ASIAN WOMEN AND HOUSING:

THE POTENTIAL FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

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ABSTRACT

The thesis presents a study of the Asian community in Govanhill, focussing on the extent to which Asian women are disadvantaged in their access to public housing. Discussion takes place at three levels: documentation of individual housing histories; examination of the institutional obstacles to housing access; analysis of the structural factors of race, class and gender which combine to restrict access to housing.

In the second part, there is an analysis of the bases on which social mobilisation may or may not take place. Essentially, the debate is whether identification of collective interests is likely to take place on the bases of race, class, or gender, rather than on the basis of consumption of resources, particularly housing. A range of collective action in Govanhill is documented, and analysed in relation to these questions of identity and interests, and particularly in relation to the question of housing class.

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CONTENTS

TABLES

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GLOSSARY

burqa : garment used to conceal a woman, especially when leaving the house.

chaddar : garment similar to shawl.

dupatta : scarf used to cover the head, neck, or shoulders.

eid-ul-fitr : a holy day, the festival which marks the end of the period of fasting during Ramzan.

gurdwara : Sikh temple, place of worship.

purdah : literally, a curtain or veil; socially, used to mean the system of segregation of men and women.

saree shops : shops selling Asian clothing.

shalwar-qemiz : costume consisting of loose shirt and trousers; commonly worn by Muslim and Sikh women.

ABBREVIATIONS

A.H.G.	Asian Housing Group
A.L.C.	Area Liaison Committee
A.W.A.G.	Asian Women's Action Group
C.D.P.	Community Development Project
D.H.S.S.	Department of Health and Social Security
E.D.	Enumeration District
E.E.C.	European Economic Community
E.S.R.C.	Economic and Social Research Council
G.D.C.	Glasgow District Council
G.H.A.	Govanhill Housing Association
G.R.A.	Govanhill Residents Association
H.M.S.O.	Her Majesty's Stationery Office
H.P.U.	Homeless Persons' Unit
O.W.A.A.D.	Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent
P.M.C.	Project Management Committee
P.S.I.	Policy Studies Institute
S.A.A.C.	Scottish Asian Action Committee
S.D.A.	Scottish Development Association

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INTRODUCTION

Action-Research

The Action-Research Project

From 1984-87 an action-research project took place in Glasgow, a collaborative venture between Stirling University, and Crossroads Youth and Community Association, Glasgow, which arose out of three years of discussions between the two organisations. During this time the principles and practices of each organisation, as well as the interests and attitudes of the workers involved, were important elements in determining the nature of the Project. The two university researchers (by the time of the establishment of the Project this had been reduced to one) came from a fairly traditional academic background, as was apparent in their initial definition of research issues. Soon, however, they began to adopt a more flexible, action-research approach, in their attempt to bring their perspective into harmony with Crossroads' strongly action-based work.[1]

Crossroads developed from the work of the Gorbals Group of the late 1950's and 1960's and shares its commitment to direct community work with the disadvantaged and unorganised sections of the community. Crossroads became established in Govanhill as well as in the Gorbals, and carries out advice and community work, as well as the training of social work students.

Crossroads' philosophy can be expressed as a commitment to the powerless and the vulnerable, with an emphasis not only on helping the individual, but on community organising, with the aim of bringing about social change - transforming 'private troubles' into 'public issues'. (Murray, 1987).

This, then, was the general academic and agency context within which the Project was established. Early stages within the action-research relationship highlighted points of divergence more clearly than potential areas of agreement. Crossroads, for example, was concerned with practical solutions to individual and social problems, while the researchers took a more academic interest in the possible implications of research findings, taking a broader, less applied perspective. However, and of central importance, there was agreement on the pressing need for research into the needs of ethnic minority communities in Scotland, and a shared view that conventional research processes would be inappropriate. These areas of agreement were sufficient to allow the dialogue to continue, and for very real differences to be negotiated and largely overcome.

At the end of a long series of discussions, funding for the Project was applied for from several sources, and the successful application to the E.S.R.C. led to the establishment of the Action-Research Project in the Autumn of 1984. Agreement was reached that the Project would concentrate on the Asian community in Govanhill, as this coincided with the interests of both the researchers, and Crossroads. In particular, Crossroads' advice centre had recently moved to a location in the centre of the Asian community in Govanhill, highlighting a general lack of knowledge of their needs, and a consequent need for research. The original remit was broad, referring to self-help and community action amongst Asian women in Glasgow, with the expectation that the research would document such activities, as well as examine their access to, and use of, some of the local social and welfare services.

Clearly, this would produce more material than could reasonably be handled, so some selection of issues was essential. Thus, within this

broad focus, a series of research questions were formulated, during the early stages of the Project. These included: the use made by Asians of Crossroads advice service; documentation of the development of the Asian Women's Action Group (A.W.A.G.); Asians' use and experience of a range of services, especially social work, education and health; housing conditions; experiences within the public housing sector, particularly racial harassment; Asian women's isolation in the home; and general attitudes towards housing. Emphasis on each of these questions shifted and changed over the months, for example, an overview was maintained of experiences of general health and social services, but no systematic data gathered while attention was paid increasingly to various aspects of housing, in particular, housing conditions, racial harassment on council housing schemes, and access to public housing.

It should be emphasised that the focus on housing, and the development of research questions, arose from the interests and commitments of both action and research workers. A research interest in housing coincided with Crossroads' established tradition of action over housing issues (Murray, 1987) while specific research questions were discussed at length at regular Project Management Committee meetings (members including researchers, community workers, and community groups), and six-monthly Project Reviews. Thus, the research was at all stages grounded in both action and research perspectives; similarly, research results were expected to be relevant to both, contributing to the fields of women, race, and housing, and to the development of qualitative and action-research methodology, while also being relevant to the needs of community workers and community groups, providing much-needed knowledge and data as

background to their work, as well as highlighting hidden problems and new areas of interest and enquiry.

One of the great strengths of the study was its specific and local context, providing a rich and detailed account of the neighbourhood of Govanhill - its residents and their activities, local service providers, and especially the interaction between the two, between residents and 'gatekeepers'. At the same time, the intention was never simply to provide an ethnographic study of one area, but to operate also within a broader frame of reference, seeking comparisons and similarities with other inner-city areas throughout Britain, especially the older, declining industrial and manufacturing centres.

With this aim in mind, visits were made to voluntary agencies and housing associations in the English Midlands, which highlighted the fact that many advice and community associations were facing very similar problems to Crossroads in their work with communities, experiencing poverty, debt, unemployment, racism, and poor housing conditions. (See Appendix A). The results of the Project should be of interest and relevance to such associations and communities, findings such as the documentation in Chapter Three of the barriers to Asian access to public housing inherent in allocation systems, and the discussion in Chapter Five on the potential for social mobilisation on the basis of housing.

At the same time, some aspects of the study were unique to the Glasgow or Scottish context, and these findings will therefore have a more localised relevance, for example, an examination of public housing in Scotland where council housing and not owner-occupation is the major tenure, and a consideration of community action in Glasgow, a city with a strong and established tradition of activism. To set the local context a brief outline of the Asian community in Govanhill,

particularly their experiences of local services, is given in Chapter Two.

Action-Research

The commitment to action-research arose from a dissatisfaction with conventional research, particularly its lack of commitment to those being researched, and its lack of relevance to their needs and interests. Town (1973) defines action-research as a process whereby research defines the parameters of a social problem, possible solutions are formulated and translated into action, and research then records and evaluates the action taken. This model assumes that research takes most of the initiative, whereas in practice, at least in Govanhill, research and action workers were equally involved in defining problems and suggesting solutions.

There is a fairly long history of action-research in Britain, dating back to the Bristol Social Project of the mid-1950's, and the Community Development Projects of the late-1960's and early-1970's. Such projects were based in small, geographical areas, but their findings were assumed to have a wider applicability: the C.D.P.'s, in particular, were intended to investigate the causes of poverty in inner-city areas. Various problems were highlighted in the early days, notably the potential conflicts between various interest groups associated with the Projects: it was not always clear which interests, if any, the workers should promote. (Town, 1973).

The C.D.P.'s have been the major projects to date, and a brief look at some of their underlying principles illustrates the tradition within which the Govanhill Action-Research Project existed. When the C.D.P.'s were established, the prevailing ideology was that poverty was a technical or administrative problem, and could thus be remedied

by the work of a series of small-scale projects, with an emphasis on community development.

The political background to the projects was the 'rediscovery of poverty' during the 1960's by academics and politicians, and the concern that arose from the realisation that widespread poverty had in fact persisted within an affluent society, despite politicians' declarations that 'you've never had it so good', and the academic heralding of 'an end to poverty'. (C.D.P. 1977).

Kraushaar (1981) argues that the State's failure to eradicate poverty threatens two of its major needs: legitimacy and efficiency. The persistence of poverty within an affluent society threatened to challenge the legitimacy of a government which had manifestly failed to redistribute resources, while large-scale poverty threatened the efficiency of the nation, due to the costs of health and welfare provision for the poor.

A third and perhaps crucial factor in precipitating the decision to 'tackle' poverty was the perceived link between poverty and social unrest. Loney (1983) argues that expressions of concern by politicians over 'deprivation' in fact masked their fears of urban violence. He argues that politicians of all parties linked potential unrest with racial issues - those on the right feared protest from the black ghettoes, while those on the left feared that white racial violence will result from inner-city poverty and deprivation. It is interesting to note that while the C.D.P.'s were based in rural as well as urban areas, the media, many politicians and some academics continued to perceive poverty as a predominantly urban phenomenon.

In terms of the ideological and theoretical background to the projects, initially at least, politicians expected to find administrative solutions to a 'residual' problem, while academics

advanced the 'cycle of deprivation' thesis to explain poverty. This theory held that poverty was transmitted from generation to generation, and was rooted in the culture and psychology of the poor themselves, rather than in the political and economic structures.

Politicians quickly took up this theory, adopting it as their main explanation of poverty. The Home Office, which was responsible for funding the projects, expressed it thus in 1969:

> '...ill-health - financial difficulties - children suffering from deprivation - consequent delinquency - inability of the children to adjust to adult life - unstable marriages - emotional problems - ill-health and the cycle begins again.'
>
> (C.D.P. 1977)

While this type of explanation underwent much criticism, it was still the case in 1976 that the Home Office expressed its concern over urban poverty in terms of a 'lack of community spirit' and 'family problems'. (C.D.P., 1977).

This theory was important as it largely determined the nature of the action taken. As the problem was defined in terms of the culture of the poor themselves - their alienation from, and failure to, participate in the values and culture of mainstream society - then the solution was couched in terms of mobilising the poor, and encouraging their participation in the democratic process. Thus, poverty was defined, not as something inherent in capitalist society, but as a residual problem, located in isolated 'pockets of deprivation'. Essentially, poverty was seen as an unfortunate oversight, to be remedied by improvements in the administration of the welfare state, and greater co-ordination in the delivery of social services. The themes of co-ordination and participation were very much to the fore during the 1960's, not only within the C.D.P.'s, but also within several major reports on social and welfare services, such as the Plowden Report (1967) on primary education,

the Seebohm Report (1968) on social services, and the Skeffington Report (1969) on planning.

The C.D.P.'s, then, as a major social policy experiment, clearly reflected Government thinking of the time, and at first Project workers operated within this framework. Soon, however, many workers began to develop a more radical perspective, arguing that poverty, far from being a residual problem, was in fact endemic to capitalist society. In North Tyneside, for example, Project workers contributed to the development of a political economy of housing, and located the cause of poverty clearly in terms of a maldistribution of resources. (Malpass and Murie, 1982). Both action and research workers on many projects worked within a Marxist perspective, and insisted that an end to poverty could only be achieved by a major redistribution of resources, and not by simply 'tinkering' with the present system. (C.D.P., 1977). Inevitably, this resulted in a significant degree of conflict between academics and politicians, as projects increasingly produced reports which questioned the official Government philosophy. (Davies, 1975).

However, Project workers themselves have acknowledged that, while they did achieve some of their aims, did contribute to the mobilisation of the poor, and did help to establish poverty and housing as political issues, nevertheless they failed to bring about radical social change. (North Tyneside C.D.P., 1978). In the end, the projects remained social policy experiments, largely because the Government of the time - as well as subsequent Governments - lacked the political will to commit themselves to any large-scale measures to bring about an end to poverty. (C.D.P., 1977).

The Govanhill action-research project began with the radical perspective adopted by many of the C.D.P.'s, perceiving the roots of poverty and racial disadvantage as lying in the inequalities of a

capitalist and white-dominated society. Action workers shared a commitment to the mobilisation of the poor, and to self-help and community action as their main tactics in pursuit of this aim. (Murray, 1987). Researchers were committed to research which was relevant to the needs and interests of the poor, and accountable to the community in which it was based. (Valentine and Valentine, 1970).

Action-research, essentially, aims to link theory and practice, to create a constructive dialogue between the academic interest of researchers, and the more empirical concerns of action workers. In Govanhill, there was a particularly close connection between action and research, in the form of a triangular relationship between researchers, Crossroads workers, and Asian women activists. Clearly, each of these groups had different sets of interests and objectives, and there was potential either for serious conflict, or else constructive, co-operative work. In particular, the differing emphasis on theory versus practice could lead to conflict, for example, action workers looking for solutions to specific problems, with researchers more concerned with making generalisations, expanding knowledge, and developing theories. (Town, 1973).

While there were indeed conflicts in Govanhill, it is interesting that these tended to be over practical issues, rather than serious disputes about aims and objectives. There was, for example, a recurrent debate about how much time should be spent 'in the field', as opposed to academic work, a debate which was resolved by compromise rather than eventual agreement. In contrast, decisions over what to research, and how, were discussed by all interested parties and agreement invariably reached by consensus. Chapter One goes on to examine the stages involved in these decision-making processes.

The aims and objectives of action and research workers, while arising from very different backgrounds and perspectives, nevertheless did coincide. The role of the researcher was to help bridge the gap between action and research.

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1. See Bowes, 1987, for a more detailed description of the genesis of the Project.

CHAPTER ONE

Doing Action-Research : Issues Around Fieldwork and the Research Process

Introduction : a Research Plan

The aim of this chapter is twofold: firstly, to outline the plan of the thesis as a whole; and secondly, to discuss the theoretical and methodological background to the research project. Some complex issues within the fields of housing and community action are addressed, and to cope with this complexity, two general approaches are adopted: firstly, levels of explanation move between the descriptive, the analytical and the theoretical, according to the nature of the data; and secondly, analysis takes place at the individual, institutional or structural levels, again, as indicated by the nature of the material.

Thus, Chapter Two is largely descriptive, 'setting the scene' of the research project, looking at Govanhill as a community, and in particular at Asian people's experiences of social and welfare service provision, housing conditions and housing tenure, and at their sense of community. This is the most descriptive chapter, and is located clearly in the ethnographic tradition of detailed description. (Wax, 1971; Spradley, 1979; Agar, 1980).

However, Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) argue that ethnography need not be purely descriptive, but may also be analytical, as well as being used to develop theory. Thus, Chapter Three uses both description and analysis in its outline of the policies and practices of public housing agencies, while Chapter Four attempts to link this analysis to the development of theory, in particular the application of Rex's (1967, 1973) theory of housing class to the situation in

Govanhill. Chapter Five encompasses all three levels of explanation - in its consideration of urban social movements, moving from a description of Asian community groups in Glasgow, to an analysis of the wider black, women's and working-class movements within which they are located, to the development of theory of community action and the mobilisation process. Chapter Six is the most strongly theoretical chapter, drawing on the evidence of earlier chapters in its attempt to develop theory on a range of social-spatial processes, such as women's use of space, and the ideology of the home.

We should note, however, that this distinction between description and analysis does not imply that analysis is therefore absent from the descriptive accounts: Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) argue that any ethnographic account is analytic, even those which claim to be purely descriptive, in that the researcher's selections and perceptions necessarily construct the way in which data are presented.

Secondly, the thesis as a whole encompasses analysis at the individual, institutional and structural levels, centring around the two major themes of housing and community action. The complexity of the material indicated the need for analysis at all three levels, and an attempt was made to draw on the best from each of these three traditions of sociological analysis.

Thus, in the field of housing for example, writers such as Clapham and Kintrea (1984, 1986) provide analysis at the individual and institutional levels, in particular, focussing on the interplay between individual choice and institutional constraint. At the institutional level there are many works highlighting racial disadvantage in terms of access to public housing, (McKay, 1977; Simpson, 1981; Malpass and Murie, 1982) and fewer works examining women's access to housing (Brion and Tinker, 1980; Watson with

Austerberry, 1986). At the structural level, significant contributions to a political economy of housing have been made by theorists such as Harvey (1978), Gough (1979), and Harloe and Paris (1984), and to a theory of housing class by theorists such as Rex (1973), Lambert et al (1978) and Lowe (1986).

Within the field of community action, there is a rich collection of individual accounts, drawing heavily on a case-study approach, such as Leonard (1975), Henderson et al (1982). Others take a more institutional approach, for example, analysing community action in relation to local political structures, Lowe (1977), Curno (1978). At a more structural level are those who study community activism, not as isolated case-studies, nor in relation to urban institutions, but as a manifestation of wider urban social movements. (Castells, 1977, 1978, 1983; Kraushaar, 1981; Harloe, 1981). A few writers attempt to integrate the individual and structural levels of analysis, such as Mayo (1977) who provides a collection of case-studies of individual community action groups, within a wider Marxist and feminist analytical framework.

In terms of housing, then, analysis at the individual level takes place in Chapters Two, Three and Five, within the case-studies of Asian households' experiences of housing conditions, access to housing, and racial harassment, respectively. These case-studies, while being fairly representative of experiences within the community as a whole, were not chosen as 'typical' cases: rather, they were chosen because they serve to illustrate several important themes which are taken up in later analytical discussion.

These case-studies, while illustrating each individual household's unique experiences, also serve two other main functions. Firstly, they act as a 'touchstone' for the experiences of the community in

general, in that each case-study chosen reflects the experiences and opinions expressed by other households in similar sets of circumstances. Secondly, each case-study introduces several important themes which emerged from fieldwork. For example, the case of Sheraz Begum in Chapter Three highlights the issue of women's limited independent access to housing; the cases of the Sharif and Singh/Kaur households were chosen to explore housing conditions within the Asian community; and finally, the cases of the Shah, Ahmed and Mohammed households in Chapter Five highlight experiences of racial harassment.

The decision to locate these case-studies at or near the beginning of the relevant chapter was a deliberate one, in line with the overall strategy of moving from the individual, to the institutional, to the structural level of analysis. Academic convention favours moving from the abstract to the particular, from the theoretical to the individual, but in this case there were strong reasons in favour of the reverse procedure. (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983).

Firstly, within the ethnographic tradition, theory is grounded in fieldwork, developed from research data. (Filstead, 1970; Burgess, 1984). This is not to say, therefore, that the project was atheoretical, operating outside the context of urban sociological theory. On the contrary, it was clearly influenced by Rex's work on housing classes (1967, 1973), Castells on urban social movements (1977, 1978, 1983) as well as many others working within the urban sociological tradition. (Harvey, 1978; Lambert et al, 1978; Malpass and Murie, 1982; Harloe and Paris, 1984). The important point is that theories were held provisionally, to be tested against empirical findings. Equally importantly, the flexible nature of the research was such as to allow theoretical questions to emerge from ongoing fieldwork, for example, theoretical issues concerning the use of

space, discussed in Chapter Six, emerged from research into Asian women's access to, and experiences of, housing. Thus, it seemed appropriate to move from the descriptive to the analytical to the structural levels, rather than vice versa, as this mirrored the development of analysis within the research process itself.

Secondly, an important feature of action-research is its commitment to the community in which it is based (Lees and Smith, 1975). Thus, some priority was given to documenting the accounts of people 'in the field'. The rationale for this was that much research is devoted to institutions, to the power-holders and decision-makers, and that therefore more attention should be given to the accounts of the powerless. (Valentine and Valentine, 1970). Thus, for example, in Chapter Two welfare provision in Govanhill is considered from the perspective of the clients, rather than the institutions themselves. Also, several major themes within the project have been under-researched, and it seemed appropriate that new research in these areas should include case-studies, in order to fill these gaps in knowledge, and also to help to provide the basis for further research. Case-studies concerning these under-researched areas include Asian women's access to housing in Chapter Three, and racial harassment in Chapter Five.

Thirdly, use of the case-studies in this way was part of the general decision to present the thesis as a 'natural history', that is, to parallel the text with the history of the fieldwork process itself, especially the development of research questions, and the progressive selection of research issues. This strategy has the advantage of including research methodology within the analytic process, but the disadvantage of threatening to prove unwieldy in terms of scale. To overcome this disadvantage, inclusion of

descriptive case-studies has been highly selective, they were chosen to serve as a 'way in' to major research themes, themes which were later subjected to analytical and theoretical consideration.

The case-studies, then, served several purposes in terms of contributing to research, especially within the traditions of ethnography and action-research. However, they were never intended solely as an end in themselves: rather, they were an integral part of the overall analysis. The case-studies represent the individual level of analysis, from which are developed the institutional and structural levels: taken together, these three levels of analysis form an integrated structure for the analysis of research material.

Thus, Chapters Two, Three and Four are concerned with housing, ranging from individual experiences of housing conditions and housing tenure in Chapters Two and Three, to the institutional barriers to housing access inherent in the policies and practices of public housing agencies in Govanhill, as discussed in Chapter Three, to a structural analysis of housing inequality, conditioned by the key variables of race, class and gender, in Chapter Four. It is in this chapter that the individual level of explanation in Chapter Two, and the institutional level in Chapter Three came together, contributing to a structural explanation of housing inequality, the two main features of this inequality being poor housing conditions, and unequal access to decent housing. (Murie, 1983). Chapter Four ends with an exploration of the relevance of the concept of housing class to the housing situation in Govanhill. (Rex and Moore, 1967; Rex, 1973).

The second major theme of the thesis, community action, is covered mainly in Chapter Five. This chapter similarly moves across three levels, but this time not the individual, institutional and structural levels: rather, the chapter examines different spatial levels of

community activism, from the local, to the city-wide, to the national. The chapter begins with case-studies of two community action groups in Govanhill, the Asian Housing, and the Asian Women's Action Groups. The activities, perceptions, conflicts and achievements of these two groups are examined in some detail, adding an Asian and a Scottish dimension to the collection of case-study material within the field of community action.

The chapter then moves on to locate these two groups within the context of city-wide community organisation and activism, which ranges from conservative Asian religious and business organisations, to Asian women's community development groups, to radical black women's groups. Finally, community groups in Govanhill and in Glasgow are located within the wider context of urban social movements, particularly those organised on the bases of race, class and gender.

Chapter Six serves two main functions, to draw some conclusions from earlier chapters, and to explore a range of social-spatial issues inherent in the research. While theoretical discussion in Chapter Six is speculative, it is grounded in the main body of the research, which draws generally on urban sociology, in particular on housing theories, and to a lesser extent on theories of women and race. Writings in all of these fields are largely split between Marxist and Weberian approaches, most studies adhering closely to one or other perspective. Rather than perpetuate this, perhaps over-emphasised, division, this study attempts a synthesis of the two major theoretical approaches, seeking to add the advantages of an 'action frame of reference', and a concept of housing class, to the Marxist analysis of the creation and perpetuation of power and social inequality in industrial, capitalist societies.

