach. I also realised that as the project was evolving, so was the application of qualitative methods. I decided that I had to continue, indeed, I now wanted to keep going! Not only was I reminded about my initial inspiration for the project, but I had an obligation to the women who had so willingly shared their stories.

A time of consolidation and the development of an inner strength, followed. I no longer apologised for advocating qualitative research, nor for my subject of women and home.

My 1993 doctoral seminar at Sydney University heralded the beginning of this new phase. As I looked around the room prior to my talk, I realised that I was surrounded by male energy. My stomach turned as I fantasised about the debates that would ensue. However, as I rose to speak, a new strength emerged. I declared my position openly and without apology - a woman undertaking feminist research, challenging the dominant methodological paradigm and exclusively interviewing women. I then launched into an explication of the study to that point. The reaction caught me totally by surprise. There was a genuine interest and curiosity around the research and with the exception of one comment, no one put a positivist template over what I was doing! The poor person who did was pounced upon by the audience, leaving me to sit back and reflect on the debate! More than anything, I believe that my experience at this seminar was related to my growing inner strength, evolving in response to the critical voices. This had been a very valuable time indeed and essential in the development of my research process.
Later that year saw the publication of a chapter on my thoughts about home (Thompson, 1993a) and the acceptance of another piece for publication focusing on the women’s stories (Thompson, 1994a). Both events were affirming and reinforced the supportive voices. I presented a paper reflecting on my process as well as discussing substantive details of the project (Thompson, 1993b). The reaction was overwhelming as people related similar experiences, doubts and depression. Many said that it was a relief to have these issues articulated so that we could share our processes, rather than holding up a pretence of order and self-confidence.

**Learning from criticism**

My process through the research is a critical element in terms of my methodology. The criticism levelled at the work has been important for three reasons.

1. It rightly forced me to examine and refine my approach.

2. It facilitated my development as a qualitative researcher. I grew in confidence about the work and became convinced of the appropriateness of my method.

3. It helped me to understand about power and the way in which discipline boundaries are defined and methodologies sanctioned.

Whilst the criticism was always couched in intellectual terms, upon reflection it was often about issues of power - who defines what should be studied in urban planning and how it should be done. There may also be fear around empowering methodologies. Not only do these enable the inclusion of marginal groups, they value the use of different ways of knowing. Intellectualism is not privileged over other understanding. Emotions, feelings, as well as intuitive and spiritual insight, are
valid. In addition, there is the need to be personally related in the research process.\textsuperscript{38}

\section*{THE WEB OF SUPPORT: TIME FOR A CHAT}

Throughout the project I have participated in a variety of supportive networks. These have sustained my need to be in relationship with others and have helped me to understand the demands of qualitative research. My active and committed involvement is central to my belief system as a feminist researcher. Both individuals and groups have provided intellectual assistance and emotional support. I have had the opportunity to talk through issues as they emerged in my work. The richness of interdisciplinary dialogue has been invaluable in developing my analytical framework, as well as being a useful source of references, ideas and possible solutions to problems. I have been able to be honest about the doubt, uncertainty and chaos, which at times seemed overwhelming. My support network has been an integral part of my scholarship, and needs to be acknowledged as such. For too long we have only validated learning from solitary endeavour.\textsuperscript{39} I detail my involvement in various support networks in Table Nine.

\textsuperscript{38} One of my harshest critics proudly told me how he had completed his doctorate in record time and did not speak to anyone - it all came from books.

\textsuperscript{39} I must acknowledge Susan Krieger's (1991) book as inspiring and encouraging. So too Linda McDowell's interview with Susan Hanson (McDowell, 1994).
Table Nine

Support Networks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Principal Support</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Academics &amp; students in urban planning &amp; social work</td>
<td>I gained support for the ideas that I was exploring during those initial discussions. References were also suggested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>As above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Contacts in academia broadened. I met nurses, social ecologists. Writers’ Group</td>
<td>The Writers’ Groups was an informal gathering of women who were interested in talking about the process of writing. We shared successes, writer’s block and helpful strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>New Paradigm Research Group(^{40})</td>
<td>I joined nursing academics at regular meetings to discuss our adventures in qualitative research. Invaluable in testing out ideas &amp; approaches, as well as a good source of references. Emotional support was considerable. Together we have shared the struggle that comes from working within a paradigm that is only now gaining respectability in our disciplines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>As above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Co-supervision group</td>
<td>I regularly met with 2 nursing academics to discuss work in progress.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{40}\) In this group I felt valued and able to ask questions freely. There was no fear of ridicule as novice and experienced researchers alike developed qualitative inquiry skills together. The group provided a safe place to work through an understanding of philosophical and theoretical positions. As relative newcomers to the academy, nurses were struggling against the legacy of positivism as the only valid research methodology in their discipline. I was able to share in this struggle and through the group began to understand why my work was perceived as marginal. There was an added dimension in that I was interacting with people outside my discipline who were equally fascinated with, and drawn to qualitative methods. I came to the realisation that even if qualitative work was not seen as legitimate in my own discipline, it was elsewhere. This encouraged me to go on and make my contribution by taking qualitative methods into planning.
A friend agreed to meet regularly & encourage me in the writing up stages of the project. I was able to report on progress and how I was organising my time. He made suggestions about efficiency.

Throughout the whole project I have been supported and encouraged by my supervisor and co-supervisor.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have described the actualisation of my research methodology. I have clearly audited what I did, which is an important contribution to rigour. I have also reflected on the process as part of my philosophy as a feminist, qualitative researcher. Chapter Four concludes the first part of the thesis, which has established the framework for the project. In Part Two I turn to the women and their stories of home.