Elliott and McCrone (1982) note that urban sociologists have tended to reject Weber's 'reactionary' work in favour of a 'radical' Marxist perspective: they argue, however, that it is possible to oppose Weber's anti-socialism without abandoning the legacy of his work. They take from Weber a general approach, rather than specific conclusions, in particular, a comparative, historical approach, which encompasses social and political, as well as economic, conflicts: they are also concerned to replace the Marxist tendency towards determinism with a more humanist approach.

Nevertheless, a Marxist perspective is also important, in its insistence on the primacy of class conflict, an issue largely neglected by urban sociologists between the 1920's and the 1970's, when the emphasis, under the influence of the Chicago School, was very much on descriptive urban ethnography. (Park, 1929; Burgess and Park, 1925; Gans, 1962). This ethnography was usually located in an atheoretical, consensus perspective. Marxism, in contrast, identifies as issues access by the working-class to urban resources such as housing, welfare and education, explaining such conflicts as arising from capitalist local and national state's contradictory needs for capital accumulation, and the avoidance of social unrest. (Harvey, 1973; Cockburn, 1977).

However, this should not lead us to dismiss the need for urban ethnography: rather, we should learn from the shortcomings of past work, and attempt to integrate structural analysis with empirical research. In this way, rich, detailed accounts of local communities may be located within a wider, theoretical context. Specifically, accounts of local people's experiences of housing in Glasgow are informed by a theory of housing class, and by analysis of race and gender, as well as class, inequalities, while documentation of local

community action groups takes place in the light of theories of urban social movements.

Such an attempt at integration has some precedents in urban sociology: apart from Elliott and McCrone (1982), mentioned above, who attempt to construct an 'interpretative framework', drawing on the best of the Marxist and Weberian traditions, there are several others. Dunleavy (1977) provides a critique of both pluralist and structuralist 'myths', and attempts to steer a middle course in his analysis of urban political protest. Pons and Francis (1983) argue for the need to forge links between the different traditions within urban sociology, and they advocate diversity, rather than uniformity, in the field.

Similarly, the research project aimed to overcome the usual division between theoretical and policy-oriented research. (Murie, 1983). Attempts were made to incorporate both a theoretical analysis of inequality on the bases of race, gender, and class, and community attempts to eradicate this inequality, and a policy-oriented approach to research, seeking both to document and inform community work, community action, and municipal and voluntary housing provision. The project's relevance to policy-making was seen as an essential part of both action and research work. (Lipman-Blumer and Bernard, 1979; Young and Connolly, 1981; Ungerson, 1985).

Fieldwork

One of the major aims of the Project was to provide a detailed account of a local community, using methods drawn from sociology and social anthropology, particularly ethnography. One of the main strengths of ethnography is that it allows for detailed description, based on firsthand knowledge, and is particularly useful within new areas of enquiry. However, the concern was not to replicate the

traditional concern within studies of poor and ethnic minority communities with 'culture', but to investigate areas of social life usually neglected by such studies: the relevance of social and economic status; the experience of disadvantage; relations between the black and white communities; and participation (or non-participation) in community action.

Much urban ethnography, from the Chicago School onwards, has focussed on the public, male life of ethnic and working-class communities, overlooking the private sphere of women. (Liebow, 1967; Suttles, 1968; Whyte, 1981). Lofland (1975) comments on the 'thereness' of women, they are present in urban life, but part of the background, in effect, invisible to (male) researchers. It is now the task of researchers to make women visible, to produce urban ethnographies of women's lives.

Ethnography, then, studies social interaction in its 'natural setting' by means of the researcher participating in the everyday lives of those being researched. While this approach recommends itself because of the range and depth of material that can be collected over an extended period of time, it does immediately raise the question of selection. Clearly, not all of the activities of everyone in any given setting can be recorded: there must be selection of location, time, events, and people (Burgess, 1984).

Selection was an ongoing process within the research project, in general, the move being made from a wide focus to progressively more specific issues. Selection was not the sole responsibility of the researcher, but was a task shared by members of the Project Management Committee, whose membership consisted of researchers, community workers and community activists. Selection of research issues was one

of the P.M.C.'s major concerns, along with the overall planning and direction of the Project.

Selection, of course, had already taken place before the beginning of the Project, in that it was designed to be a study of the Asian population within a geographically-defined community, Govanhill. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) argue that a geographic area is not a 'case' in itself, not an object of study in itself: rather, we should select cases from within the geographic setting. Thus, attention was to be focussed on the self-help and community activism of Asian women in Govanhill. However, this defined area of study remained fairly broad and open to interpretation, allowing for further selection once research work had begun. A brief chronological account of selection during the fieldwork period will serve to highlight how and why these choices were made.

From the beginning of the Project in September 1984 until Christmas 1984, the focus of research remained broad, with data being collected on the nature of the Asian community in Govanhill, their experiences of social and welfare service provision, and the activities of the Asian community groups. This focus was deliberately wide, the intention being to gather a wide variety of data from which to select certain issues of central importance to both action and research work. This was in line with what Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) have termed the 'funnel structure' of ethnographic research, whereby the research becomes progressively more focussed.

In January 1985 the first Project Review was held, with the purpose of selecting one major theme for the Project. The day was spent in full discussion of the possibilities, and housing emerged as the issue which coincided most clearly with both research interests, and action workers expertise. It was also a major local issue,

central to the quality of life of both Asians and women. Discussion papers were presented outlining issues around Asian women and housing, highlighting the extent to which housing is central to women's lives, especially in relation to their roles as housewife and mother.

For community workers, this focus appeared to be narrow enough, while researchers pointed out that the demands of research for thoroughly-documented background material necessitated an even more specific focus. There was some conflict here between action work and its impetus towards problem identification and problem-solving and its consequent tendency to respond to as many issues as possible, and research with its convention of rigorous treatment of specialised areas of study. On this occasion as on many others, a compromise between the two perspectives was reached after open discussion of their similarities and differences: the needs of both action and research were recognised and accommodated, thus making possible successful joint action-research.

Thus, the following months were spent researching public housing issues, while action workers remained free to respond to both public and private housing issues, as they arose within the Asian community. Data continued to be recorded on the Asian community groups, but with a changed emphasis to accommodate the new focus on public housing, in short, becoming more selective.

In line with this new emphasis, a major piece of fieldwork was undertaken - a series of semi-structured interviews on housing. These interviews allowed for the collection of a great deal of data, which, in turn, gave impetus to a further selection process. (See Chapter Four for a discussion of housing interview data). As the interviews were semi-structured, this allowed the interviewees themselves to

raise important issues: this proved fruitful as many respondents identified access to public housing as a major concern.

The interviews themselves revealed that, contrary to popular - and often academic - belief (see Robinson, 1980), Asian households were interested in gaining access to public housing, and that many had, in fact, registered applications. This data alerted project workers to the fact that not only was it important to conduct research into those few Asian households which had succeeded in gaining access to public housing, but that we should take note of the fact that the Asian community was then at an important transitional stage, where significant numbers were seeking access, but had not yet succeeded in doing so. Therefore, the action-research project increasingly began to focus its attention on this important, transitional stage: gaining access to public housing.

The decision to adopt this focus was made formal in September 1985, at the second Project Review. This Review was more successful than the first in ensuring full participation by both Asian and white women, reflecting the more confident and assured activity by Asian women generally in community organisation. Researchers, community workers and community activists attending the Review considered several options for the future progress of the Project, including racial harassment, special housing, and housing rehabilitation, as well as access to housing.

While every attempt was made to ensure that everyone present was familiar with each of these issues, the general response seemed to indicate a reluctance to express a preference for one particular issue, the feeling being that this choice should be left to the researcher. Alternatively, some people felt that the issues were

equally important, and should therefore all be addressed by the Project.

The intention behind the exercise was to enable joint decision-making to take place: in practice, a lack of confidence led most activists to rely on research expertise. The process was 'democratic', but mainly in the sense that everyone had an equal say in the final decision-making, rather than full participation in the whole decision-making process.

Following this decision, research work over the following months included: documentation of the housing careers of Asian households, especially in relation to the public sector; research into the policies and practices of public housing agencies in relation to the Asian population in Govanhill; participant observation of A.W.A.G. discussions concerning their experiences of, and attitudes towards, public sector housing; and documentation of Asian women's collective aspirations with regard to public housing policy, especially the allocations system. Clearly, this was largely a continuation of earlier fieldwork, using the same methods of interviews and participant observation, simply refining research questions in line with the new, more specific emphasis on access to public sector housing.

This continued for several months until, towards the end of the fieldwork period during the summer of 1986, the focus of the Project began to widen again slightly, in order to identify issues which could be expanded upon to form the basis of the second Project, to begin in September 1986. One consequence of progressive selection is, of course, that many issues remain relatively unexamined. These included not only housing issues such as housing conditions, the private housing market, special housing, as well as various planning issues,

but also several important issues relating indirectly to housing. In particular, health emerged as a major issue, with many informants, for example, connecting their experiences of illhealth to poor housing conditions. Similarly, domestic violence emerged as an issue from the concerns of those 'in the field', and again it was often linked to housing issues, especially in the case of women made homeless by their experiences of violence.

While these and other issues served as subsidiary themes within the Project, they were to a large extent 'selected out' to allow for a clearer focus on the major theme of access to public housing. A full consideration of these subsidiary themes was delegated to second, and hopefully, subsequent action-research projects.

Having made selections, the next step was gaining access to both locations and people. Two major factors were relevant here: association with Crossroads lent credibility to the Project, thus securing access to a range of individuals, groups and associations within Govanhill, while close contact with members of A.W.A.G., acting as 'key informants', led to my introduction to a variety of Asian women in an informal context - without such help this degree of contact and communication would have been difficult or impossible.

Burgess (1984) points out that gaining access is an ongoing process, something which needs to be continually negotiated while 'in the field'. The tactic adopted on the Project was to begin with 'key informants', and to progress from these people to make contact with their friends, neighbours and relatives: in this way, a progressively wider circle of contacts was established.

Jeffrey (1976) adopted similar contacts in her study of Asian people in Bristol, rejecting the idea of a 'random sample' in favour of a network of linked contacts. The justification for this approach

is similar in both studies, that is, that the potential sample was too small to allow for random sampling, and that, in any case, qualitative research is more suited to this kind of meaningful, inter-related sample.

The other major approach in terms of gaining access was that of seeking entry to specific settings, to allow participant observation to take place. This was largely negotiated through association with Crossroads, who arranged for a research presence at many group events and activities, and ensured that participant observation was acceptable to those present. This was important, as mere physical presence in a setting does not necessarily constitute access: if the full understanding and consent of those present is not secured, then the potential for gaining meaningful information may be severely restricted. (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983).

During this early stage of making contacts, I was concerned mainly with creating and managing a range of social relationships, and with the definition of my own role, or roles, within the field. I struggled, for example, to strike a balance between the two extremes of 'complete observer', with its danger of detachment, and 'complete participant', with its danger of 'going native'. There was some pressure from the women themselves to join fully in their activities and to identify closely with their aims as a group. I recognised the dangers of over-involvement and so aimed more for a position of 'detached involvement' (Agar, 1980), making clear that while I was 'on their side', it was not my role to take direct action, but to observe and record, a position which was accepted.

Research roles

An important lesson from these early negotiations was that no-one had any clear expectations of research or researchers, that there was

potential for a great deal of flexibility, and that it was largely up to me to define my own research roles. This definition was an ongoing process, and while I succeeded to some extent in establishing an identity as a researcher, at the same time I was related to in very personal terms, as an individual and, in the end, simply as 'Julia'. This ambiguity, far from hindering research, was in fact an essential element. For example, the hostility expressed by the Govanhill Management Committee towards me as a researcher was gradually overcome by their acceptance of me as a person, by my simply being there and participating in the community. In more general terms, the maintenance of a marginal position - being neither community worker, social work student, community group member, or Govanhill resident - paradoxically allowed for entry into most situations, and being accepted as some kind of member of each of these groups. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) note that such marginality is difficult, but essential to good research in that the distance thus created allows for analysis, 'creative insights', and helps to maintain the researcher's critical faculties. This position consists, essentially, of being simultaneously an 'insider' and an 'outsider', and this was in fact the position I maintained in most situations, throughout the research period.

Apart from general research roles, it is also important to consider the more specific roles played according to age, gender, ethnicity, and personal biography. (Burgess, 1984). I was more concerned here with the potential for 'role flexibility' than with any constraints. (Papanek, 1964). This is not to deny the very real restrictions which may be imposed by gender or ethnicity, simply to emphasise the gaps within any social system which can be exploited, particularly by a 'marginal' researcher. The junction between the

class, gender, and ethnic identities of both researcher and those researched was complex, and with important consequences for the research process - perhaps most relevant was the degree to which I found myself to be an 'insider' or 'outsider' on each of these bases.

The fact that I was a woman working with Asian women was seen as essential by those working with the Project, given the sex-segregated nature of the Asian community. This allowed for an easy acceptance into women's homes, at group meetings and social events that it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for a man to achieve.[1] While the main focus was on Asian women, some time was also spent with Asian men, particularly while recording incidents of racial hent. Access here for a white woman was easier than it would have been for an Asian woman: contact thus gained allowed for the recording of some valuable information and also highlighted two main types of Asian male attitudes towards women. On the one hand, white women may be seen as 'liberated' or 'immoral', and therefore treated with some hostility, or ignored: on the other hand, they may be seen as 'educated', in contrast to Asian women who are seen as 'backward', and are thus accorded 'token male' status, and related to more-or-less as an equal.

That I was a white person working within an Asian community was clearly important, and influenced the research process in both negative and positive ways. On the negative side, language was clearly a major disadvantage, not speaking fluent Urdu or Punjabi meant that I had to use translators in some interviews, and that, generally, I missed some of the conversations during participant observation. This problem was partly overcome as I learned some Urdu, enabling me to follow the gist, if not the detail, of most conversations, and allowing interviews to be conducted in a mixture of Urdu and English. This was a common enough process, as many Asians in

Govanhill switched frequently between Urdu or Punjabi and English during conversations. At the very least, a degree of familiarity and trust was established because of my attempts to learn an Asian language.

At a more political level, objections were made by some black activists to the very concept of a white researcher working with Asian people. This issue was raised specifically at one A.W.A.G. meeting, where a spokeswoman from the Community Relations Council was critical both of my presence at the meeting, and of my position as researcher within the Project. Later the objections she raised led to an interesting debate, each person involved defining her own position on the issue. One group member agreed wholly with the position taken at the meeting, feeling that black people should be the ones to carry out work in their own communities, though, paradoxically, she had been very involved in the early stages of the Project, introducing me to a wide range of people and situations. Others in the group, while recognising the fact of racism, were quite happy to work with white people, as long as they shared their own aims and objectives. In addition, one or two noted that it was an advantage that in this aspect I was an 'outsider', as this meant that a lot of Asian women would be willing to share personal details with me in the knowledge that there was no danger that these details would become known to others within the community.[2] My own position involved a recognition of the realities of racism, but nevertheless a conviction that a guilty abstention from any involvement with black people was less useful than an attempt to work together in addressing issues of racism, poverty and poor housing.

Class membership, unlike gender or ethnicity, is not immediately visible, and thus perhaps open to even more ambiguity. While I share

a common class background with most of the women, this was often not evident, my working-class origins having been overlaid by a University education and some middle-class values. Nevertheless, class did help to some extent to create a common bond, evidenced by a lack of formality, an ability on my part to 'fit in', and confirmed by comments to the effect that I was 'ordinary', or 'just like one of us'.

Thus, I found myself to be an 'insider' on the basis of gender, an 'outsider' on the basis of ethnicity, and simultaneously 'insider-outsider' in terms of class. While there were some inherent disadvantages, overall, these roles significantly aided the research process: as a woman I had open access to most aspects of the women's lives; as an outsider to the community, confidences were made to me which may not have been made to an insider; while my ambiguous class position meant that I could develop my own role as a researcher, while at the same time establishing a level of informality and familiarity.

Perhaps more important than the external limits set by membership of each of these social groups is the potential for 'role flexibility', the creation and definition of one's own role. (Papanek, 1964). Role flexibility requires both that the individual can play a variety of roles, and that there exist ambiguities within a social system which can be exploited. In Govanhill both these conditions were met: my own marginality, and tendancy in social situations to take the role of observer, coincided with changes and ambiguities within the Asian community. Important elements here were changes in women's roles - particularly the women involved with A.W.A.G. who were departing from their traditional roles as wife and mother, not without some conflict, and the second and third generations who were moving into nuclear family structures, and

becoming educated. In short, the interaction between a maginal researcher and a far from static community allowed for great flexibility, and consequently, the collection of data from a wide range of sources. Equally importantly, it allowed for the close involvement of some members of the community in the research process, in line with the early, and continued, commitment to an action-research approach.

The Research process

Within a general action-research approach, various research methods may be employed: participant observation, interviews, life-histories, documents, and group discussions. All of these methods were used during fieldwork and each raises a range of research issues. A first and basic principle was that the research should be committed to furthering the interests of those being researched. This position arose both from the academic tradition of the late 1960's which held that research should be committed to the oppressed (Jones, 1980), and from Crossroads' tradition, originating from the same period, that community workers should 'take sides' with local people. (Murray, 1987).

Such commitment to those researched implies their involvement in all stages of the research process, and the observation of such ethics as informed consent, and the question of data dissemination. (Burgess, 1984). The structure of the Project ensured regular consultation with the community by means of the Project Management Committee, and meetings with other management structures, such as the Govanhill sub-committee. While these procedures ensured general agreement on the conduct of the research, it could not be guaranteed that everyone involved had given their consent; while those being interviewed had clearly agreed to be involved, certainly some, but

perhaps not all of those present during participant observation were familiar with, and in agreement with, the aims and procedures of the research project. In terms of the use of data thus gathered, confidentiality was ensured by the changing of all names in written material, while safeguards regarding the actual use of the data were contained in a contract drawn up between the researcher and Crossroads, at the beginning of the Project.

The two major research methods, then, were interviews and participant observation. While the division between the two is not always clear - for example, informal interviews often took place spontaneously during participant observation - it is important to maintain the distinction, partly because the procedures of each were different, and partly because each raises a different set of issues. A range of issues connected with participant observation have already been discussed: it remains here to explore aspects of the interviewing process.

An important first consideration was the context in which the interviews took place. One or two of the early, racial harassment, interviews took place within the Crossroads advice centre (then known as Govanhill Information Centre) and these contrasted with those conducted in people's own homes in being shorter, more focussed, and 'business-like'.[3] Thus, it seems that the setting can influence both the quantity and quality of data obtained: people responded to the atmosphere of the advice centre in keeping conversations short and to the point, and in waiting to be asked questions rather than volunteering information, while in people's own homes the quality of interaction was quite different, exchanges of information being mixed with general conversation, a great deal of hospitality, and my participation in ordinary events within the home.

These different kinds of interaction raise the issue of 'presentation of self' (Agar, 1980). Frequently, particularly in the early days, I was associated closely with Crossroads, often being mistaken for an advice worker, and asked for advice, during interviews, on a range of housing, debt and benefits problems.[4] ,This identification with Crossroads was not too problematic, given the good relationship the agency had established with the community, and in any case it would have been almost impossible to avoid, given my close contacts with Crossroads. More dangerous was the assumption that I was 'someone from the Housing Department': in the first place I didn't want to raise false expectations that I could help anyone directly to gain access to housing, and, secondly, I didn't want information offered to be slanted towards my supposed role as housing officer.

On the whole, however, 'presentation of self' was less problematic than had been anticipated - despite some early confusions, I soon became accepted simply as myself, made welcome both by those with whom I was previously acquainted, and those I had not met. Some difficulties in communication, and in establishing relationships had been anticipated, largely because of our different ethnic origins. While there were of course significant social, cultural and linguistic differences, in everyday contact these did not seem to be too significant, overridden as they were by a shared working-class culture of informality and hospitality.

Any 'culture shock' I did feel was in fact experienced more in relation to Crossroads than to the Asian community - finding alien the community work culture of frequent meetings, detailed discussions of every aspect of work, and a self-conscious identification with local people (rather than an unspoken sense of belonging).

A final general issue is the extent to which the researcher becomes involved with those she is interviewing. The classic, textbook formula is that involvement should be avoided at all costs, leading as it does to 'bias' and a lack of 'objectivity'. Instead, the researcher is supposed to establish a degree of 'rapport', or gaining the interviewees' confidence, but which in fact, Oakley (1981) argues, really means encouraging the interviewee to accept the researcher's goals, the researcher indeed actively constructs the interviewee as a passive supplier of information. Thus, she argues, traditional interviews are a one-way process, involving the objectification of interviewees, and allowing for no personal meanings within the exchange. She argues that a two-way relationship should be encouraged, both parties determining the nature and course of the interview, with, for example, those being interviewed encouraged to also ask questions of the interviewer. While not denying the power structure inherent in the relationship, attempts were made to relate on an equal basis, involving my 'taking risks' in terms of personal involvement, for example, in answering questions about my own life, beliefs, and perceptions.

Very relevant here is the question of 'social distance', or the extent to which the researcher shares social and cultural identities with respondents. Oakley (1981) argues that a woman interviewing other women is automatically 'inside' their culture, and thus the research will be 'grounded' as a result of the researcher's own experiences, and that this will serve to reduce any power imbalance. However, Oakley does not address the situation when both parties are women, but of different ethnic origins, and the implications this has for the interviewer-interviewee relationship.

Working with Asian Women

It is worth looking here at the work of two women researchers who were involved to an unusual degree in the communities they studied, as they themselves were members of these communities.[5] Pettigrew (1981), a white woman who married into a Jat Sikh family, conducted her fieldwork in the Punjab, largely amongst families related to her own. She records her own socialisation into the accepted norms and behaviour expected of a Sikh woman, such as not speaking directly to unrelated men, or not leaving the house unless accompanied by a male relative. She notes that this...'resulted in an undoubted loss of information' (Pettigrew, 1981:73), that her membership of a Jat family impeded her ability to collect data on the Jat community. However, she argues that her position did enable her to achieve a direct and very personal understanding of what it meant to be a woman in that particular culture. While this does make a valuable contribution, the scope of such a study would tend to be descriptive, rather than engaging in analysis or evaluation, still less the development or testing of theory. However, this was largely because, when Pettigrew conducted her fieldwork in the mid-1960's, anthropology was weighted towards description, rather than evaluation.

Similarly, Bhachu's (1985) study of East African Sikhs in Britain is strongly descriptive: she argues that this is justified, given the generalised nature of ethnic minority studies, and the lack of any detailed ethnography within the field. While undoubtedly there is a need for such studies, there is a danger of studying ethnic minority communities in isolation, as if they existed independently of the wider society. While this need not be the main focus of a study, reference should be made to this wider context, firstly so that any research findings can be applied to other communities experiencing a

similar set of circumstances, and secondly, so that recognition is made of external factors impinging on a community which deeply affect its development and adaptation: factors such as racism, unemployment, poverty and immigration laws.

However, while being a member of the community she studies, Bhachu avoids the danger of over-identification, contrasting with Pettigrew's acceptance of the community's norms and values. Bhachu settled in Southall for the duration of the research period, but maintained a formal tenant-landlady relationship, not wanting to accept the status of 'daughter of the house'. This allowed her to avoid too many restrictions on her behaviour, and enabled her to gain access to families other than those connected with the landlady, and thus to conduct interviews with people from most sections of the community.

As an 'outsider' to the Asian community in Govanhill, I was not associated with any particular group, and was careful throughout the research period not to become too closely identified with any one section. The term 'community' is in fact deceptive, suggesting a unity which masks very real divisions, notably between male and female, Muslim and Sikh, and those with urban or rural origins. While contact was greater with some groups than with others - with women more than men, and with Muslims more than Sikhs - care was taken not to let this preclude contact with other groups. Divisions were often personal, but these too were negotiated: for example, I maintained close contact with two women who were mutually hostile.

Negotiating the complexities of social relationships does not imply an equal detachment from all groups and individuals: rather, a balance between the two extremes of 'objectivity' and total identification is desirable, that is, a process of 'detached involvement' (Agar, 1980). This involves a fine balance between

commitment to those being researched, and a sharing of some of their social and cultural characteristics, and a degree of detachment or distance sufficient to allow for the observation, recording and analysis of social interaction. This represents, not a denial that personal involvement does take place, simply a recognition of the need to balance this with the needs of research.

An early example of a study which achieved such a balance is that of Papanek (1964), an American woman who conducted fieldwork in Pakistan.[6] As a 'foreign woman' fieldworker she was able to gain access to men and women of various classes and in various regions. This contrasts with Pettigrew who interviewed mainly powerful male landowners, her association with this group precluding her access to most other groups. Papanek argues that only a woman could have access to the local women, while as a white woman she also had access to the local men. Far from allowing herself to be confined by the rules of the society, she deliberately exploited the loopholes in the system, thus ensuring a significant degree of role flexibility. Central to this was her ability to be simultaneously a member and a non-member of the society, participating in various social and cultural events, yet maintaining an independent, autonomous position.

Twenty years later, and in Britain rather than in Pakistan, this is very close to the role I myself adopted. Maintaining a marginal position I was able to participate in many aspects of local life - visiting the mosque, celebrating eid-ul-fitr, attending women's sewing classes and A.W.A.G. meetings, spending hours in various homes, and visiting the local school.

I was able to interview most sections of the community - social work and housing officials, Muslims and Sikhs, and men and women and those from urban and rural, and middle- and working-class backgrounds.

Such interviews and particicpant observation form the basis of the following chapters: a study of Govanhill as a community, of housing tenure, local service provision, housing classes, and of community action groups in Govanhill.

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1. A male student did later work with some of the Asian women, disproving to some extent the earlier assumption that this would be impossible. However, his work was largely with women active in A.W.A.G., or otherwise connected with the Project, and tended to be those less constrained by the local social value-system. It remains the case that most women had little social contact with men, and some would not interact with unrelated men in any way.

2. References were made here and elsewhere to 'gossip', a derogatory term usually applied to women. Mention is made of it here not to perpetuate the myth of women's gossip, but to point to the real constraints felt by some people living in a small, relatively self-contained community, who experienced the closeness and lack of privacy, valued by some, as a form of social control. Typical comments included:

   'It's impossible to move round here, everyone is watching you, they all know what you're doing all the time' - and

   'Pakistanis in Glasgow are mostly the poorest village people, they are backward. I myself come from the city where people are less narrow-minded'.

3. Although interviews in the advice centre can last up to one or even two hours, the average time spent on each is around ten minutes. (Crossroads surveys, 1984 and 1985).

4. Advice I wasn't qualified to give, so I always referred the person to advice workers in the Centre.

5. See also Golde (1970) for a more general account of women's experiences of fieldwork, and Stanley and Wise (1983) for an overview of feminist research.

6. See also Dahya (1965) for an early example of participant observation amongst Pakistani women in Britain.

CHAPTER TWO

Housing and Community in Govanhill

History of Glasgow

Modern Glasgow has its origins in the period of rapid development and expansion that occurred between 1780-1830, growing from a town of 40,000 inhabitants, to a city of 200,000 people. Population levels reached a peak of around one million during the 1960's, and have now declined to around 700,000. The city was founded largely on trade - in cotton and tobacco - and on industry - coal, steel, railways and shipbuilding. From the time of the economic boom of the 1870's until housebuilding largely stopped during the First World War, high land prices and the pressure of population led to the building of tenements at high densities, and to poor standards. (Adams, 1978). Glaswegians today have inherited the legacy of these tenements.

From the second half of the eighteenth century onwards, the middle classes began to move out from the city centre, away from the noise and pollution of the industries they had created, and into the suburbs. In such moves we have the origins of the much-analysed 'inner-city problem', whereby the working-classes were left behind in the, now decaying, inner areas. Improved transport facilities in the early twentieth century led to the depopulation of the inner-city as more people, from a wider range of social classes, left the city for the suburbs. Later, in the 1950's and early 1960's, large numbers of working-class residents left the inner-city to move to peripheral estates, such as Castlemilk, and the New Towns, such as Coatbridge. (Pacione, 1981).

Housing conditions in Scotland, and particularly in Glasgow, have

long been worse than those prevailing in England. A survey carried out under the Housing (Scotland) Act, 1936 found that 23.5% of Scottish, but only 3.8% of English households were overcrowded, and that the figures for houses with two rooms or less were 44% and 4.6% respectively. Figures had scarcely changed by the 1950's, with 43% of Glasgow's housing having two rooms or less, in comparison with less than 5% of English houses. Into the 1970's and 1980's, Glasgow ranks first in 14 out of 21 measures of housing deprivation, and second in another six. Overcrowding is perhaps the most serious and persistent problem, along with poor health standards, and high levels of unemployment. (Adams, 1978).

Patterns of housing tenure, as well as housing conditions, differ markedly in Scotland. The ratio of council tenants to owner-occupiers is around 60:30, in contrast to 30:60 in the rest of Britain. Adams suggests that this arises, not so much from political or ideological pressures, but from the magnitude of Scotland's housing problems: population density in urban areas, high land prices, and an old and decaying housing stock. Such economic and demographic factors combine with a Scottish cultural tradition which favours renting rather than owning. Adams traces this tradition from eighteenth century rural housing to nineteenth century urban tenements, to twentieth century Council housing.

In addition, there are financial deterrents to owner-occupation, mortgage-holders in Scotland require higher incomes than their counterparts in England and Wales, though, of course, average wages are lower. In particular, the gap between the cost of buying an average house, and renting a council house is wider in Scotland, and this serves to discourage owner-occupation. (Niven, 1979).

Govanhill

Govanhill was built largely during the housing construction boom of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and so consists mainly of Victorian sandstone tenements. The newer tenements of North Govanhill were built by the local authority during the inter-war years. Primarily a residential and shopping area, Govanhill houses around 13,500 people, and remains a popular, central area, less than two miles from the city centre.

Approaching Govanhill from the city centre, first crossing the river Clyde, a stranger would notice the minaret of the new city mosque, close beside the notorious, abandoned 'Hutch "E"' flats, along with the rest of the Gorbals townscape - a series of 'high flats' punctuated by empty space and the remaining public houses, which seem, along with churches, to be protected from demolition. (Jephcott and Robinson, 1971; Coleman, 1985).

Arriving soon in Govanhill, the gap-sites are repeated, legacy of the redevelopment programmes of the 1960's and 1970's, but Govanhill has retained the traditional tenemental built form, and has nowhere adopted the concrete, systems-built housing of the Gorbals. Since 1974 there has been a steady rate of improvement in the area, largely in association with Govanhill Housing Association, and taking the form of internal renovation, external sandblasting and repairs, and a small amount of newbuild.

Bounded to the north by the Glasgow Central railway lines, to the south by the Dixon Road and Dixon Avenue, to the west by the main shopping centre of Victoria Road, and to the east by Aikenhead Road, Govanhill is a fairly distinct, clearly-defined neighbourhood, not only for planners but for local people who have a strong identification with the neighbourhood. Govanhill has many of the

features common to the older areas of Glasgow: Victorian schools and churches, some of which now accommodate social work departments and community centres, tenements accommodating a variety of shops on their ground-floors, old buildings mixed with the new health centre and sheltered housing complex.

Along with such general facilities, there is specific provision for various ethnic and religious groups: Roman Catholic schools, Jewish food shops and a synagogue, and a wide variety of shops and facilities for the Asian population.[1] These include food shops, 'sari' shops, a jewellery shop, a Muslim bank, video shops, and an Asian bookshop and reading room.

This wide range of amenities reflects the settled and well-developed nature of the Asian community in Govanhill. The community became established during the 1950's and 1960's, when many Asian families moved southwards from the Gorbals, during the extensive redevelopment programmes then under way. Such a move followed the Irish and Jewish settlers before them, most of the Jewish population now having continued their move southwards to more affluent, suburban areas, the case of the Irish being different in that many have remained in the Gorbals. It remains to be seen whether the Asian community will follow their Jewish predecessors to the ultimate destination of Newton Mearns, or remain in the older, deprived areas, like the Irish.

While, clearly, the nature and quality of ethnic shops and other facilities are important in the everyday life of the community, and while there is a degree of segregation, Asians in Govanhill do not lead totally separate lives, but participate in the wider structure of social life in Govanhill and in Glasgow. In particular, their experiences of the education, social work, health and other social

services were of central importance, influencing most significant areas of their lives.

Service provision in Govanhill

Although the focus of the research was on housing rather than on the other major services, concern over local service provision was a recurrent theme throughout the research period, and so at least a brief mention should be made of some of the major issues raised. The accounts recorded here are those provided by local people of their own experiences in relation to the various services, not of the service providers themselves. This perspective is adopted, partly because much of the literature concentrates on institutions rather than individuals (McKay, 1977; Simpson, 1981; C.R.E., 1984), and partly because action-research is committed to recording local experiences, particularly those of the least powerful. (Town, 1973; Jones, 1980).

In tems of education, the two major concerns were the availability of nursery school places, and the extent of racism in primary and secondary schools. While Asian mothers thought that the nursery school was excellent, they were worried over the shortage of places, and the long waiting-lists of around 160. (Govanhill Local Plan, 1981). They felt that nursery school attendance would help their children socially, educationally, and in their language development: it was common for children to learn to speak Urdu or Punjabi at home, and English at nursery school.

Within the older age groups, the problem was not lack of provision, but the nature of that provision. There are three primary schools, Annette Street Primary, Holy Cross, Batson Street, and Victoria Primary, Batson Street: Asian children attended all three, though the largest numbers went to Annette Street Primary, as this was situated in the heart of the Asian community, rather than either of

the other two, which are situated in North Govanhill. Some Asian children also attended schools in neighbouring Pollokshields, though this tended to be the case with secondary rather than primary school-age children.

Attitudes of school staff to their Asian pupils, racism among white schoolchildren, and relations with parents all varied amongst these schools. A feeling amongst parents was that the ethos of the school depended largely on the headteacher. Relations with Annette Street Primary were very good, where the headmistress made every effort to implement a multi-cultural curriculum, and to consult with local parents. A major step in this direction was the provision within the school of a 'Parents' Room' which was much appreciated generally, and used on occasion by the Asian Women's Action Group. In contrast, the headmaster of Victoria Primary was uninterested in taking any action to discourage incidents of racial harassment occurring within the school. In a Pollokshields primary school, parents complained of 'cultural racism', one example being a schoolteacher's complaint that she couldn't cope with one Asian boy in her class not only because he didn't always speak English, but because he - 'even thought in Pakistani'.

Racism, whether indirect, as manifested in indifference to the problems suffered by Asian children or direct, as in the hostility felt towards Asian languages and customs, is important in several respects. First, it often leads to low self-esteem amongst black pupils; second, it means that teachers tend to have low expectations of black pupils; and third, it encourages racism amongst white pupils. (Runnymede Trust and Radical Statistics Race Group, 1980).

An important point to note is the connection between this racism in the schools, and other experiences within the community. For many

families racial harassment took place in all areas of their daily lives: at home, in school, and in the streets. Schoolchildren are part of the community, and racism learned at school is also expressed outside the schoolgates, thus shaping the future of community relations.

While Asians were concerned about the inadequacies of many services, feelings tended to run highest with regard to the Social Work Department. It could be argued that this is because they had most frequent recourse to this service, especially in the case of women, but health services, for example, were equally, if not more, heavily used. In fact, in comparison to the white population, Asians tended to underuse the social work services. Perhaps then it is in the nature of the service itself, social workers dealing with such personal and sensitive issues as debt, childcare, and violence in the family. Social workers tend not to be popular with client groups, white or black: their intervention, while often seen as being necessary, is nevertheless resented. (Cheetham, 1981).

In addition, Asian people felt that the service was not at all geared to their specific needs. Their major complaints were that the Department was inaccessible, both in its location in an old school building, which was not clearly marked as being the social work department, and in its appointment system which meant that even people with urgent problems had to wait up to a week for an interview. This was compounded by the lack of effort to overcome language barriers, for example, by printing publicity in Asian languages, or having interpreters available when necessary at interviews. Further, there was a common feeling that social workers were, at least indirectly, racist in their lack of understanding of Asian culture and lifestyles, and their insensitivity to differing family practices and values.

The Social Work Department was aware that their services were being underused by the Asian population, and that they themselves had little understanding of their needs. They did take measures to change this situation, including the organisation of a consultative Area Liaison Committee, with representatives from the Asian community, and most of the local services, as well as the employment of several black social workers, as part of a new Strathclyde Regional Council initiative on ethnic minorities. The response of the Asian Women's Action Group to the Area Liaison Committee was lukewarm, taking the view that it was well-intentioned, but ineffectual. They were more positive towards the employment initiative, seeing in it an opportunity for black people to be paid to do much-needed work within their own communities.

Within the social security system, as within social work, the main practical problems included the inaccessibility of the offices, the unavailability of any written or verbal information in Asian languages, and the lack of Asian workers. This inaccessibility, combined with a widespread fear and misunderstanding of the system, resulted in a significant underclaiming of benefits. A Crossroads Benefits Take-Up Campaign revealed large amounts of benefits remaining unclaimed amongst a small sample of local households. The work of Crossroads in publicising entitlements to benefits helps offset the views commonly expressed, both locally and nationally, that black people receive more than their fair share of welfare benefits, to the detriment of white claimants - views which led one local woman not to claim benefits as she felt that - 'they are only for white people'.

While it is true that it is mainly Asian men who deal directly with the social security system, increasing numbers of Asian women are taking sole or major responsibility for household finances. There is

a small, but growing, number of Asian single mothers, and a larger group whose husbands are on extended visits to Pakistan. The low take-up of benefits has implications for the quality of housing conditions. For example, very few householders were aware that owner-occupiers could claim a small weekly allowance for repairs to their properties. Also underused was the provision, within the single-payments system, for household items, furniture, and decoration. Claims for these could significantly improve conditions within the home, and it was one of Crossroads' priorities to encourage full use of this provision. While it is true that the level of benefits is low enough to make independent survival for women difficult, it is nevertheless true that, for those women who compare their circumstances with those prevailing in Pakistan, life lived separately from men is at least feasible. However, other women may regard this possibility with some bitterness:

> 'In Pakistan men rarely divorce their wives, or leave their families...the extended family will always exert pressure to make people stay together. Here, men abuse their freedom, they don't take responsibility for their families...they always know that they can at least rely on social security.'

Similarly, connections can be made between housing and health. Asians tended to make full use of the health service, but nevertheless experienced high levels of illness and disease. The connections between poor housing conditions and ill-health have been documented, and thus it would be reasonable to expect Asians, who experience poorer housing conditions, to suffer correspondingly high levels of illness. (Harrison, 1983). During interviews on housing topics, many people spontaneously referred to their ill-health, linking conditions such as arthritis, asthma, and bronchitis to damp, overcrowded housing, and a generally poor environment. Depression was also fairly common, particularly amongst women, and can be attributed largely to

isolation within the home, racism, and a general feeling of powerlessness.

The elderly are another group who experience isolation within the home, but this is one area where there is virtually no provision for Asians in Govanhill, and is clearly an area of unmet need. A major reason for these needs being overlooked is that of definitions. Elderly for the white population means being over the ages of sixty or sixty-five, while for Asians it is more likely to mean anyone aged fifty or over. The difference lies in the fact that most Asians of that age were born in the Indian sub-continent, where life-expectancy is around 45-50 years: in Britain, even with changes in diet and lifestyle, the Asian older generation are unlikely to live as long as their white peers. Thus, patterns of need are different, but service provision has so far not adapted accordingly.

On the contrary, existing services cater for few, if any, Asian elderly people. Staff at the Dixon Halls day care centre can remember only one Asian person attending the centre during its twelve years of operation. No Asians in contact with the Project had applied for one of the new sheltered houses, and many did not even know of their existence. Thus, the small but inevitably increasing numbers of Asian elderly are likely to continue to be cared for within the family, the common assumption that 'Asians look after their own' dovetailing neatly with the renewed emphasis on 'community care'.

Thus, responsibility is devolved from the housing and welfare services to individual families, where, inevitably, the burden of care falls most heavily on women. (Finch and Groves, 1985).

Gryffe Women's Aid is located twenty miles outside of Glasgow, but is included here as it tends to be used by Asian women in Glasgow, rather than Glasgow Women's Aid's refuge which is located in the city.

An Asian woman going to a predominantly white refuge tends to find herself isolated, unable to communicate in her own language, her particular history and values may not be understood, and she may face direct hostility and racism. Asian women's refuges such as Gryffe aim to provide for all these needs, and to provide an environment where women can restructure their lives on their own terms.

Gryffe did go a long way towards meeting these needs, but there remained some differences between workers and users of the service, which meant that women from Govanhill were not entirely happy about using the refuge. From the experiences of one woman, Sheraz Begum[2], who stayed in the refuge, and of the support group who visited her there, several complaints crystallized. It was felt that workers did not allow women to take control of their situation, for example, in denying women friends free access to visit. Worries over security may make this understandable, but those concerned pointed out that Sheraz was extremely isolated, staying twenty miles from Glasgow in a small rural area, speaking little English, and needing a great deal of support in dealing with solicitors, the D.H.S.S., and the housing department. In the end, Sheraz travelled the twenty miles by bus each day, with four children, simply to gain the help and support of women in Govanhill.

Furthermore, according to Sheraz, the workers made judgements as to her choices, in particular, suggesting that she should return to her husband. She felt that she did not really get the support she needed in her decision not to return to the marital home, but to establish a new life for herself and her children. This she eventually did achieve, but thanks more to the Asian women's group than to the refuge, although the refuge did of course provide the necessary temporary accommodation when she needed it most.

According to the Asian Women's Action Group, Gryffe did meet a very real need in providing refuge accommodation run by and for Asian women, but that conflicts did occur, arising largely from class differences. Workers were all middle-class women, while those using the refuge tended to be working class. Thus, there was a lack of understanding of the material conditions of these women's lives, of the very real poverty and deprivation they faced daily. Workers tended to uphold traditional Asian norms, especially that women should return to the marital home, but conversely, they subscribed more to a Western individualist tradition, tending not to share the collectivist lifestyles common amongst the Govanhill women.

Given their more communal orientation, community centres are likely to be of great importance to Asian people. Their use of Crossroads was extensive, and is described later in the chapter, and their use of other community facilities, particularly the community centre, is of general interest here. The community centre was well-used by both white and Asian groups, in fact all the groups competed for time, space and resources. While the situation eased towards the end of the research period, on completion of the expansion and improvement of the community centre, use of the centre highlights the potential for competition on the basis of ethnicity. Asian women and children, for example, were often subjected to racist abuse, such incidents reflecting white resentment of Asians using 'their' facilities.

Such conflicts emerged more clearly during a public discussion held by the Govanhill Residents Association on the possibility of a new community centre. Naturally, most groups were interested in securing facilities for themselves, and each had ideas as to how a new centre should be run, but there seemed to be a clear split between

Asian and white groups. The Asian Women's Group envisaged a multi-racial centre, with both Asians and whites amongst staff and users, organising together a range of social, educational and political activities. White activists, while conceiving of much the same type of centre in terms of activities, did not envisage any real Asian involvement, they defined everything in terms of their own ethnic group. They did not make a deliberate decision to exclude Asians, quite simply they did not enter into their calculations. Clearly, these attitudes will have important implications for the future community development of Govanhill, whether or not a new community centre is ever built.

Case-studies

Having sketched the nature of the Asian community in Govanhill, and their experience of service provision, two case-studies may help to illustrate how it actually feels to live within the community. The case studies are not intended to be representative, but are a record of two households, chosen to highlight some of the issues central to this chapter, in particular, housing conditions, the relationship between housing and social relations, the work of Crossroads, and relationships within, and between, communities.

Amarjit Kaur[3] lived with her husband, Mohindar Singh, and their two small children, in a ground-floor, two-room tenement, in the centre of the Asian community. Conditions in the tenement were very poor, there being no bath or shower, and a shared outside toilet. Dampness was a serious problem with fungus growing on the walls; single-bar electric fires provided the only source of heating, and the electric writing was in a dangerous state of repair.

The daily problems of coping with such conditions were exacerbated by anxiety over insecurity of tenure. The flat was leased on a yearly

basis, and Mrs Kaur was afraid that when the lease expired they would become homeless. They rented the flat from an Asian landlord living nearby, but as they were not related to him, there existed no obligations between them which may have helped to prolong their stay.

In addition to insecurity of tenure, the household was vulnerable in several other respects. The parents were very young - still in their teens - and appeared to have little knowledge of the housing system, and in fact seemed afraid of seeking any help. As this fear extended to myself as an interviewer (though this was mitigated by he presence of an Asian neighbour who translated the conversation) it was difficult to determine the causes of this fear. However, it seems likely that being a non-English speaker, with little knowledge of British institutions, (Mrs Kaur having recently left the Indian Punjab to settle in Scotland), combined with experiences of racial hostility, would create a general sense of unease, and a lack of confidence in dealing with the housing system. Further, this household had had no contact with Crossroads, and thus had not had the benefit of their advice and advocacy services.

Clearly dissatisfied with their current housing conditions, indeed, desperate for some improvement, and in any case facing potential homelessness, the Singh/Kaur household had considered alternative housing options. They knew that they were in no position to afford owner-occupation, they didn't want to continue as private tenants, and hadn't heard of housing associations, so the only viable option was council housing. They had applied for council housing eighteen months prior to the interview, but as yet had received no offers. They had been awarded 80 points on the basis of lacking amenities, but this was far below the total required for council houses in Govanhill, which varied between 200-500 points, and for

which there were long waiting-lists, even for those with high points totals. The household could fairly quickly have been offered a house in a neighbouring area such as Oatlands, in the Gorbals (50-200 points) or in the peripheral estate of Castlemilk (75-250 points), but like most Asian households they had applied to be rehoused in Govanhill, deterred largely by the serious levels of racial harassment in areas such as Oatlands and Castlemilk, and their lack of community support.

In Govanhill, the household had not only the general support of the Asian community, but also that of Mr Singh's extended family, although Mrs Kaur's family network was in the Punjab. They had in fact recently moved out from Mr Singh's family home, largely because of the overcrowded conditions, where they had lived since their marriage.

Their position was different to that of the majority in that, while they clearly identified with, and were seen as part of, the Asian community, there was a significant social distance between themselves as Sikhs, and their largely Muslim neighbours. There was no evidence of hostility or conflict, simply a sense of 'otherness', an awareness of social, cultural, political and nationality differences. This distance can perhaps be best expressed by the Muslim woman who translated during the interview, who said beforehand that, 'they are Sikhs, you know, I don't see them much, they are different from us'.[4]

The differences between Sikhs and Muslims appeared to be of greater significance than differences amongst Muslims, such as those caused by generation, urban or rural origins, or country of birth. However, while such differences are clearly important, their shared identity as 'Asians', their common disadvantaged position in society,

their attempts to improve their situation, and experiences of racism all serve, in some measure, to overcome these divisions, and provide a sense of unity.

The Sharif household, the parents in their late 20's, with three children under the age of ten, lived in owner-occuped property which, at the time of interview, was undergoing extensive improvement, including fitting a new bathroom, converting one room to a children's bedroom, the replastering of inside walls, as well as external sandblasting and improvements to the common stair, the last two undertaken with a 90% improvement grant. Clearly, with the investment of time and money in these improvements, the family were reasonably happy with the house, and were committed to staying there for some time. They shared a clear preference for owner-occupation, and were not interested in either private or public renting as an alternative.

An important factor here is that Mr Sharif was in secure paid employment, unlike many other households interviewed, and this allowed them both to view owner-occupation as a positive choice, and to invest money in improving their house. As with the majority of Asian households, and around half of all white households, the house was solely in the husband's name. However, they had not followed the more usual pattern of living first with the husband's parents until they could afford accommodation of their own, instead they had lived previously with Mrs Sharif's sister in Pollokshields. It is interesting here to note the fairly extensive kinship links between Pollokshields and Govanhill.

The household was now well-settled in Govanhill, Mrs Sharif being a member of the Asian Women's Action Group, and maintaining close contact with Crossroads. She reported no problems with neighbours, white or Asian, and was very happy with the neighbourhood in general.

However, later observation revealed that there were in fact some conflicts with her Asian neighbours, arising from the fact that the Sharif's 'respectability' and relative affluence contrasted with the disadvantage of their neighbours, and that these differences led to conflicting attitudes and patterns of behaviour.

In particular, the interaction between Mrs Sharif and Mrs Begum highlights the connection between attitudes and socio-economic position. One incident passed into local folklore; Mrs Sharif's advice to Mrs Begum not to claim 'extra' payments from the D.H.S.S. as this might lead them to stop payments already being made to her. This displays a curious combination of the fear of the 'system' displayed by the powerless, the reluctance to ask for anything common to those who feel their position in society to be insecure, and the contempt felt by those in households with paid employment for the 'scroungers on the dole'.

While the situation of both households was similar - both owner-occupiers, and both carrying out major improvements to their homes - it is interesting to note that their reasons for being in this position differed, and their attitudes towards housing varied. The Sharif household had a clear preference for owner-occupation, clearly seeing this as an expression of social status. Mrs Begum, in contrast, seemed to be making the best of her situation by having housing improvements carried out, but would really have preferred council housing. They were deterred from applying, however, by the high levels of racial harassment.

Taken together, the case-studies of the Singh/Kaur, and the Sharif households provide a contrast between the different standards of living that can exist within the same street. This local detail complements the general observations that are made about housing and

community. Particularly interesting is the way in which variations in housing conditions - extreme deprivation on the one hand, and relative comfort on the other - may be reflected in different attitudes. Both households displayed anxiety over their position in society, Mr Singh and Mrs Kaur in the form of a quiet desperation, a feeling of helplessness in the face of the overwhelming odds of poverty, poor housing and racism, while the Sharifs displayed the anxiety of those who have a little more than their neighbours, and were concerned not to lose this advantage. Classically, any hostility was displayed, not towards the really powerful in society, but towards those closest in social and economic position, those one or two rungs up or down the 'ladder'. Underlying attempts at social control is the fact of competition over scarce resources such as housing and employment.

Housing conditions and tenure patterns

The two thousand or so Asians in Govanhill live mainly in the older housing, built at the peak of housing expansion in late-nineteenth century Glasgow. They have inherited many of the housing conditions of that time, frequently suffering dampness, lacking one or more of the basic amenities, while overcrowding remains perhaps the most serious problem, often at similar levels to those experienced by the white working-class of a century ago. (Adams, 1978).

This is not to say there is no continued presence of white working-class people in this type of housing, suffering the same conditions, simply that while the white population is spread between the better and worse housing, with many living in decent housing association, council, or owner-occupied accommodation, the vast majority of Asians remain in the worst housing. The reasons for this are varied, ranging from direct discrimination in the form of racist

landlords or finance agencies, to the indirect discrimination of the council's often incomprehensible and inaccessible allocations system, to simple poverty which denies access to decent owner-occupied properties. (Runnymede Trust and Radical Statistics Race Group, 1980; Commission for Racial Equality, 1984(b)).

Housing conditions are closely connected to tenure patterns, in that private rented properties are overwhelmingly of a poor standard, while council properties represent for many Glaswegians the only hope of securing decent accommodation, though this is by no means to suggest that all, or even most, council houses are of a good standard, nevertheless, rents are at a fairly low level, in comparison to the private rented sector, and there is a statutory duty to provide basic amenities, to repair and maintain the properties, and not to allow overcrowding to occur. It is important, therefore, before going on to consider the social aspects of housing, to outline the nature of Asian housing conditions and tenure patterns in Govanhill.[5]

One crude, though important, measure of housing quality is whether a property has all the basic amenities, that is, a bath or shower, an inside toilet, and running hot water: a house lacking one or more of these is said to be below the tolerable standard. (Murie, 1983). Glasgow has, on average, 4% of dwellings lacking one or more of the basic amenities, a figure about equivalent to the national average. (1981 census). Percentages in Govanhill are higher than the city average, particularly within the older streets, those where the Asian population is concentrated. Figures within three enumeration districts (E.D.'s) covering Daisy Street and Garturk Street (streets adjoining Crossroads, and within which many of those interviewed, and A.W.A. Group members lived) range from 10% to 40% of households lacking the basic amenities. (Small Area Statistics, 1981 Census).

This is consistent with the fact that Asians nationally are twice as likely as whites to lack the basic amenities, 12% and 6% respectively. (National Dwelling and Housing Survey: H.M.S.O., 1979, Table 8. Brown, 1984).

In terms of tenure, Govanhill, like many other inner-city areas, varies from the rest of the city, with lower levels of council renting, and correspondingly higher levels of owner-occupation and private renting.

Table 1: Tenure patterns in Govanhill and Glasgow

	Glasgow[1]	Govanhill[2]
Owner-occupation	27%	40%
Council-rented	62	17
Private rented Housing Association	11	43

(Souces: [1]1981 Census, [2]Govanhill Local Plan, 1981)

At a national level, Asians generally, and Pakistanis in particular, are far more likely than whites to be owner-occupiers, and less likely to be council tenants.

Table 2: Tenure patterns according to ethnic origin

	White	Asian	Pakistan
Owner-occupation	59%	72%	80%
Council-rented	30	19	13
Private-rented	9	6	5
Housing association	2	2	1

(Source: Third P.S.I. Survey. Colin Brown, 1984)

Taking these two trends together, we would expect that Asians in Govanhill would have even higher levels of owner-occupation, and even lower levels of public renting than either Asians nationally, or other Govanhill residents. In fact, this did seem to be the case with the

vast majority of Asians in Govanhill being owner-occupiers, a significant minority being private tenants, and only around 1% being public sector tenants, either local authority or housing associations.[6]

Housing and social relations

While housing conditions and tenure patterns can be measured quantitatively, and the differences between Asian and white households noted, concern here is as much with the social and cultural, as with the physical aspects of housing. Dahya (1974) argues that the housing conditions of Asians in Britain should be placed in the context of conditions common in Pakistani villages. The majority of the population there have no bathroom, inside toilet, running hot water or electricity, while the high density of population is not seen as 'overcrowding', but considered to be normal. He argues that Asians in Britain have not been forced by racial discrimination into decaying inner-city areas but, rather, chose to live there because of cheap, easily available housing, good transport, and access to Asian community facilities.

The debate over whether Asian housing conditions and tenure patterns are the result of choice or constraint is still alive, and will be considered in detail in Chapter Four. However, 'explaining away' current housing conditions by reference to the situation in Pakistan is highly questionable, on at least three counts. Firstly, while experiences in Pakistan may continue to be important, particularly for first-generation migrants, the vast majority have settled permanently in Britain, and thus tend to compare their housing situation with other households in Britain, rather than those in Pakistan. The concept of relative deprivation helps explain how a household experiencing similar housing conditions in Britain and

Pakistan may feel disadvantaged in the former but not the latter. (Townsend, 1983). In addition, a lack of household amenities may be felt more keenly in the cold, damp British climate. (Saifullah Khan, 1979). The evidence from Govanhill was that even those who had experienced equally poor, or worse, conditions in Pakistan, did complain about dampness, lack of bathroom facilities, and overcrowding.

Secondly, second and third generations growing up within British society will inevitably have higher expectations than their parents in terms of standards of housing. Thirdly, even if Asian households are 'used to' poorer conditions, there is no evidence that their housing situation is therefore a result of individual choice rather than racial discrimination.

In a similar way, Dahya argues that Pakistani social and cultural values can help explain Asian patterns of tenure in Britain: for Pakistani villagers, land represents status, membership of the village kinship network, and a security greater than that provided by money. He goes on to assert that -

> ...'their traditional bias for land ownership is the basis of their predilection for real estate in Britain'. (Dahya, 1974:82)

Again, this translation of Pakistani values to the British context is dubious: Asian communities do not exist within a vacuum in British cities, but interact with the wider society, adopting at least some new values, norms and behaviours. Furthermore, values may be very different amongst the second generation who have little or no direct experience of Pakistan: in contrast to their parents' background in Pakistan where there is little tradition of municipal housing, the younger generation are familiar with council housing provision in Britain, and therefore more likely to consider it as an option.

Dahya explains tenure patterns, in particular the high levels of low-income owner-occupation, not with reference to the policies and practices of building societies, banks, and local authorities, but in cultural terms. He argues that Asians don't want to rent housing as this is low-status, and entails dependence on the landlord. Data gained from interviews in Govanhill suggests that, while the majority were in low-income owner-occupied property, this was due to circumstances, especially the wider availability of such properties, rather than any clear tenure preference. Indeed, a significant number expressed a clear preference for public rented housing.[7]

The debate over the nature of Asian tenure patterns obscures the fact that owner-occupation is in fact the preferred tenure for the majority of the population, (currently around 60% and increasing). Cultural values have long been relevant to housing tenure, and owner-occupation, in particular, has been actively promoted by a succession of governments, both Conservative and Labour. The consensus has been, and is, that owner-occupation is of benefit to individuals, promotes the nuclear family, and acts as a stabilising force within society. Owner-occupation is meant to provide both personal and financial security, freedom of choice, status, and stability. (Merrett, 1982). The irony is that, firstly, Asians are seen as being culturally distinctive in their supposed preference for owner-occupation, and that, secondly, their concentration in this tenure is often not the result of choice and, being overwhelmingly within the lower-income section of the market, provides them with little security, stability or status.[8]

Community

Social attitudes and cultural values are equally important in a consideration of the environment; just as houses are more than bricks

and mortar but represent ideals, values and aspirations, so the environment is more than a collection of shops, houses, factories and other buildings. People help to shape - and are in turn influenced by - their environment. Popular myths exist about Asian use of, and attitudes towards, the environment. Asians are thought to be untidy, dirty, noisy, overcrowded, to have lower standards of living, and are held generally responsible for low house prices in the inner-cities, and environmental decline. (Barr, 1978).

Barr argues that inter-ethnic relations can considerably affect the potential for environmental improvement, that, for example in an Oldham C.D.P. area, Asians were blamed for the poor environment, and that this reduced the willingness of white residents, and outsiders, to invest time or money in improving the environment. The white community were very negative towards the Asian residents and this led to a process of segregation, especially as the Asians had a much stronger attachment to the area than did the whites, most of whom, who were able, moved away from the area. While Asians expressed some dissatisfaction with the environment, they were on the whole satisfied, especially in terms of Asian shops and facilities.

Similar processes were evident in Govanhill: hostility towards Asians by whites, a degree of segregation, and a strongly-expressed need to have available Asian community facilities. Significant differences were that whites were equally attached to Govanhill, there being generally a strong sense of community identity, and there were, in fact, extensive improvement programmes being carried out in the neighbourhood, largely by the Govanhill Housing Association.

The central points made by Barr, however, hold true, and require further exploration: the polarisation between the two communities, different attitudes and aspirations towards housing and the community,

and separate forms of social, cultural and community organisation. These features of life in Govanhill raise questions of culture, of community, and of identity.

In referring to 'community' it is worth remembering that communities need not correspond to geographical locations: people sharing the same neighbourhood may not necessarily share values and norms, a social and cultural life, or indeed any sense of living in a shared community. (Cohen, 1986). It would be more accurate to speak of two parallel communities existing in Govanhill, each with its separate structures, and a strong but separate identification with the neighbourhood, and each coming into little meaningful contact with the other. Certain aspects of the internal structure of the Asian community will be examined here, along with an exploration of the ways in which it articulates with the white community. Three themes in particular will be explored, covering aspects of gender, generation and race: the male and female experience of community, 'culture conflict' between the generations, and the maintenance of ethnic boundaries. All three will be considered in relation to the key concepts of culture, community, and identity.

Purdah is central to lives of Asian women, and to the functioning of the Asian community.[9] It represents, not a static expression of traditional culture, but a vehicle for the expression of community values, it operates as an indicator of social and religious status, and as a means of mediating relations both within the Asian community, and between it and the wider society. (Saifullah Khan, 1976). By its very nature - a more or less strict segregation of the sexes - purdah ensures that culture is both experienced and maintained differently by women and men. Both have clear identities as Asians (and as Pakistani Muslims or Indian Sikhs) but men also participate to a far greater

extent than women in white society, mostly wearing Western dress, being more likely to speak English fluently, and having a deeper knowledge of white-dominated institutions. Asian women, in common with most women, are the principal transmitters of culture, in terms of dress, preparation of food, the maintenance of religion within the home, and, perhaps most importantly, their centrality to the main carrier of culture - the family unit.

However, this is not to suggest that women are passive recipients of social pressures. All Asian women in Govanhill did conform, to a varying extent, to the rules of purdah, but some attempted to define their own roles, exploiting any loopholes or ambiguities in the system. For example, freedom to leave the house alone was restricted, but this was negotiated in some cases by using attendance at sewing classes as a respectable 'front' for participation in Asian Women's Action group activities, thus subverting the traditional female role by outwardly conforming to it.

While men and women may experience culture differently, together their experiences and identifications constitute a distinct Asian community. A consideration of Asian communities in Britain should be placed in the context of a recent history of rural-urban migration, and the recreation, in many cases, of Pakistani village institutions within British cities. (Saifullah Khan, 1976). However, there is never a simple replication of Pakistani village life: the community exists in quite a different context, and interacts, to a greater or lesser extent, with the wider society. Change does occur, adaptations are of necessity made to British urban life, some contact is made with British culture, institutions, life-styles and - often hostile - white neighbours. A sense of a distinct community may equally result from the external pressures of rejection by white society, racism, and

assertion of white culture, as from the internal forces of ethnic identity and maintenance of Asian culture.

Change and adaptation can be observed, particularly amongst the second generation. The assumption in much of the literature has been that second generation Asians will inevitably experience 'culture conflict' as a result of their exposure to both Western and Asian cultures, and must choose between them. Rex and Moore (1967), for example, argue that an Asian child -

> 'may well have presented to him three sets of role models - his family, his school, his peers, within which a workable synthesis is impossible.'
>
> (Rex and Moore, 1967:231)

They go on to note second-generation 'immigrant delinquency', in the United States, presumably resulting from these conflicting influences.

The evidence from Govanhill is that young people can and do synthesise a variety of influences, have succeeded in creating a Scottish Asian identity, and are able to operate well within both cultures. (See Ballard, 1979). Half-joking references were in fact made to the non-Scottish researchers as being the 'immigrants', humour masking the importance that was in fact attached to Scottish culture in general, and a Glaswegian identity in particular. The ability to operate easily in both worlds was highlighted by their fluent bilingualism, rapid switches frequently being made between English and Urdu or Punjabi, in order to relate effectively to both the white and Asian people present.

The maintenance of a dual identity is likely to be permanent, rather than a transition stage, given the good reasons that exist to share in both cultures. Being born and educated in Britain, young Asians share in British culture and society, but this does not lead to an automatic decline in their Asian identity, as there are both

internal and external pressures which ensure its maintenance. Many mentioned positive aspects of their culture - particularly family closeness and support, and the richness and variety of Asian cultural forms - and see themselves very much as part of their community. At the same time, they come into daily contact with attitudes which define them as 'immigrants', and they know that they will never be fully accepted by white British society. Ballard (1979) notes that racism can lead to reactive ethnicity, the affirmation by young Asians of their ethnic identity, at least partly in reaction to racist attitudes.

This combination of internal and external forces leads not only to the creation of young people's identities, but to the creation and maintenance of the community as a whole. The positive aspects of Asian culture combine with the often hidden, but pervasive influence of racism to result in a strong, clearly-defined, and largely separate, community. Thus, there are powerful forces on both sides which serve to maintain ethnic boundaries. While there are some positive aspects, for example, the diversity of cultural forms, such a separation has many negative consequences: mutual suspicion, competition for scarce resources, racial harassment, and social and cultural, as well as a level of physical, segregation.

Crossroads

The work of Crossroads is central here as it was committed to the whole of the local community, not to one or other of the two parallel communities. Given its long association with Govanhill, and the Gorbals, Crossroads is an integral part of what community means in a local sense, being very much a part of neighbourhood life, being managed by local people, and initiating and facilitating various forms of community action. (Henderson and Thomas, 1981; Bryant and Bryant,

1982). Most importantly, Crossroads was the major meeting place for white and Asian groups and individuals. Certainly, contact was made within other places, such as schools, or the health centre, but any interaction was usually minimal. Even within Crossroads, mixed groups were rare, with perhaps only one or two Asian members within the housing action groups or on the management committee. Problems of communication, but more importantly, different traditions and approaches, deterred joint organisation.

The Action-Research Project, then, broke new ground in having equal Asian and white involvement, although this took about a year to establish. This involvement crossed various boundaries, and began the creation of alternative forms of community. In creating a common identity, Asian women were taking their traditional separation and transforming it into a sense of community, based on solidarity. In doing so they crossed class and religious barriers separating working-class from middle-class, and Muslim from Sikh. Further, they crossed race, and sometimes gender, divisions in their close contact with researchers and community workers: while these factors continued to be of importance, they could be transcended sufficiently to create some sense of unity.

The nature of Crossroads as an agency was important to this interaction, the fact that it was situated in a shopfront on one of the main shopping streets, and was easily accessible to anyone passing by - both physically, in its informal layout, and socially, in the friendly attitudes of both staff and users of the centre. The centre was always busy with workers giving information and advice, social work students working on various projects, community groups discussing and organising their activities, and myself, observing and participating in as much of this as possible. While such observation

can provide much information on the interaction between Crossroads and the local community, two surveys, conducted by myself and social work students, can give a more detailed account.

The surveys were conducted in the winters of 1984 and 1985, and recorded the number of callers, their ethnic origin, the type of enquiries made, and the amount of time spent with each person. The results of the surveys are presented below and important features discussed: features which show no change over time, or which show no significant differences between Asians and whites, or women and men, need not be analysed. This includes the fact that there was no significant difference in the types of enquiries made by Asians and whites, and that the overall percentage of enquiries in each category changed very little over the period of one year.

Table 3: Survey of the use of Crossroads Advice Service, 1984-85

Types of Enquiry	1984		1985
non-means-tested benefits	10%		11%
means-tested benefits	11	)	20
single payments	9	)	
housing benefit	9		9
landlord-tenant disputes	2		1
public housing repairs	7		6
private housing repairs	9		5
housing allocations	5		9
miscellaneous	18	)	32
leaflets	13	)	
group members	7		7
base:	371		193

During the first survey, conducted over two weeks, an average of 185 people were seen each week, while during the one week of the

second survey 193 people were seen. However, the important difference is that interviewing took place during 35 hours per week in 1984, compared with only 15 hours per week in 1985. The average time spent on each interview was reduced from 15 to 12 minutes, but the Centre was still far busier at the end of 1985 than it had been a year earlier. The pressure of this work had important implications in that workers felt that advice work was taking time and energy away from community work activities, and there appeared to be an increasing level of resentment of Asians by the white population, due to their perception that they were receiving more than their fair share of scarce resources. This is a common complaint amongst white people, particularly in inner-city areas, but scarcely justified as Asians used the centre roughly in proportion to their numbers in the community. (Barr, 1978).

The use by Asians of the Centre increased from around 20% to 25% of all callers, or an increase in numbes from an average of 37 to 48 individuals per week. This increase can be attributed to recommendation of the Centre being spread by word-of-mouth amongst the Asian community, amongst which it gained a reputation for giving good advice and being easily approachable. As well as an increase in numbers, workers commented that, while all cases were increasing in complexity, Asian clients in particular often required an extended, casework approach. That is, rather than one-off enquiries, many Asian individuals and families used the centre repeatedly for a range of welfare, social, housing and family problems. This was largely due to the greater disadvantage Asians face in terms of access to housing, the social security system and social services. It is also partly due to their lesser acquaintance with public and social institutions, ranging from not knowing where to find information on the housing

allocations system (most white Glaswegians at least know where the Housing Department offices are, even if they don't find them particularly helpful), to being unable to ring to enquire about a gas bill, because of lack of fluency in the English language.

It is also worth noting a gender difference amongst users of the Centre, women generally outnumbering men by 6:4, and Asian women outnumbering Asian men by 6:5. Generally, women tend to be in the majority in community activities, are more likely to be at home during the day, and are in the majority amongst pensioners, who form a large part of the population of Govanhill: all of this accounts for women's greater use of the centre.

However, the fact that Asian women also use the Centre more than Asian men is interesting. There are many structural barriers to their seeking outside help: lack of fluency in English, distrust of official agencies, racism, lack of accessibility of services, and isolation within the home. When these external constraints are removed - as in the case of Crossroads with its accessibility, trustworthiness, and provision of translators - Asian women can and do take steps to improve their situation, thus challenging the myth of the passive Asian woman.

They become involved in a variety of housing and community issues, both on an individual and a collective level. Their specific experiences of housing, and involvement in community action will be considered in detail in later chapters. This chapter has aimed to describe the background to these experiences and involvements, in providing a sketch of Asian women's lives in Govanhill, their values and attitudes, and relationships with both the Asian and white communities. The account was selective, focussing on areas of tension and ambiguity, and assessing the potential for change.

1. 'Asian' here, and throughout, is taken to mean those of South Asian origin, rather than the Chinese community in Govanhill.

2. For obvious reasons, this name has been changed. See Chapter Three for a fuller discussion of Sheraz Begum's experiences of housing and domestic violence.

3. All names have been changed.

4. See Jeffrey (1976) who notes that, while there are many similarities between Muslims and Sikhs, particularly those from the Punjab, in terms of language, diet and styles of dress, differences of religion and country-of-origin are emphasised rather than any social and cultural similarities.

5. As there are no official statistics on Asian housing conditions or tenure in Govanhill, two sets of data are used here: general housing conditions and tenure patterns in Govanhill, and national trends for Asian households. Along with fieldwork observations, this provides a fairly clear picture of Asian housing in Govanhill.

6. The figure of 1% comes from a Govanhill Housing Association estimate of six Asian households within their thousand-plus properties, and a Crossroads survey, conducted in the summer of 1984, which identified 12-15 Asian households living in North Govanhill council housing.

7. However, earlier studies have found that Asian households were less likely to consider council housing as an option, (e.g. Barr, 1978). This variation may be due to differences in time, or location, or a combination of the two.

8. Security for low-income owner-occupiers is decreasing in line with the increase in evictions for non-payment of mortgages, such households move frequently in an attempt to improve their housing quality, while little status is attached to the ownership of a decaying inner-city property. See Fenton (1977) on the patterns and costs of owner-occupation in Manchester.

9. See Glossary for explanation of words in Urdu.

CHAPTER THREE

Access to housing: individuals and institutions

Chapter Two dealt with general housing issues, particularly housing conditions, tenure patterns, and the connection between housing and social relations. Chapters Three and Four move on to examine more specific issues, particularly access to housing, and housing inequality. Taken together, the two chapters cover three levels of analysis, moving from the individual and the institutional in Chapter Three, to the structural in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four focusses on the structural factors of race, class and gender, looking particularly at the housing disadvantage experienced by Asian women in all three respects. Analysis then extends to the question of housing class, the extent to which social identity may be based on consumption interests. Questions are raised as to the potential for housing class interests to cut across race, class or gender identities and interests.

Chapter Three concentrates on individual and institutional aspects of housing, looking firstly at case-studies which illustrate the personal experience of housing, in particular, the experience of poor housing conditions, and a powerless position within the housing market. The account of the two housing agencies highlights the institutional barriers faced by minority households in their attempts to gain access to public housing.

These individual and institutional accounts are of course simply two aspects of the same process - access to housing. Taken together, they provide a picture of the position of Asian households within the local housing market.

Case-studies

Nasreen Hassan lived with her two small children, Talat a girl of $2\frac{1}{2}$, and Zahed a boy of $1\frac{1}{2}$ years, in a three-apartment house on the bleak council housing scheme in North Govanhill. In her early twenties, and recently separated from her husband, Zahir, she struggled alone to build a reasonable life for herself, and her two children, as well as the third child she was expecting in six months time. Daily she faced damp housing conditions, racial harassment from her neighbours, and attempts to budget her weekly £40 Supplementary Benefit. Heating came from the sole source of a one-bar electric fire, so the family lived and slept mostly in one room, especially in the winter months. Wiring in the house was over seventy years old, in a very poor condition, and thus posed a danger, especially to the children.

Nasreen, at the time of interview, had lived in North Govanhill for eighteen months. Before moving there, she had had a varied housing history. Born in Pakistan, she lived until the age of six in a large house in a major city, living with her extended family. Then she moved with her parents, brothers and sisters to Glasgow, living with them in owner-occupied property in Govanhill, until her marriage. On marrying, she moved with her husband into private-rented accommodation. This was of very poor quality, so when they heard of friends who were returning to Pakistan, they decided to rent their property from them. However, this turned out to be Govanhill Housing Association property, whose policy of not allowing sub-lets led to the Hassans being evicted. Finding themselves homeless, they were offered a place in the District Council's Homeless Persons Unit. Nasreen explained that to stay in such accommodation was considered to be shameful by her community, so she stayed instead with her mother,

while awaiting rehousing by the council. Council policy on the homeless is that they receive one offer only, and Nasreen pointed out that although she was reluctant to move to North Govanhill, knowing it to have a reputation for racial harassment, she felt that she had no choice but to accept their offer of housing.

Later, she was very unhappy there, partly because of the conditions of the housing, and the environment generally, and partly because of the racial harassment she and her children suffered. She wanted desperately to move house, and had tried in several ways to achieve this. Since moving into the house, she had been on the council transfer list, but she knew that as she had a low points total, she had little hope of moving to a better council property. This was confirmed to me by a housing officer from the District Council who observed that North Govanhill was really 'the end of the line', and that few living there could hope to obtain transfers.

Nasreen had tried a range of other options. She applied to the local authority for a mortgage, as these are designed to provide lending facilities to those who are on low incomes, and unable to borrow through the more usual channels of banks and building societies. She was offered only £6,000 which she didn't accept, as she felt she needed £10-£12,000 to buy a reasonable house.

In terms of private renting she noted that this was very expensive, and that she couldn't afford to spend any more on housing than she does at present: on a fixed income of £40 per week, she spends at least £10 on heating alone.

The last remaining option was the housing associations. She applied to Govanhill Housing Association, but was not accepted on to their waiting-lists. She received a letter explaining that it was not their policy to rehouse council tenants, but she was convinced she had

been refused largely because of her earlier trouble with the Association, i.e. her unwitting occupancy of one of their properties as a sub-tenant, and her then subsequent eviction.[1] Later, she applied to Pollokshields Housing Association, and was accepted on to their waiting-list, though she realised she would have to wait two to three years before she would have any hope of being rehoused by them.

When asked what she thought about living with her extended family, she replied that even if this were possible, she wouldn't want to as she valued her independence, and preferred to live on her own. In any case, it would not be possible as her brother and his wife and children were already living with her mother in overcrowded conditions. Both her mother and her brother had made separate applications for council housing, but faced a long wait, as they wished to remain in Govanhill. She noted that her parents would have applied for council housing when they settled in Glasgow in 1970, if they had known enough about the housing system. She felt that they would have been likely to obtain decent housing then, as this was a period of extensive slum clearance and rehousing programmes in Govanhill.

Having considered all the housing options open to her, it still seemed that Nasreen, an intelligent, articulate woman with a good understanding of the housing system, nevertheless had little hope of improving her housing situation. She and her children remained caught in the 'poverty trap', subjected to racial harassment, and situated at the end of every housing queue.

A woman in her late twenties, Sheraz Begum lived until 1985 in an owner-occupied three-apartment house in the heart of Govanhill's Asian community. She came to this house from Pakistan, nine years earlier, in order to join her husband, Mushtaq Ali, a man now in his late 50's.

Speaking very little English, and therefore unable to deal directly with public institutions and services, Sheraz was very dependent on her husband.

As there were four children, the main problem for the household was overcrowding. Other conditions were fairly typical, especially of the older housing in Govanhill - cold and dampness, inadequate heating facilities, poor wiring, but, unlike many others, there were at least bathroom amenities and running hot water. At the time of interview, May 1985, major improvements were being carried out on the house: rewiring, installation of new heaters, cupboards being fitted, and beds being built into one of the three rooms for the children. They also intended to apply for a 90% improvement grant, to install new windows.

Before deciding to invest money in these improvements, they had considered other alternatives. They had thought of moving house, but in terms of private renting, they felt it was impossible to find a reasonable place without any major defects. They had also thought of renting from the council, but had been deterred from applying, for two reasons. First, they wanted to stay in Govanhill but realised that there were long waiting-lists for the area (that is, the decent council housing, not North Govanhill), and secondly, that, if they lived in council accommodation they felt they were far more likely to face severe levels of racial harassment. At present they had few problems with their neighbours. When asked, they said they knew nothing of the existence of Govanhill Housing Association.

Sheraz had a clear idea of the kind of housing she would like - larger than the present one, and with a garden, rather than the backcourts of the tenements. She was particularly concerned at the lack of playspace for the children, disliking having to keep them

indoors most of the time. However, she realised that it would be impossible to acquire such a house on their low, fixed income, so instead of attempting to move house they decided to spend what money they had on improving their current accommodation.

This, then, was the situation in May 1985. Later that summer, however, it became clear that Sheraz was being repeatedly and severely beaten by Mushtaq. The situation was intolerable, but for a woman with four children, speaking little English, and with little or no money, the prospects of survival on her own were not good. However, with the practical help and advice of Crossroads, and the emotional support of the Asian Women's Group, Sheraz did leave the marital home for the Asian women's refuge in Bridge of Weir.

Once settled into the temporary accommodation of the refuge, Sheraz had to begin thinking about permanent rehousing for herself and her children. The few weeks she stayed there were spent in various consultations with the Housing Department, social workers, and her solicitor, as, apart from possible rehousing by the council she also had to clarify her legal position with regard to rights of residence in the marital home. While in law Sheraz did have some rights in this respect, she decided not to pursue them, deterred mainly by her husband's hostility and aggression.[2] Deciding that her main priority was safety, she reluctantly left Mushtaq in possession of the marital home. Financially, she had to make a claim for Supplementary Benefits, both the usual weekly allowance, and single payments for furnishings for her new accommodation. During, and after, this period she received continued support from Crossroads, and from the Asian Women's Action Group, in the form of advice on her legal, housing, and welfare rights, and translation of discussions with the relevant agencies.

In September 1985, Sheraz Begum was offered temporary accommodation in Toryglen, an area adjoining Govanhill. As the house was in reasonable condition, was near to the Asian community in Govanhill, and was in any case only a temporary measure, she decided to accept the offer. The council policy on those in temporary accommodation is that they should be offered permanent housing very quickly, but it was in fact February 1986 before any further action was taken.

On 12 February, Sheraz was offered a house in the Hillpark/Mansewood area of the city (a district lying a mile or two to the south of Govanhill), with the stipulation that she should accept or refuse the offer within twenty-four hours. Sheraz wanted to be rehoused in either Govanhill or Pollokshields, as she felt she needed to live within an Asian community. Otherwise, speaking little English she would find it vey difficult to shop, or seek help from neighbours in dealing with everyday matters such as electricity bills, and, especially, there would be no-one to help with the children if she was ill, or faced some other crisis.

In discussion with a community worker from Crossroads, officers from the Homeless Persons Unit insisted that there was no possibility of Mrs Begum being offered accommodation in either Govanhill or Pollokshields. They regretted this, as they realised that the proposed new move would make it difficult for Mrs Begum to send her children to the mosque, some 3-4 miles away in the Gorbals. While this remark was supposed to show some sensitivity to the importance of area of residence to Asian families, for Mrs Begum, nearness to the mosque was not one of her priorities: rather, she needed the practical and moral support she was used to receiving within an established Asian community.

On inspection, the house itself proved to be damp, lacking a sink, and badly in need of decoration. The housing officers stated, however, that if these problems could be overcome, then Mrs Begum would have to accept the house, as she would receive only one offer. This was standard council policy on rehousing the homeless. While, clearly, a sink could be installed, and the house decorated, it was difficult to see, as the community worker involved commented, how the problem of dampness could be 'overcome'.

Housing inequality and the housing market

While Chapter Two documented racial disadvantage in housing conditions, this chapter is mainly concerned with disadvantage within housing provision. Taken together, these two forms of disadvantage constitute what I will term 'housing inequality', signifying not only inferior current housing conditions, but also a disadvantaged position within the housing market, that is, households which, for structural reasons of poverty, racism, and sexual inequality, have little chance of ever securing decent accommodation. (Henderson and Karn, 1984; Watson with Austerberry, 1986).

It will be argued in Chapter Four that a theory of housing classes gives an understanding of how and why some households occupy this disadvantaged position within the housing market.

The housing market is an extensive area of study, comprising a range of agencies such as building societies, banks, estate agents, private landlords, local authorities and housing associations. It was decided, after several months of preliminary research, and extensive discussion with local groups and community workers, to concentrate on a study of public rather than private sector housing. This decision was made primarily to keep the project within realistic limits, but

the area decided on was not chosen for arbitrary reasons. Firstly, the Project was, by its very nature, concerned with the process of change, and, as it became increasingly clear that Asians were moving from the private sector which they traditionally occupied, into council housing, it seemed important to record this new trend, and to document especially those households who were in the process of making this transition. A second, and central concern of the Project was to record local people's responses to their living situations, in particular to examine the potential for community action over housing issues. Within the tradition of housing activism in Britain, most struggles are directed towards public rather than private agencies, particularly the local authorities, as with the rent strikes and squatting movements of the late 1960's and early 1970's (Lowe, 1986). Thirdly, unlike private agencies, public housing authorities have a duty, within certain legal and financial limits, to house people, and to a specified standard. Thus, it might be reasonable to suppose that they would be more likely to alter their policies in line with any policy recommendations arising from research findings. (Merrett, 1979).

In terms of definitions, the 'public sector' is here taken to include housing associations as well as the local authorities. Many writers include housing associations within the private sector, or within a grey area of 'other tenures'. (See e.g. Watson with Austerberry, 1986). This is understandable, given the varied and often small-scale nature of the associations, and the fact that they are managed by local groups rather than housing professionals (although many do also have a skilled, paid workforce). However, several factors argue strongly for the inclusion of housing associations within the public sector.

1. Finance for the building, renovation and management of housing association properties comes from central government (i.e. public) funds, via the Housing Corporation.
2. Housing associations are required to accept local authority nominations of 50% of their total allocations.
3. Associations house primarily those in social or housing need (the elderly, disabled, etc.), rather than according to ability to pay, operating on the basis of social service provision rather than maximisation of profit.

Thus, in their funding, their principles, and their allocations policies, housing associations can be seen to be an integral part of public housing policy.

The housing agencies

GOVANHILL HOUSING ASSOCIATION

In Britain there are around three thousand housing associations, with about fifty in the Strathclyde Region, and twenty in the city of Glasgow. (Derby and Smith, 1981; Brailey, 1981). Annual spending on all associations is around £100 million, 80% of which goes on renewal work in the inner-cities, work carried out largely by community-based associations, such as the Govanhill Housing Association. These associations are managed by local residents, and renovate housing within a clearly-defined neighbourhood, usually to be occupied by local people. (Niven, 1979).

Before going on to analyse the policies and practices of Govanhill Housing Association (G.H.A.) it is important to bear in mind the extent of the impact these policies can have on the local community. While nationally housing associations cater for only 2% of all

households, in Glasgow this figure rises to around 6%; however, in Govanhill G.H.A. controls around 20% of all properties, and this figure is rising all the time. By the early 1990's, it is estimated that G.H.A. will have acquired two to two-and-a-half thousand properties, or around half of all properties in Govanhill. Thus it is clear that G.H.A. is already, and will become increasingly, a major landlord in Govanhill, having considerable impact on the housing prospects and quality of life of local residents.

Established in 1974, G.H.A. has grown to be one of the largest associations in Glasgow, employs around twenty-five staff, and carries out a range of functions associated with renovating, allocating and managing its one thousand-plus properties. It is the central argument here that at each of these steps the policies and practices of G.H.A., whether deliberately or not, serve to exclude Asians from its tenancies. A range of evidence will be presented to support this argument, including several internal discussion papers of the Association, Annual Reports, and interviews with the Director of the Association. (Unless otherwise indicated, policies of the Association are quoted from its own documents).

In its Annual Report for 1982/83, the Association noted that if improvement programmes were to proceed at the then current rate - and there was no reason to suppose that it would not, as Government funding for Housing Associations, in contrast to that for council housebuilding, seemed at the time to be fairly assured - then it would be around ten years before all houses in need of improvement in Govanhill had been completed. Such a housing programme involves complex decisions, not least of which is deciding which properties should be improved, and when. In an area like Govanhill, with many

houses in a poor state of repair, and lacking the basic amenities, inevitably many people will have to wait some years for improvements. However, housing need is not uniform within the area as the quality of the housing stock varies considerably, and it seemed that, in contradiction to the association's stated 'worst first' policy, some of the better-quality housing had been improved before the poorer-quality stock in the older part of Govanhill (e.g. Daisy Street and Garturk Street). In an interview with the Director of G.H.A., he accepted that this might happen in some cases, but was defensible in that there were no longer in Govanhill any houses which fell below the tolerable standard. He seemed surprised when I pointed out that I myself had recently visited families living in houses which lacked hot water, inside toilets, and a bath or shower, in other words, which were quite clearly below the tolerable standard.

Interestingly, earlier in the interview he had pointed out that there were few Asians in the association for the simple reason of geography, that is, they tended not to live in the areas covered by G.H.A. It is highly questionable, however, whether this can simply be said to be a matter of chance. Someone, at some time, decides which sections of Govanhill will be improved, and when. Whether consciously or not, the older streets, with a significant Asian population, have been left till last, while the streets to the north-west of Govanhill, predominantly white streets, have been the first to be improved.

A second reason given for the lack of Asian tenants, this time by one of the housing officers, was that, due to financial restraints the Association found it almost impossible to build large housing units, and so could not cater for Asian households. The assumption here was clearly that Asians tend to live in large or extended households. A

look at some national statistics explodes this popular myth: while it is true that Asian households are larger, on the whole, than white, they do not usually consist of the ten or twelve members of the popular imagination. The average is in fact 4.6 persons in a household, in comparison with the average 2.6 in a white household. As to joint, or extended families, this applies to 21% of Asian households, in comparison to 11% of white. The essential point here is that eight out of ten Asian households consist of nuclear families, or single people. At a local level, of the hundred or so families coming into contact with the advice centre, only a few had as many as six children, the majority having between two and four. Similarly, extended families were in the minority, with most new households preferring to live as nuclear families. Thus, most Asian households in Govanhill could be rehoused by G.H.A.

The majority of G.H.A. allocations are made to existing residents of the properties affected by their rehabilitation programme: only when all of those people who want to be, have been rehoused, and there is surplus stock, are other applications considered. Brailey (1981) argues that most associations feel that only at this point, i.e. the opening of waiting-lists, is it necessary to formulate an allocations policy, but she believes that the policies and aims of an association should be made explicit from the beginning of its activities, including improvement programmes. The early development policies of G.H.A. provide a good example of this need, whereby its schedule for rehabilitation has had undesirable social effects, notably perpetuating a degree of racial segregation and the levels of housing inequality within the area.

While G.H.A.'s waiting-list didn't come into operation until 1982, discussion as to housing priorities, operation of a points system, and

the overall aims of the association had been taking place since 1977. Discussion amongst staff, management and members resulted in a consensus view which has altered in detail but not in substance since then, and which can be summarised as follows:

1. Priority should be given, ovewhelmingly, to those in housing need.
2. Priority should be given to local residents, in the provision of decent accommodation at a reasonable rent.
3. G.H.A. is committed to maintaining a 'balanced community' within Govanhill. (Internal discussion paper, 1981).

The argument here is that on all three counts Asian residents have an equal, if not greater, claim to G.H.A. housing, but that, in practice, they have scarcely begun to be housed by the Association.

Each of these three priorities is examined here in detail, in order to analyse the ways in which the policies of the Association affect the re-housing chances of the Asian population. The evidence is that Asian households are systematically discriminated against by this housing system, explaining their serious under-representation within G.H.A. housing.

1. Housing need

G.H.A. have defined seven categories of housing need, and each of these is examined in relation to Asian households.

a) lack of amenities

As highlighted in Chapter Two, Asians are twice as likely as whites to be lacking in the basic amenities - 12% and 6% of households, respectively. (National Dwelling and Housing Survey: H.M.S.O., 1979, Table 8). While Glasgow District Council could provide no statistics for Govanhill, a local House Condition Survey (Allen, 1986), indicated that around

40% of Asian households surveyed were lacking in the basic amenities.

b) overcrowding

The same survey found that 57% of Asian households were overcrowded, in comparison with 12% for Govanhill as a whole.

c) disability

No figures exist comparing disability rates amongst the white and Asian populations in Govanhill. However, a health visitor working for over ten years in the area noted a higher level of disability amongst Asian children, which may be attributable to the practice amongst Muslims of marrying first cousins.

d) suitability of present accommodation

This is a category open to interpretation, and therefore difficult to compare. Assessment here will depend on physical factors such as condition and state of repair of house, as well as subjective evaluation, based on factors such as suitability to the needs of different members of the household, or harassment and nuisance from neighbours.

e) age

Asian households in Govanhill tend to be younger than their white counterparts, and thus to have more very young children, but this is perhaps counteracted by the large numbers of elderly white households, and their relative lack within the Asian community.

f) dependence on local residents

While both white and Asian households in Govanhill tend to have strong family links in the area, and thus those who are

vulnerable for whatever reason, would tend to depend on local residents for support, the need is arguably greater for Asians. Language difficulties, especially for the women[3], mean that even those without specific needs such as the disabled, those with elderly relatives or young children, are dependent on friends, family and neighbours for help in everyday matters such as dealing with schools, post offices or D.H.S.S. departments.

g) lack of alternative options

While it is true that most Govanhill residents face problems in securing decent accommodation, and many lack 'alternative options' to G.H.A. housing, for Asians the situation would appear to be even worse, as in each of the housing tenures they are likely to face direct or indirect discrimination.

Owner-occupation, at around 40%, is the main tenure in Govanhill: while many Asians are to be found in this tenure, nevertheless it is more difficult for them to buy their own home than it is for white residents. No statistics are available, but from interviews with various households, as well as participant observation, it became clear that Asian households tended to seek finance for owner-occupation from banks rather than the more usual source of building societies. Without going into the reasons for the differential lending rates of finance agencies to members of different ethnic groups, the main point to be made is simply that Asian households thus tend to pay far more for their housing, due to the higher interest rates charged by banks.

The private rented sector is another important tenure, accounting, like the housing association, for around 20% of all housing in

Govanhill. This figure is around twice the national average (9%) and four times the average for all Pakistani households (5%). (Third P.S.I. Survey: Table 29). Thus, unlike its declining importance in Britain generally, this tenure represents a major housing choice for Govanhill residents. Its two major drawbacks are that it is very expensive, and is often insecure, with many contracts being renewable on a yearly basis. In addition, Asians are likely to suffer racial discrimination from white landlords, thus further restricting their choice. In practice, most Asian households rent from Asian landlords. A national survey of Asian private tenants showed that 39% had previously been refused accommodation by a white landlord. (Brown, 1984).

Public sector housing is the other major tenure but at present represents little in the way of alternative options to the Asian community. A tiny proportion - less than 1% - of Asian households are to be found in Govanhill's council housing. While the percentage of the total stock in the control of the local authority is well below the city's average of around 60%, at 17% of Govanhill's housing it represents a significant housing choice for white - but not Asian - residents.

The reasons for these differences in tenure patterns will be explored in detail in the following section which analyses Glasgow District Council's allocation policies.

2. Local residence

In G.H.A.'s policy document (1981) and in its open letter on its waiting-list policies (1982), consideration of local residence is added after its definition of housing need. It is not clear if this is intended to be part of, or quite separate from, the concept of

'housing need'. The distinction is, in fact, an important one, as the two aims could quite easily be in conflict, and thus decisions would have to be made as to which should take precedence. G.H.A. makes no mention of such potential conflict, or the means by which it might be resolved, e.g. the relative weight, in the form of points, to be given to each, until publication of a points system in 1984.

In effect, then, housing need may be overridden, to a greater or lesser extent, by length of local residence - that is someone who has lived all their lives in Govanhill may have equal or greater priority than someone in desperate housing need. In theory, this should lead to little differentiation between many Asian households and the white majority, in that there has been a settled Asian community in Govanhill for 20-30 years. In practice, however, the Asian population still has an 'immigrant' status in the eyes of many, including inevitably at least some of G.H.A.'s workers and management. They are, quite simply, not seen as being part of the local community. This may be compounded by the perceptions of Asian people themselves who, if they know of the existence of G.H.A. at all, may believe it to be an association run by and for 'whites only'.

One exchange during an interview illustrates this point:

JW: Have you heard of the Govanhill Housing Association?

AK: I'm not sure, isn't it part of the council housing?

JW: No, it's a separate organisation which houses local people.

AK: I've never heard of it, then. How do you get a house, I suppose you'd have to have lived here all your life...I don't suppose we'd have a chance...

This situation was confirmed and extended by the policy introduced in 1984, which gives priority in the allocation of new properties to

the close relatives of existing G.H.A. tenants. Many Govanhill residents do have close relations living in the area who could thus be helped to gain access to G.H.A. properties, while many tenancies, of course, will pass on to offspring on the death of their parents. This perpetuates the overwhelmingly white membership of the Association.

3. A 'balanced community'

It is axiomatic that a community-based housing association should, as one of its central aims, serve the local community, in this case 'to help maintain a balanced community in the Govanhill area'. (Discussion Paper, 1981). It is not clear from this, however, which community or communities are to be served. Without entering here into the debate of what does or does not constitute a community (but see Blowers et al, 1982) it would seem fair to say that it is based on a sense of belonging, or inclusion. On the negative side this also, of course, means that some will experience a sense of exclusion, of not-belonging. The central point here is that there is no one community in Govanhill: that while the white majority certainly think that there is, in fact there are at least two existing in parallel, but with little contact with each other - the white and Asian communities.

This goes some way towards explaining how G.H.A. can talk of their work as maintaining a 'balanced community' when, in fact, there are virtually no Asians living in their housing. It seems what they are really seeking to maintain is a 'family mix', (Discussion Paper, 1977) that is, a variety of single people, childless couples, families, young and elderly, able- and disable-bodied people within their housing stock. This they seem largely to have achieved with large numbers of single elderly householders as well as younger people with

and without children, as well as their new schemes to provide sheltered accommodation for the frail elderly, in Govanhill Street.

The reason for the exclusion of Asians from G.H.A.'s concept of 'community' perhaps lies partly in the widespread belief that all non-whites are immigrants, and not British at all. In fact, based on national averages, we could expect around 40% to have been born in Britain. Of the rest, around half settled in Britain between 1956-1968, that is, 20-30 years before the research period. These now form a settled community in Britain. Thus far, then, it seems that 70% of all Asians were either born in Britain, or have lived here for 20-30 years. The remaining 30% migrated to Britain from 1968 to the present, thus a substantial minority can be said to be fairly recent immigrants. However, over half of these were women, presumably mainly single women coming to settle with their husbands, and thus joining an established community, consisting of extended family networks. (Brown, 1984).

The general picture, then, is one of a settled community, and this is borne out by research experience in Govanhill, which observed a group with a well-developed sense of community, and a commitment to living in Govanhill equal to that of the white population. This is evidenced by the fact that many who are living under the stress of sub-tolerable housing conditions, and urgently seeking rehousing, are nevertheless reluctant to consider options outside of Govanhill. The simple fact is that Govanhill, as one of Glasgow's three main centres of Asian residence can meet a range of needs that cannot be met elsewhere, needs that range from the individual through the social and the political. Individual needs are diverse, and include practical matters such as provision of Asian food, clothing and banking

facilities, as well as personal relationships, particularly but not exclusively with family members: friends and neighbours are also frequently involved in informal caring networks, helping with children and elderly relatives.

These relations are, of course, social as well as individual: on a more social-cultural level, however, are matters relating to religion and language. As Govanhill is situated only a mile from the main city mosque in the Gorbals, the mainly Muslim Asian community tends to use this mosque as one of their main centres of activity and identity.[4] Its importance for women can, however, be over-estimated: it is used mainly by men and children for prayer and instruction, women tending to pray within their own homes. The mosque is run exclusively by men, and women clearly viewed it as a male domain, going there only occasionally, usually to wedding celebrations. For many women, then, little has changed in the fifteen years since Dahya noted that Pakistani Muslim women rarely left the house to visit the mosque, or even to shop or visit friends and family. (Dahya, 1974). Perhaps things have changed a little in the latter respects, but the women's situation is still one of close confinement to the home and the immediate neighbourhood.

Language is a particularly important element in women's confinement to the home, and general isolation. As noted earlier, 70% of Pakistani women, as opposed to 27% of Pakistani men (42% and 15% respectively for Indian women and men) speak English slightly or not at all. (Brown, 1984). Clearly, this severely limits contact with anyone outside of the home, or Urdu or Punjabi-speaking neighbours or shopowners. This, then, demonstrates a strong need for many, or most, Asian women to live within an Asian community, if they are not to experience virtually total isolation. (Bhatti, 1976).

On a more social-political level, many women, and men, have strong community needs in terms of dealing with social and public institutions. Everyday life is complex, requiring people to deal with banks, post offices, D.H.S.S. offices, rent and rates payments, transport, shopping, etc. All of these involve the written and/or the spoken word, and thus present serious difficulties to those not fluent and literate in English. In Govanhill, it is common for friends and neighbours to provide informal translation in transactions with various agencies, and to deal with forms and other written material. Without this support it would be near-impossible for many to negotiate their everyday lives.

A final and most important factor in Asians' felt need to live within a community is racial harassment. Throughout the research period, this emerged consistently as one of the most serious issues. Chapter Five refers to some of the more extreme cases of violence - incidents of stoning, beating and kicking adults and children, as well as campaigns of intimidation, usually carried out in the council housing sector of North Govanhill - but of equal concern is the lower level of verbal, and sometimes physical abuse common throughout Govanhill. Contrary to the popular mythology which holds that hostility against black people erupts only when there are 'too many' in one area, it seems, in fact, that racial harassment is less serious, less violent in the older part of Govanhill where the Asian community is concentrated, and more sustained, more violent in North Govanhill where the few Asian households are far more isolated, and thus more vulnerable.

The Asian community, then, meets a range of needs - religious, social, cultural as well as practical - but none of this is recognised

by the local 'community-based' housing association. On this count, as well as in recognition of their housing needs, and length of local residence, Asians are disadvantaged in comparison to their white neighbours. Apart from the consequences in terms of community relations, one major result is that Asians have been, and continue to be, virtually excluded from G.H.A. housing. Before moving on to a more general examination of housing inequality in Chapter Four, a study should be made of Govanhill's other major landlord, Glasgow District Council.

GLASGOW DISTRICT COUNCIL

In Glasgow, as in Scotland generally, there is a strong tradition of public housing, this sector accounting for roughly twice as much housing as in cities in the rest of Britain. However, in Govanhill, the council housing stock is only about one third of the proportion of the city average, around 17% in comparison to 54%. (Govanhill Local Plan, 1979).[5] Nevertheless, controlling as it does around 1,000 of Govanhill's 5,300 properties, G.D.C. is still a significant local landlord.

The majority of council housing in Govanhill was built in the inter-war years, consisting mainly of three-storey red and grey sandstone tenements, and some, more desirable, cottage flats. With a few exceptions (notably the modernised sections of Hollybrook and Hickman Streets) this housing is in a poor state of repair, requiring extensive modernisation, as well as major improvements to the environments, particularly the backcourts, gardens and parks.

Nevertheless, Govanhill is a popular area, and there have always been long waiting-lists of those wishing to move into the area. In 1984, there were 1,100 first-choice applicants for the Govanhill

sub-area, that is, only counting those who listed Govanhill as their most-favoured area, so, clearly, the waiting-list is much longer than a thousand. (G.D.C., 1985). In addition, there is a very slow turnover of houses, resulting in fierce competition for scarce resources. This is important as it is within this context that we must assess the chances of Asians in Govanhill gaining access to council housing. G.D.C. themselves have -

> 'identified the need to give additional priority to certain vulnerable groups...ethnic minorities'.

However, they continue:

> 'We already know that ethnic groups are not being given a fair chance of having their housing needs met.'
>
> (G.D.C. 1985:17-18)

What this means in real terms is that out of around a thousand council tenancies in Govanhill, only around twelve to thirteen have been allocated to Asian households. (Crossroads Survey, 1984). Or, in percentage terms, Asians constitute around 20% of the local population, but have only 1% of council tenancies.

The reason for this discrepancy may lie at one or more of the individual, institutional, or structural levels. Individual explanations range from the commonsense notion of 'Asians prefer to be owner-occupiers, they don't want council houses, anyway', to the more sophisticated analysis of Robinson (1980) who argues that Asians in Blackburn chose not to enter the council sector until:

> 'it becomes economically and socially advantageous to do so.'

The institutional approach is perhaps the most influential within urban sociology, particularly in the study of public housing allocations. Such studies explain Asian absence from public sector housing in terms

of the discriminatory policies and procedures of the local authorities, (e.g. Murie et al, 1976; Smith and Whalley, 1976).

A smaller, but growing, body of work takes a neo-Marxist, or structuralist approach, and points to the essential class nature of a capitalist society, in its explanations of the allocations process, rather than looking primarily at urban managers. (Castells, 1977; Lambert et al, 1978; Dunleavy, 1980). Central areas of concern are government housing policies, especially cutbacks in public expenditure, New Right ideology on the role of the state, (e.g. promotion of the 'right to buy' council houses), and the bureaucratic control of tenants by housing managers.

Each of these three approaches has something to contribute to an understanding of the differential allocation of housing, and elements of each will be used in an examination of the situation in Govanhill. A series of interviews allowed a range of individual attitudes to be recorded on such issues as the relative merits of the various tenures, the accessibility of the Housing Department, and understanding of the allocations process. This individual perspective will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four, along with an analysis of such structural factors as race and gender. First, however, it is important to continue a discussion at the institutional level. This is important as it is the institution which mediates between the individual and structural levels. That is, it is in relation to the institution that individuals address their aspirations, fears, and disappointments, while it is through the institution that the abstracts of race, gender, and class are expressed in terms of housing inequality.

The local authority housing system can perhaps be best understood by means of an analysis of its allocations system. To understand how this operates, it is helpful first to look briefly at its evolution.

The underlying principles of the system have changed several times over recent years, following a long period of stability: prior to 1980, allocations were made primarily according to length of time spent on the waiting-list, rather than housing need. During this period, Asians were generally excluded from access to council housing because of this emphasis on length of waiting - even if they had been long-resident in Glasgow they tended not to know about the public housing system and thus not to be registered on the waiting-list. This contrasts with the culture of white Glaswegians, where the tradition of council housing is well-established, and many have their names on the waiting-list for many years, which eventually secures them access to decent council housing. (However, see English, 1976, for an account of unequal housing access amongst the white Scottish population).

In December 1980, several changes occurred within the Housing Department: the service was decentralised, now to be administered through fifteen Area Offices, and at the same time, the allocations process was computerised.[6] Both of these changes are, albeit indirectly, relevant to a discussion of allocations policies. Both measures have been heralded as ways of making the system more responsive, more relevant to people's needs, and fairer. Decentralisation is part of the movement towards popular participation which was influential during the late 1960's and early 1970's, and is now undergoing something of a revival. (See for example Seabrook, 1984).

Without criticising the principles involved, the actual effects of such policies, at least for ethnic minorities, can be questioned. If the local Area Office is no more aware of ethnic minority needs, has

no bilingual staff or publicity in Asian languages, its usefulness for non-English speaking applicants will be limited. Furthermore, from interviews and participant observation, it seems that Area Offices (in this case Argyle Street which deals with City Centre and South district) can seem just as bureaucratic and inaccessible as did the old Glasgow Corporation.

Computerisation is meant to make the allocations process objective, removed from the influence of human bias:

> 'However...discrimination is still occurring in Glasgow in spite of the fact that the system was designed to be as objective as possible.'
>
> (Clapham & Kintrea, 1985:17)

Clapham and Kintrea here are referring to low-income households, but it seems reasonable to presume that, in this as in other respects, discrimination occurs also against black households. G.D.C. itself points out that -

> 'At several points in the process L. & T. (lettings and transfers) officers exercise discretion.'
>
> (G.D.C. n.d.)

This discretion occurs, for example, at the point where a housing officer selects an applicant for a vacant house. The system should be understood as not one but several queues for different kinds of housing in different areas. When an applicant comes to the head of the queue for a particular housing type, and a house becomes vacant, they will be made an offer: seemingly no bias could enter into this system. However, there is pressure on officers to make lets quickly, and to avoid properties lying empty, and clearly this involves offering applicants properties they are likely to accept. It is here that the human element becomes apparent, where the expectations of

both applicant and lettings officer are important. While, as Clapham and Kintrea argue, low-income - or black - households may downgrade themselves in applying for lower-pointed housing than that for which they might be eligible, there is also clearly scope for discrimination - whether conscious or not - on the part of allocations staff. While policies and procedures may be reformed, old attitudes may persist. Thus, while official policy may be to give more priority to the housing needs of ethnic minorities, individual officers may still have low expectations of the housing Asian applicants deserve, or need, 'selecting them out' of the better areas if they believe they would refuse these offers, thus slowing down the allocations process.

In addition to such changes in administration the whole principle of the system changed, priority shifting away from the waiting-list and towards housing need. A points system was introduced with four priorities: special cases, move within a close, downmarket moves, and 'others'. (A 'close' in this context can be taken to mean a high-rise block of flats, as well as a tenement). This move represented a major change in the tradition of Glasgow's public housing, and met with a lot of opposition. A significant body of public opinion held that those in housing need should not be allowed to 'jump the queue' ahead of those who had spent a long time on the waiting-list. The most important group here were not those waiting for their first council house, but those already in a council house and with their names on the transfer-list. In a city where around six out of ten households live in council houses, transfers are an accepted way of moving up the housing ladder, perhaps comparable to home-owners who 'move up' every few years - the main difference being that the 'currency' used to obtain such improvements are points rather than pounds. Thus, a

strong 'transfers' lobby emerged to protect the interests of such tenants, leading to the system being reviewed in 1982, and amended in 1984. Waiting-list points for transfer applicants were increased, thus favouring long-standing tenants to the detriment of those in housing need, e.g. the homeless.

However, to retain some emphasis on housing need, the council introduced a priority system.

Table 4: Priorities within Glasgow District Council allocations system

1. special cases
2. medical 'A' (that is, those with serious health problems)
3. move within a close
4. downmarket moves
5. strategic under-occupation
6. urgent rehousing
7. homeless persons
8. severe overcrowding
9. move within a close (to a different sized property)
10. all other cases.

To put this priority system into perspective, it must be noted that categories 1-9 account for around 2,000 applicants out of a total of around 80,000 which means that 2-3% of all applicants are considered according to housing need, rather than waiting-time.

However, the system was revised again in January 1985 when, for a six-month trial period, severe overcrowding was removed from the list of priority needs. This move was made in an attempt to deal with the problem differently, taking into account such factors as the nature of the housing stock and local residence patterns, as well as housing need. This is an important point as many Asian households are overcrowded, and it is to their detriment if severe overcrowding is no

longer considered to be a priority category.[7] G.D.C. themselves refer to overcrowding as primarily affecting areas like Woodlands and Pollokshields, both areas of Asian residence, and so presumably this would also include Govanhill. While a set number of points are allocated for each room lacking, G.D.C. point out that there is no set measure of 'severe' overcrowding, but that this is something decided by the Senior Letting Officer. In practice:

> 'The applicant must be short of as many as 6 bedrooms, therefore, there is an assumption of a very large family indeed.'
>
> (G.D.C., n.d.)

In practice, of course, even if there were such a large family, G.D.C. has virtually no properties with 6-plus bedrooms, so this category of need would seem to have no practical application.

While overcrowding is an important problem, in fact most Asian households who come into contact with the Housing Department, do so when they are homeless. This is not to say that more Asian households are homeless than are in other categories of housing need, simply that those who are not literally homeless tend not to approach the Housing Department, or perhaps even to know of its existence, whereas when homeless they may be referred to the Homeless Persons Unit (H.P.U.) by other agencies, e.g. social work.[8]

Within the H.P.U. a caseworker approach is adopted, decisions being made not according to points as with waiting-list applicants, but according to the discretion of the caseworker. Usually, one offer only is made, and this generally is of low-standard housing, though, if there is reasonable cause for refusal, a second offer may be made in exceptional cases. However, in the case of Sheraz Begum for example it was considered that her reluctance to accept the offer made

to her of housing in Mansewood/Hillpark on the grounds of social and community needs, was not sufficient to warrant a second offer.

In an interesting aside, it is worth noting that when I contacted the Housing Department, in May 1985, to speak to someone about Asian people and council housing, I was put in touch with an officer from the H.P.U., apparently on the assumption that this was their main, or only, means of entry into the public housing system. While the officer in question was in fact familiar with a range of issues other than homelessness, the fact remains that I was not put in touch with an officer concerned with Asian housing needs within the mainstream allocations system.[9]

While most Asians do enter council housing via the H.P.U., and few have as yet gained access by means of the waiting-list, it is important not to therefore confine our attention to the H.P.U. The mainstream allocations system should also be examined, firstly to assess why Asians have been, directly or indirectly, excluded from it, and, secondly, to assess the potential for their future entry into the public sector by means of the waiting-list.

For waiting-list applicants, the categories under which points may be allocated are as follows:

Table 5: Glasgow District Council points system

1. date of application points
2. local connection
3. essential incoming workers/national mobility scheme
4. overcrowding
5. under-occupation
6. children at a height above fourth floor
7. urgent rehousing

8. lacking amenities
9. shared amenities
10. medical priority
11. social points.

(See Appendix B for details of points allocated within each category). As already noted, many Asian households have missed out on accumulating date of application and local connection points either because of their lack of knowledge of the system, or the inaccessibility of the Housing Department, especially for non-English speakers. Thus, the potential points lost to Asian households as a result of their not making an early application would amount to 35 points for five years, 70 points for ten years, and 155 for twenty years. While this is inevitably a slow process, it is nevertheless a major way of obtaining decent housing in their area of choice.

While, as has been noted, 'severe overcrowding' has been removed from the list of priority categories, overcrowding is allocated points, within the general waiting-list. Clearly, many Asian households in Govanhill are not aware of this, and have lived for some years in overcrowded conditions before eventually applying for a house. From interviews, the indications are, however, that younger households are more aware of council provision and are taking steps much earlier to register on the waiting-list - within months rather than years of finding themselves in overcrowded conditions.

G.D.C. itself recognises the extent of the problem, and would like to alter the allocations process in order to alleviate the situation, and maximise the benefit derived from the housing stock by matching more closely household composition to house size. They note that this would have to be carried out while avoiding 'social engineering' but

it is difficult to see how this could be achieved. (G.D.C., n.d.). In reality, it would mean persuading elderly tenants (almost exclusively white) to leave the homes they have occupied for many years, and move somewhere smaller, so that a larger (perhaps Asian) family could occupy their house.[10] Clearly, such a policy would be unlikely to meet with much success.

Urgent rehousing is not a category in much use now, although it was of great relevance in the early 1970's when extensive clearance of slum dwellings in Govanhill led to many households being rehoused by the council. This is not to say that all received decent accommodation, and many were moved out of Govanhill against their wish to remain in the area; nevertheless, for white people this was then a major means of entry into the public sector, while Asian residents moved into other owner-occupied or private-rented accommodation. As there are no records of Housing Department actions, or the Asian community's attitudes at the time, the reasons for this discrepancy remain speculative: perhaps the procedures were not made clear to Asian households, or perhaps they at that time preferred to remain owner-occupiers. Whatever the cause the result is the same, the non-entry of significant numbers of Asian families into the public sector, and their subsequent absence now from the transfers list.

Returning to the present, significant numbers are failing to make applications on the basis of lacking or sharing amenities, although, as was clearly illustrated in Chapter Two, Asians are twice as likely as whites to be lacking in the basic amenities. This is an important category of housing need as it can carry a total of 200 points (40 points for each amenity lacked), but a significant section of the community are not registering this housing need.

An important category additional to those defining housing need is the consideration of social need, which would add fifty points to an applicant's total, if confirmed by a G.P. or a social worker. Usual cases here would be an applicant's need to be near family members for medical or social reasons. Not included here is a consideration of 'community' need, e.g. an Asian household's need to live within an Asian community, for needs already detailed during the discussion of G.H.A. housing. It is also interesting to note the authority given to doctors and social workers in determining social needs, but not, for example, to organisations like Crossroads or community groups like the Asian Women's Action Group who come daily into contact with those in severe social and housing need.

Having detailed the different experience Asians in Glasgow have of the allocations system, and some of the barriers they face in gaining access, it is important not to overlook some of the more hidden obstacles. Discretion is an important factor here, and while being present throughout the system and certainly exercised to the disadvantage of some white households, it is particularly relevant at present to Asian households who are dealt with mainly through the Homeless Persons Unit, and thus subject to discretion rather than the calculation of points.

Also important is the question of 'tactics' in making an application. G.D.C. recommends:

> 'Applicants should be guided carefully through the initial application form...To be inaccurate at that point would be to take a place in a queue which would not realistically result in an offer; or would be using a preference in a queue which the applicant would not consider anyway.'
>
> (G.D.C., n.d.)

For white applicants advice comes from housing officers, but also informally from family and friends who have 'been through the system'

and who are therefore familiar with its operation and can advise them what to expect. Applicants can indicate a choice of up to six house-types in each of six different areas, and this choice is central to the speed with which they may be offered a house. A balance must be struck between a desire for an attractive area and house-type, and the length of waiting-time required to be offered this. For example, the most popular four-in-a-block flats in Govanhill would require between 400-450 points, and a tenement between 200-475 points. Given the slow turnover of properties in Govanhill applicants may be well-advised to choose one of the lower-pointed properties. In contrast, properties in neighbouring Oatlands carry points of between 50-200 and waiting-time is much shorter. However, potential Asian applicants are deterred from applying, not only by the generally poor state of the properties, but also due to the level of racial harassment, and a National Front presence. (Both of the other two main areas of Asian residence also have a combination of popular, high-pointed housing, and a slow turnover of properties, holding out little hope for Asian residents to gain access to decent accommodation.)

For Asian households, advice on how to maximise their chances of being allocated housing is seldom forthcoming. Lacking a tradition of council housing, there is an absence of a store of community knowledge of the operation of the allocations system: in addition, while officers may well have tried to explain the system, interviews revealed that there was a general lack of understanding of the complexities of the system, e.g. of the various steps from filling in forms, to visits from housing officers to final decisions on making offers.

Here it is evident that individual and institutional factors combine to deter Asian applicants: a further factor in this respect is the often negative opinion held within the Asian community of local authority housing. This, and the sometimes stereotyped attitudes towards Asian households held by the Housing Departments, tend to be mutually reinforcing as the two groups come into little contact with each other.

Finally, an analysis of the interaction between individual and institutional forces should not overlook the influence of structural factors. Racial harassment has already been mentioned as deterrring many Asian households from applying for council housing, and from living in certain areas of the city. This problem is not easily overcome as racism is part of the structure of society, as is the poverty of the areas where racial violence is most prevalent. Such poverty at least partly contributes to racial hostility in that it leads the lowest-income groups to feel themselves to be in competition with their even more disadvantaged black neighbours.

The background of the inner-cities is also important as, historically, these areas have the worst housing, poorest facilities, and accommodate marginal social groups. Tenure patterns differ from the rest of the city, with only a third the level of council housing, and correspondingly higher levels of low-income owner-occupation, and insecure, expensive private rented accommodation. Asians are simply the most recent group - after the Highlanders, the Irish, and the Jews - to experience the worst the inner-city area of Govanhill has to offer.

Prospects for the future are no better than those of the present or the past - severe cutbacks in Government spending on public

housing, the sale of council houses, and the allocation of public land, originally intended for council housing, to private housebuilding for owner-occupation, mean that little or no council housing is likely to be built in Govanhill in the foreseeable future. Clearly, this has serious implications for the already disadvantaged position of Asian households within the housing market, as documented in the following chapter.

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1. This feeling was borne out to some extent during a later interview with the Director of G.H.A. In general discussion as to why Asians tended not to be housed by the Association, he mentioned that when they did house them then there tended to be trouble - as in the case of Mrs Hassan - as they 'didn't seem to understand the Association's rules'. (See C.U.R., 1980).

2. Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act, 1981.

3. 27% of Pakistani men, and 70% of Pakistani women speak English slightly, or not at all. (P.S.I. Survey 1984, Table 66).

4. Sikh religious needs are catered for by the gurdwaras (temples) in neighbouring East Pollokshields.

5. The local plan goes on to estimate that by 1984 this figure of 17% would have risen to 28%, largely due to newbuild on cleared sites, as well as rehabilitation of some properties in the private sector. However, by the mid-1980's, it became clear that these clearance sites were to be used for housebuilding for owner-occupation, rather than public renting (apart from around thirty sheltered accommodation units). Thus, the proportion of housing stock in G.D.C.'s control during the research period (1984-86) was unlikely to have been above 20%.

6. This, and most of the information on the development of the allocations system since 1980 was obtained in an interview with a housing officer from Lomond House the central policy and administrative office of the Housing Department.

7. Nationally Asian households have an average of 4.6 persons, in contrast to 2.6 in white households. (Brown, 1984). In Govanhill, the average is 5.4 persons in Asian households, while at the same time, they tend to live in the smaller tenement properties. (Crossroads Survey, 1985).

8. See Watson and Austerberry (1986) on the distinction between literal homelessness and 'hidden homelessness', viz that households staying temporarily with friends or relatives are not seen as being homeless. They apply their argument to women, but it could equally well be applied to Asians in Glasgow who are also, in this respect, 'invisible'.

9. However, later in 1985, I did speak to a senior officer who as part of her remit dealt with 'ethnic minority' issues. At this point, however, this work was underdeveloped, consisting mainly of an unsuccessful attempt to monitor the ethnic origins of applicants.

10. Within Govanhill's council housing, there is a level of 60% under-occupation, largely due to single elderly tenants. (G.D.C., 1984).

CHAPTER FOUR

Housing inequality: aspects of race, class and gender

Housing Inequality

In Chapter Three, the analysis of the allocations policies and procedures of Govanhill Housing Association and Glasgow District Council presented a wealth of evidence to support the contention that Asians are consistently and systematically discriminated against in their access to public housing in Govanhill. While institutional factors, particularly the operation of housing allocation systems, are clearly important, it is essential not to see these factors as the sole, or even necessarily the primary, cause of disadvantage. Observations on local authority and housing association housing provision in Glasgow must be made in the context of massive cutbacks in public expenditure on housing, leading both to serious lack of newbuild and long delays in improvements and repairs of council housing stock. Housing associations are relatively better-off, being able, despite cutbacks, to continue fairly steadily with their redevelopment programmes: nevertheless, the situation is still one of a severe shortage of good-quality accommodation, resulting in fierce competition for a scarce resource. On an ideological level, the ten or so years prior to the research period (i.e. from about 1973 onwards) saw a radical change in housing policies, such policies as the sale of council houses and the virtual halting of local authority housebuilding programmes marking a break with the post-war consensus which held that there was a permanent place within British housing for a public rented sector, even if the actual levels of council

housebuilding varied according to fluctuations in the economy, and the ideology of the Government. (Murie, 1983; Cooper, 1985).

Within this context, it seems that the extent of racial inequality with regard to housing, already well-documented during the 1960's (Rex and Moore, 1967) and the 1970's (Smith and Whalley, 1976; McKay, 1977; Lambert et al, 1978) has increased, rather than been alleviated, during the 1980's (Simpson, 1981; CRE, 1984). In any conflict over resources, it is likely to be the more vulnerable groups - women, blacks, the 'undeserving' working-class - who are likely to lose out. Turning to sociological explanations of this inequality, we are faced largely with a choice between Marxist and Weberian analyses, earlier ecological approaches having fallen largely out of favour. (Bassett and Short, 1980). While most commentators adopt one or other of these two main theoretical perspectives, it should be possible to select some elements from each, and, adding a feminist analysis, thus create a synthesis capable of doing justice to the complexities of the position of Asian women within the housing market.

Thus, while Weberians concentrate on the functions of institutions to the exclusion of a consideration of wider, more structural factors, a Marxist analysis would emphasise the importance of class structures, and the control exercised by the powerful over the powerless. However, the Weberian 'action frame of reference' is a useful corrective to Marxist macro-analysis, putting the experiences and perceptions of the individual back into the picture. A further, and particularly relevant, contribution, is the Weberian insistence that class interests can be formed on other than an industrial workplace basis, for example, that classes may be formed on the basis of housing consumption. (Rex and Moore, 1967; Rex, 1973; Lowe, 1986). Finally, within a Weberian analysis, equal importance may be accorded to race

as to class. (Lambert et al, 1978). However, neither approach deals adequately with the position of women, so it is also necessary to look to feminist analysts, and their writing on women and housing. (Brion and Tinker, 1980; Austerberry and Watson, 1981).

Class and housing

Discussions of class in terms of public housing may seem superfluous in that it is overwhelmingly working-class people who are council tenants. However, there are of course divisions within the working-class according to income, and other factors, and it is the argument here that public housing is stratified according to class divisions, with the main distinction being between the 'respectable' and the 'disreputable' working-classes. (Henderson and Karn, 1983).

Attempts to relate considerations of class to the main discussion of racial inequality in housing raises the question of whether race or class should have primacy in explaining the position of Asians in Glasgow. The traditional Marxist position is that black people should be seen as part of the working-class, racial discrimination being simply another aspect of class disadvantage. Other Marxists (e.g. Castles and Kosack, 1985) feel that this underestimates the significance of race, and point to the fact that migrant workers in Western Europe, while clearly belonging to the working-class, are not evenly distributed throughout the class, but occupy the lowest stratum, thus leading to a weakened and divided working-class. Some Marxists (e.g. Sivanandan, 1984), but mainly conflict theorists, have advanced a third thesis, that black people constitute an 'underclass'. As with the two previous theses, the emphasis is overwhelmingly on employment, in this case that blacks are concentrated in the secondary labour market; however, the analysis could be extended to an understanding of disadvantages in housing.

An analysis of class is important, as racial discrimination cannot be discussed in isolation from black people's general class position, and their experiences of poverty, poor housing, and unemployment. However, it is not the position held here that black people can be understood as only belonging to the working-class; rather, it is argued that theirs is a qualitatively different experience to that of the white working-class, in their historical experience of colonialism, migration to Britain, subjection to racial discrimination and prejudice within British society, and their maintenance of a distinctive identity and culture.

The interest here lies mainly in the point at which race and class converge to produce a specific form of disadvantage. Clapham and Kintrea (1984, 1986) conducted an extensive survey of council house allocations in Glasgow according to class, which was measured in terms of occupation and income. They discovered a clear association between high-status areas and professional and other non-manual workers, between medium-status areas and skilled and semi-skilled workers, and between low status areas and unskilled workers, the unemployed, and those in full-time domestic work. While income was by far the most important factor, life-cycle was also important in that pensioners are over-represented in high-status areas while young childless couples and families (either one- or two-parent) with children under five tend to be concentrated in low-status areas. In addition, category of applicant is relevant, with, for example, the homeless being discriminated against, while transfer applicants were favoured under the system, this being largely due to the ability of the latter to wait until a decent offer is made, while the homeless are made one offer only, and are in no position to wait, or in any other way to negotiate a better offer.

Interpreting these observations in the case of Asian households, it is clear that they are over-represented in the disadvantaged categories - the unskilled, the unemployed, families with young children, and the homeless - while the white working-class are more likely to be skilled workers, and far more likely to be pensioners. (Third P.S.I. Survey, 1984).

Inequality on the bases of race and class, then, combine to place Asian households in a disadvantaged position within the housing market. In some cases, this is compounded by gender inequality. The vast majority of single-parent households are headed by a woman, and their general deprivation has been well-documented. The Finer Report of 1974, for example, found not only greater poverty among female-headed households, but also less equal access to council housing. The cases of Mrs Hassan and Mrs Begum, documented in Chapter Three, highlight the particular disadvantages faced by the small, but growing, number of Asian female-headed households.

Asian households are more likely than either white or West Indian households to have children, and on average have more children than either of the other two groups (1.9 children in Asian households, as opposed to 1.0 in West Indian, and 0.5 children in white households. Third P.S.I. Survey: Table 13; Brown, 1984). Large families frequently experience overcrowded conditions, as well as poverty, due to the high cost of childrearing. In addition, only a small proportion of the British housing stock is designed to cater for larger families, and this situation has been exacerbated recently by the sale of the larger, better properties. Women's domestic role and their isolation within the home, result in their experiencing most directly the poverty, overcrowding, and lack of choice common to many large households.

Both single-parent and large households have a history of disadvantage within the white working-class, and this is compounded by racial prejudice. Gallagher (1982) notes the attitudes of housing officers who tend to allocate inferior housing - often the 1930's 'ghetto' estates - to such households. The process whereby these households are disadvantaged is under-written by the attitude which sees them as 'undeserving' according to either race, class, or gender, or a combination of these factors. This categorisation results in the stratification of the working-class, discrimination against vulnerable groups, and a public housing system wherein allocations are made as much according to income as to housing need.

In addition, race, class, and gender inequalities may all result in a degree of segregation within the public housing sector. (Malpass, 1976; Forrest and Murie, 1976). Clapham and Kintrea argue that:

> 'Social segregation does not just exist in a few isolated, low-status areas; the public sector appears to be infinitely stratified with households apparently being sifted into dwellings that broadly accord with their status.'
>
> (Clapham and Kintrea, 1984:261)

In Glasgow's public housing sector they note an index of segregation based on occupational class, of 12% for skilled manual workers, 24% for unskilled manual workers, and 33.4% for professional workers. The figures for Glasgow's private sector housing are 23.3%, 42.5%, and 31.9% respectively. (See Simpson and Lloyd, 1977, for a study of middle-class housing in Glasgow).

There is, then, a significant degree of segregation, on the basis of class. For Asian households this is compounded by high levels of racial segregation. McEvoy (1978) notes levels of segregation of Asians from non-Asians in Glasgow of between 69-73%. He argues that

this is a result of white, rather than Asian housing choices, and that Asians are constrained by the property-market to remain concentrated in a few, lower-status areas.

The concentration of the Asian population in Glasgow into three main areas - Govanhill, East Pollokshields, and Woodlands/Charing Cross - has already been noted. In addition, there is some evidence to suggest that Asian households within these neighbourhoods are further concentrated into the areas of poorest housing. In Govanhill, for example, close observation over an extended period of time revealed that Asian households were concentrated within a few streets of the older part of Govanhill, and in particular, within certain closes in these streets. Such housing tended to be smaller, damper, and more lacking in the basic amenities, than other housing in Govanhill. In contrast, few or no Asian households were to be found in the better-quality housing of either the public or private sectors.

Race and housing

In Summer 1985, a series of interviews was conducted with Asian households in Govanhill, in order to contribute more detailed information on their housing situation to these preliminary observations on housing disadvantage and segregation. While the sample was small, it was drawn from three housing tenures - owner-occupation, council housing, and the private rented sector - and two distinct areas of Govanhill - North Govanhill's council housing estate, and the older tenemental area of main Asian settlement.

The interviews were semi-structured, which enabled information to be gathered under broad headings, while at the same time allowing the interviewees themselves to raise issues of concern. In this way, a large amount of detailed information was gathered about Asian people's experiences of, and attitudes towards, housing in Govanhill. There

has been, as yet, little record made of black people's own accounts of their housing situation, so that data makes an important contribution to the wealth of literature analysing black people's unequal position within the housing market.

Much of the information gathered was concerned with housing tenure, particularly people's past and present experiences of tenure, and their future tenure aspirations. On both counts, research findings contradict popular belief, and in some cases academic argument, that, firstly, Asian households almost universally occupy privately-owned properties, and, secondly, that they hold strong preferences for doing so. Data from Govanhill showed that in fact Asian households were spread between the tenures, although there was a clear concentration in the owner-occupied sector. An important point was that there was a marked degree of mobility, with many households moving between tenures during their housing career. This trend was most marked amongst present council tenants who, between them, had previously belonged to all the major tenures, and least marked amongst private tenants who had had no previous experience of other tenures, a private tenancy generally being the first stage in a housing career.

In terms of preferences, just over half of the sample, including all three tenures, stated that their preferred choice of tenure would be the public sector. For private tenants, this represented a step up from appalling housing conditions, while for owner-occupiers it would also frequently mean an improvement in conditions, as well as a release from the expense and responsibility of attempting to maintain a decaying, inner-city property. However, a significant minority did prefer to own, giving as reasons security, stability and privacy. One or two generalised from their own preferences to state that:

'Pakistanis prefer to own, they don't want to rent.'

While this statement appears to confirm much research which takes this perspective, (Dahya, 1974; Robinson, 1980), it must be emphasized that this was a minority view.

Around half of those not already in a council house had made an application to the local authority for housing, and had been on the waiting-lists for a period of beween eighteen months and three years. While this move represented an attempt to improve their housing situation, their choices were in fact limited in that, while all households knew about their options in relation to council housing, only a third knew of the existence of Govanhill Housing Association, and only one household had made an application to them for housing.

The rest of the interview data was largely concerned with attitudes towards housing and the community. Only a small minority of households expressed satisfaction with their current housing, the most common complaints made were about dampness, overcrowding, and the lack of bathroom and kitchen facilities. Of course, such comments are based on subjective evaluations, as well as on objective housing conditions: expressed satisfaction or dissatisfaction is not necessarily correlated with housing quality. However, in most cases there was in fact a close fit between degree of satisfaction and housing conditions.

In terms of relationships with neighbours, the majority of households reported that they shared good relations with others in the same close, though at the same time there was frequent mention of racial abuse and hostility from neighbours. This apparent contradiction may be explained in one of two ways: either neighbours and the perpetrators of racial harassment were two different sets of people (unlikely as harassment frequently took place within closes), or good relations could somehow be maintained with abusive neighbours,

possibly with the parents of young harassers. A more likely explanation, however, is that Asian households' definition of 'good' community relations is relative: it was frequently stated that a level of racial harassment was common throughout Govanhill, but was largely confined to verbal abuse in most areas, more frequently taking the form of serious physical harassment in North Govanhill.

For most households, this degree of racial hostility was outweighed by the strong sense of community solidarity and support they shared with their Asian neighbours. The vast majority expressed a clear preference for living in Govanhill, and were committed to staying in the area, whatever their future housing choices; only those living in North Govanhill showed a strong negative reaction to their neighbourhood. The small number of households interviewed who lived outside Govanhill, in the neighbouring area of Toryglen, also held a very positive attitude towards Govanhill, and frequently visited the area in order to meet friends, and to benefit from the community support networks.

From the interview data, then, there emerge several important points. A significant number of Asian households showed a clear preference for council housing, and many of these households had in fact made applications to the local authorities. For a significant minority, however, high levels of racial harassment within council housing estates acted as a deterrent to their making an application. Knowledge of racial harassment on council schemes was gained by the community from the experiences of those households which had moved into the public sector - often in North Govanhill, but also into the peripheral housing schemes, such as Castlemilk. During one interview, reference was made to the experiences of one family who had moved to Castlemilk, but who:

> '...only stayed there a very short time, their lives were made a misery as soon as they moved in...stones were thrown at the house, abuse shouted constantly at the family, the cars of their visitors were wrecked...they left after a few days, things were so bad.'

For those who did apply, their strong preference for remaining in Govanhill meant that they had to join very long waiting-lists; they were further restricted by their limited familiarity with Govanhill Housing Association.

These and other institutional constraints were examined in detail in Chapter Three. While institutional explanations of housing deprivation are perhaps the most useful, individual and structural approaches also have their contributions to make. (Murie, 1983). All three approaches can help to explain the processes underlying racial inequality in housing, an inequality which manifests itself in three major ways. Asian (but no Afro-Caribbean) households have unequal access to public housing, black households experience poorer quality housing, and they are concentrated in the least-popular areas, subject to a process of segregation, or 'ghettoisation'. (Collison, 1975; Power, 1979).

The institutional model replaced in popularity the 'individual pathology' model which was prevalent from the inception of public housing in the 1920's until the 1960's, and which held that the cause of poor housing conditions lay in the behaviour of the residents themselves, in their moral and social degeneracy. (Martin, 1935; Burney, 1967). This perspective has been used to explain the conditions of both ethnic minorities and the 'disreputable' working-class. While the institutional model now predominates and there is a growing literature adopting a structuralist approach it is worth noting a trend again towards individual explanations of

deprivation, some bearing a resemblance to this earlier 'individual pathology' model, and some not.

Robinson (1980) argues that the reform of the lettings procedures of local authorities during the 1970's undermined the 'discrimination' thesis, in that Asians showed no significant increase in their applications for, or receipt of, council housing. Thus, he argues, it can be assumed that their previous non-entry into council housing had nothing to do with discrimination. This begs the question of whether in fact the new procedures really did remove the possibility of any discrimination against ethnic minorities, for example, the material in Chapter Three on G.D.C. allocations argued that, despite one of the most progressive policies in the country, Glasgow's public housing still has entrenched within it policies and practices which discriminate against both ethnic minorities and the 'disreputable' working-class. In any case, the fact that lettings procedures were reformed surely suggests that they must at some time have presented barriers to some social groups.

Robinson goes on to discount 'culture', as well as discrimination, as an explanation of differential access to public housing, thus apparently dissociating himself from the 'individual pathology' model which looks very much to cultural behaviour. His central argument is that Asians have recently begun to move into public housing only because it now suits them to do so, for financial and social reasons. He gives as an example East African Asians in Blackburn who, unlike the majority of Asians, held no 'myth of return', and thus were able to act as a pioneer group in entering public housing. They could do so unhindered by the need to save as much money as possible in order to return to their country-of-origin or to send to relatives, both of which actions would necessitate them living in cheap owner-occupied

accommodation, and unhindered also by the desire to offer hospitality to friends and kin, a desire, he argues, met more easily in owner-occupied than in public-rented accommodation.

In such references to a 'myth of return', and preferences for owner-occupation as a tenure for cultural, as well as economic reasons, Robinson does still seem to be adhering to cultural explanations, rather than showing any recognition of external constraints. While of course individual and community aspirations may differ across the country, certainly in Glasgow none of those interviewed revealed any intention or desire to 'return' to Pakistan or India, (for many, of course, it would not be a question of 'returning', but of migrating to an unknown country, being Glasgow-born) but were in fact quite clearly settled in Glasgow, and very committed to living in Govanhill. On the issue of tenure preference, only about one-third of those interviewed expressed a clear preference for owner-occupation, the rest, whatever their current tenure, either preferred council housing or private rented housing, had no clear tenure preference - their major concern simply being to secure decent accommodation, they were therefore willing to consider a range of housing options. The main issue for most of them was the various obstacles they experienced within the allocations process.

Robinson's favouring of individual rather than institutional or structural explanations comes across most strongly in such comments as:

> 'The case of Asian families which have turned down six offers of alternative estates, without even inspecting the property is not atypical. Consequently, Asians spend twice as long on the waiting-list.'
>
> (Robinson, 1980:326. My emphasis)

He makes no reference here of the need for Asians to live in a community where their social, religious, and cultural needs can be met, and that this might lead to the rejection of offers on outlying estates. Nor does he at any point recognise that widespread and often vicious racial harassment does in many cases act as a deterrent to the acceptance of offers which would place a household in an isolated and vulnerable position. This was certainly the case with Govanhill residents, several of whom mentioned a fear of racial harassment as deterring them from applying for council housing, or if they did apply, of only accepting offers in Govanhill or closely-neighbouring areas, a 'choice' which would indeed lead to their spending longer on the waiting-list.

This question of choice is a crucial one - while recognising the importance of analysis at the individual household level, it is important not to lose sight of the external contraints impinging on households: the fault in Robinson's analysis lies in his belief that Asian households are able to make a free and rational choice, based on their needs and desires, a belief which simply ignores their powerless position in society. (See also Ratcliffe, 1981, who emphasises 'choice' rather than 'discrimination' as an explanation of Asian occupation of poor-quality, inner-city housing)..

Clapham and Kintrea's (1984) 'individualist' approach offers a more sophisticated and convincing account of how and why housing is distributed unequally. This type of approach has been used mainly to explain movement within the private sector (e.g. Rossi, 1980), but they have adapted it to the public sector, looking at: a) how choices are made between tenures by households, and b) how the choice of a particular house within the public sector is made. This focus on household choice is a useful addition to Marxist analyses which, in

giving a macro-account of, for example, the functions of the state, tend to overlook the scope for individual responses to any given situation. However, at no point do Clapham and Kintrea suggest that individual choices are made independently, they insist on an understanding of both institutional and structural factors which constrain individual choice. It is, in fact, the constant tension between individual choice and institutional constraint which informs their work, and which is relevant to an analysis of the housing choices available to Asians in Glasgow.

Such a focus on the household contributes to an understanding of these choices in two major ways: firstly, it illustrates the influence structural factors actually have on individual households, especially in their participation, or non-participation, in the public housing system. In other words, it translates into human terms what would otherwise be abstract concepts of poverty, racism, and inequality. Secondly, it highlights the interaction between the institution and the household, which is both dynamic and complex.

Women and housing

A framework which encompasses both individual choice and institutional constraint, along with an awareness of structural factors, can also contribute to an understanding of the relationship between women and housing. Data on women's experience of housing was gathered from housing interviews, case-studies and participant observation: several important themes emerging from this material are recorded here, and are put into the wider context of academic literature examining the position of women nationally in relation to housing.

While women have long been involved in housing struggles, in the housing professions, and are the main consumers of housing, feminist

commentators have only recently begun to address issues around women and housing: a notable exception is Women's Aid refuge provision, which has long been a feminist issue. (Brion and Tinker, 1980; Austerberry and Watson, 1981). In particular, few studies have examined women's unequal access to housing, or housing inequality between women on the bases of race and class. (However, see Moser and Peake, 1987, for a cross-cultural approach to women and housing). Women geographers have broken new ground here, drawing on the traditional concerns of their discipline to point to the major factors which restrict women's access to urban resources, notably distance, mobility, cost of facilities, and knowledge of opportunities. (Women and Geography Study Group of the I.B.G., 1984).

Consideration of these factors helps to explain Asian women's unequal access to housing in Govanhill. As already noted, few Asian women would want to move far from their community networks in Govanhill, and their lack of access to private transport contributes to their reluctance to move to outlying disticts. Distance and lack of mobility, then, combine to restrict Asian women's choice of area of residence to the inner neighbourhoods of the city.

Cost of facilities is particularly relevant to a study of housing, the cost of housing being the major item of expenditure for any household, with a higher proportion of net income being spent on housing by low-income, than by high-income households. The majority of Asian households in Govanhill were low-income, and for many the high cost of both private rented and owner-occupied accommodation contributed to their preference for council housing. The lack of knowledge of opportunities common to many Asian households (for example, lack of knowledge of G.H.A. housing) was exacerbated for Asian women by the fact that they are far less likely than Asian men

to be fluent in the English language, and in addition faced considerable social pressures which discouraged them from dealing directly with public institutions, including the housing agencies.

Madigan (1984) argues that women's economic dependence means that they are also housing dependents, dependent on men for the provision of housing. While this is true for all women, Asian women have a specific experience of housing dependence. Few or no Asian women in Govanhill consider that they own their own home, jointly or otherwise, the common attitude being that the man owns the marital home, while the woman simply lives there, her 'real' home being that of her parents.

While around half of white owner-occupied households name the man as the sole owner of the property, nevertheless almost half hold joint mortgages, with a small proportion (5%) naming the woman as the mortgage-holder. (Austerberry and Watson, 1981). While of course women have a claim on the marital home, whether or not it is in their name, legal rights may often not carry the same weight as social attitudes.

Asian women in Govanhill were frequently unaware of their rights, or else reluctant to pursue them for fear of social sanctions. Mrs. Takhar, for example, felt tied to the house she was occupying with her six children, and she was reluctant to sell it as she thought that her husband, who was living in London for an indefinite period, would be unlikely to 'give' her any of the proceeds of the sale, money she would need if she was to rehouse herself and her children. If women do leave their marital home, usually with few resources, they frequently return to the parental home. While there is a concept of a woman being able to seek refuge with her parents, even here she may be in a vulnerable position. Mrs Mir returned with her children to her

parents' home, but experienced a great deal of stress and tension within the family, and was afraid that her brother would soon ask her to leave.

Thus, many Asian women are in an insecure housing position - their housing is provided by husbands, fathers, or other male relatives, and may be withdrawn at any time. Even if women had sufficient resources and knowledge to acquire their own housing, there is little precedent for them to seek independent access to housing. Single women rarely, if ever, leave their parents' home to set up their own household; however, there is a small, but growing, number of single women with children heading their own household, rather than returning to their parents' home.

In addition to their general inequality of access to housing, and their economic and housing dependence, some groups of women are in a further disadvantaged position within the housing market. The case of Sheras Begum in Chapter Three highlights the range of problems facing a woman seeking to leave the marital home as a result of domestic violence. Feeling deep resentment that her violent husband should be left in possession of the marital home, Sheras nevertheless was forced to seek refuge in Gryffe, the Asian women's hostel. Her lack of resources, and the hostel's position twenty miles from Glasgow, severely restricted her access to Govanhill's social and community services and resources. Temporary re-housing was eventually arranged for her by the local authority, which, being close to Govanhill, was more suited to her needs than their offer of permanent re-housing in a more outlying district. Her housing and community needs were finally met, largely due to the efforts of Crossroads and the Asian Women's Action Group, who secured her an offer of housing in Govanhill, but her experiences during these months illustrates the vulnerable

position which results from a combination of economic disadvantage, social pressures, and institutional constraints. (Pahl, 1985).

A second group who are in a particularly disadvantaged housing position are single parents, the vast majoriy of whom are women: of course, the two groups often overlap, many battered women are also single parents. It has been argued that:

> 'Access to ownership is by economic capital; access to council tenancy is by human capital.'
>
> (New Society. 25 July 1986, p.18)

That is, it is by virtue of their role as a wife that women gain access to home ownership, dependent on men's economic ability to provide housing; and it is largely in their capacity as a mother that women gain access to council housing, there being a statutory duty, under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, for local authorities to rehouse pregnant women, or households with children, but not single people or childless couples.

While this provision may seem to favour women with children, it is a dubious privilege: it simply 'compensates' for the fact that men in the same position are more likely to have a sufficiently high income to enable them to buy their own housing, and are more likely to receive supportive services such as home helps, thus enabling them to maintain a full-time job. (Dale and Foster, 1986).

In addition, while single parents do have access to council housing, they are likely to be allocated the poorest-quality housing, for several reasons. Firstly, the Finer Report (1974) found that single parents were discriminated against within the allocations system, being allowed less points than a two-parent family, and being expected to share bedroom space with children, while couples with children were not. Secondly, many single parents, as well as many

battered women, are rehoused from a position of homelessness, are therefore, usually made only one offer, often of the worst housing available. Thirdly, housing managers tend to share society's negative attitudes towards single parents, thus recommending them for housing on the poorest estates. (Gallagher, 1982). The case of Mrs Hassan in Chapter Three illustrates the working of this process: the household had been homeless, and was stigmatised by housing managers as 'disreputable' because it was a single-parent, low-income Asian family. Consequently, they were rehoused in one of North Govanhill's worst streets.

A household in this position finds itself at the junction between race, class, and gender disadvantage. Other households - Asian two-parent households, battered women, the homeless - experience various forms of housing disadvantage, on one or more of these three main bases. The general situation for all such households is worsening in the context of continuing cutbacks in public expenditure on housing, high levels of unemployment and increasing poverty. At the same time, the demand for housing is increasing, for example, as a result of new, young Asian households entering the housing market, many of whom are likely to apply for council housing, along with the creation of new households on the breakdown of marriage, where, again, single parents and battered women are most likely to turn to the public sector.

Such housing need among minority groups of course exists alongside high and growing levels of housing need among other households. Various groups, then, are in competition for an increasingly scarce resource: these competing demands are likely to result in social conflict, which in turn results in at least two major social processes. Firstly, there will be a further stigmatisation of

disadvantaged groups, such as ethnic minorities, female-headed households, and the 'disreputable' working-class, with members of 'respectable' social groups expressing resentment that 'they' are consuming public services and resources. Secondly, there is likely to be a marked development of pressure groups to protect these competing interests, both on the part of the relatively powerful, for example, the 'transfers' lobby of existing council tenants who have recently won major concessions from Glasgow District Council, and on behalf of the powerless, as in the case of Asian women's and housing groups. The central question here is whether these divisions of interest, and action to defend these interests, constitute housing classes.

Housing class

While there have been serious criticisms of Rex and Moore's concept of housing class in the twenty years since it was first formulated, nevertheless it remains useful today. (Lambert, et al, 1978). Their major contribution has been the argument that class interests can be formed on the basis of housing consumption, as well as on the basis of occupation. This has opened the way for studies such as Lowe's (1986) which analyses the potential for social mobilisation on the basis of housing class. Furthermore, it enables us to allocate an independent class position to women, on the basis of their own relation to housing, rather than in terms of their husband's or father's occupation. It also points to the ways in which consumption interests in general, and housing class in particular, may, or may not, cut across identities and interests based on race, class, or gender. Finally, it helps to explain the link between the centrality of the home to women's identity, and their roles as housewife and mother, with their long history of involvement in housing struggles. (Melling, 1980).

In the Birmingham of the 1960's, then, Rex and Moore identified seven housing classes.

Table 6: Housing classes in Birmingham, 1960's

1. outright owners of large houses in desirable areas
2. mortgage-holders occupying large houses in desirable areas
3. council house tenants
4. council house tenants in slum clearance areas
5. tenants of whole privately-rented houses
6. owners of houses bought with short-term loans, who let rooms in their house, in order to meet loan repayments
7. tenants of rooms in lodging-houses.

Of course, the housing market has changed considerably over the past twenty years, making a direct comparison of housing class impossible. Changes include the general decline of the private rented sector, and in particular the provision of lodging-houses; the growth of owner-occupation, including sales to former council tenants; the increased move of black households into public sector housing, although this is less marked for Asian than for Afro-Caribbean households; and the expansion, since 1974, of housing association provision, particularly in inner-city areas.

In addition, Glasgow has a different housing tradition than Birmingham, with a much higher proportion of council tenancies, and less stigma attached to this tenure, as well as a difference in architectural style, with the tenemental form predominating, rather than the terraced streets common to many English cities.

Nevertheless, the concept of housing class can serve as a model, allowing for the documentation of housing classes in the Glasgow of the 1980's: based on the evaluations of local residents, and fieldwork data, seven housing classes have been identified in Govanhill.

Table 7: Housing classes in Glasgow, 1980's

1. owner-occupier of more desirable housing, e.g. four-in-a-block tenements
2. owner of a housing association property
3. housing association tenant
4. council tenant in more desirable area, e.g. mixed with the better private housing
5. owner-occupation of less desirable properties in the older part of Govanhill
6. council tenant in North Govanhill, except those in the modernised properties
7. private tenants.

This formulation of housing classes has several contributions to make. Firstly, it adds to the generally theoretical debate about housing class evidence based on a detailed local study. Secondly, it illustrates the racial and class divisions which result in most white, skilled working-class and pensioner households belonging to the first four housing classes, while most Asian households, and many unskilled and unemployed white households, belong to the last three housing classes. Thirdly, it provides a mechanism for understanding the exact social and economic position of Asian women, based not only on race or gender, but on housing class. Thus, we are able to assess both the position of women dependent on men for housing provision, who generally belong to housing classes five or seven, and the specific experience of single parents and battered women, most of whom belong to housing class six.

Finally, housing class membership is important as it is on this basis that people may, or may not, take action to defend their interests. In Glasgow, there has been a long tradition of housing

activism, so in this context an understanding of housing class, and its relation to housing action, is especially relevant. Rex and Moore have argued that the lowest housing class, which includes - 'immigrants, many people with irregular forms of social life, and social deviants' (1967:38) - is incapable of organising itself as an interest group. Evidence from Govanhill, similarly, suggests that private tenants, the lowest housing group, are the group least likely to be organised, largely because of their insecurity of tenure, and high levels of mobility.

However, it will be argued in Chapter Five that households belonging to housing classes five and six are more likely to be organised: the chapter will be concerned with the bases on which this organisation takes place, and the forms which housing and community action takes, in particular, the development of the Asian Housing, and Asian Women's Action Groups.

CHAPTER FIVE

Urban social movements: the case of Asian community groups in Govanhill

Chapter Four identified North Govanhill council tenants and homeowners of the older tenemental properties as two of the most disadvantaged housing classes. It is with these two groups that this chapter will largely be concerned, and in particular, with their potential for housing or community action. During the fieldwork period, community groups within each housing class were active, and case-studies of the Asian Women's Action Group, and the Asian Housing Group are recorded below. The groups were of a different nature, held different priorities, and employed different tactics; they also met with a varying level of success, the Asian Women's Action Group (A.W.A.G.) continuing up to the present to be a thriving, developing group, while the Asian Housing Group was in existence for a period of about six months.

The marked differences between the groups raise the issue of how to present fieldwork data. Various methods of presentation may be chosen partly to suit the nature of the material, but in turn, nature of presentation may influence the meanings subsequently attached to the material (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Bearing this in mind, it would seem most appropriate to present the A.W.A.G. material chronologically, as an awareness of the group's development over a fairly long period of time is central to an understanding of their motivations and achievements. A.H.G., in contrast, had no comparable period of development, they simply came into existence to tackle a specific issue, and disbanded again quickly, after they had met with some limited success. Thus, a thematic account of this group's

activities would be more appropriate than a chronological record.

Both case-studies are heavily descriptive - the intention is to give a detailed account of community group activities at a local level. Many such groups exist throughout Britain, but few have any permanent record. Some analysis is included within these accounts, although most of the analysis is reserved for a later section which draws out issues at a wider level, placing the groups' activities within the framework of the women's, working-class and black movements. The final part of the chapter draws on both local case-material, and a wider analysis to construct a theoretical model, which can be applied to urban social movements, with the particular aim of understanding the mobilisation process.

Asian Women's Action Group (A.W.A.G.)

The following is a study of A.W.A.G. over a period of two years, from Summer 1984 to Summer 1986, the group having been established in the Winter of 1983, prior to the beginning of the research project. Changes in membership, the nature of the group, and its activities will be traced. Key events in the group's history will be noted, along with an analysis of these events.

While it is true that Asian women do share a range of interests, it is also true that there are significant differences, based on class, religion, level of education, urban or rural background, etc. The founder-members of the A.W.A.G. had in common two or more of: middle-class status, urban origins, and education. This means, not that they shared interests more strongly than other Asian women, but that they had resources which enabled them to identify where their interests lay, and subsequently to take action. Later, however, a broader base was established within the group, including middle and working-class women, Sikh as well as Muslim (though the latter

predominated) and illiterate women from rural backgrounds as well as educated urban women.

While it is true that the majority of group members were married women with children, certain key members had in common the fact that adult male members of the household were absent on a prolonged or permanent basis. For example, one of the active group members was in the position where her husband was in Pakistan on a long-term basis, while another, younger, woman lived in a household headed by her mother, her father living in London for an indefinite period of time. Evidence to support a connection between the absence of male authority figures within the household, and active group membership lies in the many comments made by Asian women, along the following lines:

> 'We always have to be back to see to them, cook their meals, tidy the house, see to the children, they don't like us to go out, except to the shops or something.'

Or, while at a group meeting:

> 'He thinks I'm at the shops now, you know...[laughs]...I'm not supposed to be here...can't stay too long though, can't explain being out for more than a couple of hours.'

The term 'key members' refers to those group members who played a more active role in organising meetings, initiating action, and supporting the involvement of other women in the group, as opposed to 'ordinary' members, usually the majority, who attended meetings but adopted a more passive role. The main differences between the two were that 'key members' tended to be from families of urban, middle-class origins, to be more highly-educated and politically aware than their counterparts, and to live in a female-headed household.

Several important issues emerged during the early period of the group's development: firstly, debate over the nature of the group

itself; secondly, the group's relationship to the Action-Research Project; and thirdly, practical issues of group tactics.

The nature of the Asian Women's Action Group was debated by the group itself, as well as by community workers and researchers. Crossroads identified three major types of community group: 'service delivery', which is mainly concerned with providing services or resources for a target group, e.g. Dixon Halls day-care centre for the elderly; 'self-help' groups, where members are mainly concerned with bringing about improvements for group members, e.g. tenants groups such as Daisychain; and 'community action' groups which adopt a more conflictual perspective, with the intention of bringing about wider social change.

Crossroads workers felt both that the nature of A.W.A.G. was for a fairly long time unclear, and that in fact at different times the group could be said to conform to all three models of community organisation. That is, they provided services for Asian women, e.g. sewing classes, engaged in self-help, for example in attending a course on welfare rights, and also engaged in community action, e.g. addressing the issue of racism. Thus, A.W.A.G. differed from most other community groups in that it was never a single-issue group, but engaged in a wide range of community activism.

Wider debate focused on whether A.W.A.G. was a general community group or specifically a women's group. For example, community workers questioned whether action on welfare rights might orient the group towards a more general focus, away from women's issues such as domestic violence. While this was primarily an issue for the group themselves, an issue for community workers was their role in relation to the group, in particular, whether they were 'holding back' group development, for example, by conducting group discussions in English.

The question of language usage recurred throughout the group's development, and was an important issue in several respects: firstly, many women were less fluent in English than in Urdu or Punjabi, and their participation in group meetings was thus limited by the use of English; secondly, the use of English was primarily to allow for participation by white community workers and researcher. Language usage, then, raises the issues of control and directiveness, in that those with greater command of a language could be expected to exercise greater control over the proceedings. Thus, in the early months, it was the case that white English-speakers tended to play a more active role; later, however, as the group began to gain skills and confidence there was a marked shift towards the use of Asian languages, paralleling a shift in the balance of power. (Staff meeting, November 1984).

A further dimension to the group's development was its relationship to the research process, the Action-Research Project in effect consisting of a triangular relationship between researchers, community workers, and Asian women. The role of research in relation to A.W.A.G. was debated at various group, staff, and P.M.C. meetings, meetings which identified the central issue as being the tension which existed between A.W.A.G.'s need and desire for active involvement, and the need for the researcher to 'stand back' a little from this action.

There was in the beginning considerable pressure for the researcher to participate fully in group activities, in effect to combine action and research. While some projects have favoured allocating both roles to one person, the Govanhill Project was committed from its earliest days to separating the roles of research and action. (Jacobs, 1974). This was in line with the belief that the two roles required very different knowledge and skills, and that

in any case to conduct both action and research would be an impossible task for any one person. Soon, therefore, roles were established whereby community workers and group members took responsibility for organising group activities, leaving the researcher, through participant observation, to document and analyse these activities.

At every stage in the group's development, questions of tactics emerged. While at one level these involved purely practical questions of which issues to address, when, and how, they were also related to wider issues of principle and philosophy. It may be argued that a group's organisational style reflects its ideology, values and beliefs. For example, feminist groups have often consciously adopted an anti-hierarchical, anti-bureaucratic mode of operation, in line with their rejection of the values of patriarchal society. (Morgan, 1970; Rowbotham, 1972; Mitchell and Oakley, 1976). Similarly, community activists have developed similar values and commitments, in reaction to their perception of the priorities of capitalist society. For example, Murray (1987) notes that Crossroads' adoption of a neighbourhood community action model was influenced by the work of theorists such as Alinsky (1972).

While they were not necessarily familiar with this ideological background, A.W.A.G. nevertheless drew to a significant extent on these principles of feminist and community activism. Thus, they were concerned to establish an accountable, anti-hierarchical group, with members participating equally in the decision-making process.

However, for A.W.A.G. as for many other feminist and community groups, the translation of principle into practice was not always a straightforward process: inequalities between group members in terms of class, status and education, the, albeit unwilling, early dominance of English-speakers, and the tendency of some members to adopt a more

active, key role within the group, have all been noted above. Nevertheless, the importance of commitment to these principles is not negated by difficulties of implementation: the central point here is that this commitment locates A.W.A.G. firmly within the wider context of urban social movements, a context which will be explored more fully later in the chapter.

Summer 1984 - making a video

The first major project undertaken by the group was the making of a video about the processes involved in making a claim for welfare benefits. The idea was to raise a subject relevant to many Asian women's lives, and by making the video in Urdu with English subtitles, for it to be as accessible as possible. The video could be shown at various venues, with a threefold aim: to pass on useful information on the benefits system, to encourage women to seek further advice on a range of problems, and to attract new members to the group.

In making the video, technical aid came from Queen's College, Glasgow, advice and help from community workers and students, while the Asian women themselves wrote the script and acted the parts. The result was a half-hour long video, well-made and well-presented, telling the fictional, but fairly common, story of a young Asian woman's life. Briefly, her husband leaves her to return to Pakistan, leaving her with little money and with children to care for. She has little knowledge of the English language, so a friend goes with her to the D.H.S.S. Office to help translate, and to explain how the system operates. The same friend helps her through the subsequent process - from visits from the D.H.S.S. Officer, to filling in forms and finding necessary documentation, to awaiting the giro cheque and finally shopping for food.

The video, then, dramatised the range of obstacles faced by Asian women in dealing with the benefits system, the complexities of a bureaucratic system being compounded by lack of familiarity with the English language. A major aim of the video was to address the material conditions of Asian women's lives, and to this end the video proved to be of considerable practical value. However, it was also of importance in the development of the group: firstly, in increasing group members' confidence in their own skills and abilities; secondly, in giving a clear focus to the group through their joint work on a shared project; thirdly, in defining a target group towards which their activities should be directed; and fourthly, as the subsequent showing of the video attracted new members, it allowed the group to broaden its base, and to connect with a wider reference group.

September 1984 - Information Forum

This was organised by A.W.A.G. to create better communication between a range of statutory and voluntary agencies and Asians in Govanhill, thus improving Asian access to, and understanding of, services and resources. Agencies invited included the District Council Housing Department, Govanhill Housing Association, United Kingdom Immigration Advisory Service, Gryffe Women's Aid, and local primary and secondary schools.

Around 50-60 people attended the occasion, all Asian women except for one or two white women, and a couple of Asian men. All attending agreed that the event was a success, with lively discussion between local people and agency representatives, as well as between the agencies themselves. Local people had a range of queries about housing, education, social work, etc. answered, while liaison between those working within these services was improved.

For A.W.A.G., the most important outcome of the day was that they attracted many women who would not usually come to their meetings, though most were known to them personally, and also, their credibility as a group was enhanced, due to the successful organisation of an event relevant to the needs of the local community. One local woman who attended the forum commented:

> 'Isn't it great that they've been able to put on something like this, it just shows what you can do if you try...we really need things like this around here.'

Thus, it would seem that A.W.A.G., in widening their contacts in this way, were seeking to mobilise on the basis of residential community rather than sectoral interests (Lowe, 1986). That is, they had chosen to identify with Asian women living in Govanhill, a specific grouping within the residential community, and not with a particular sectoral interest group, such as all claimants or all private tenants.

October 1984 - Meeting on racism

The Asian women's group invited a worker from the Community Relations Council to give a talk on racism. The speaker outlined a number of immigration issues, as well as discussisng racism in Britain in general. She took a radical political stance, in particular objecting to the presence of white community workers and researcher at the meeting, and our involvement with the group. The meeting was well-attended, and there was much lively discussion in both Urdu and English on a range of topics.

At this meeting, as on many other occasions, the importance of language usage was very clear. When the meeting proceeded in English, discussion was more formal, more restrained, more slowly-paced, contrasting with the much more animated and intense exchanges in Urdu. From participant observation, it was becoming increasingly clear that shifts in the balance of power accompanied these changes in language usage, and, on this occasion, this was clearly the effect intended by the

black Community Relations Officer. The dynamics of the situation were that the meeting changed sharply from being an occasion organised by white community workers and researcher, to a meeting where Asian women took the initiative and participated fully in discussion, to the slight bewilderment of the white women present.

This meeting, then, represented an interesting reversal of the more usual situation where English is taken to be the norm, with some translation provided for those women who, unable to understand much English, so often sit through hours of discussion, understanding little of the proceedings. Asked why these women persisted in attending group meetings when they were so clearly unable to participate in discussions, one key member replied:

> 'They just like to be with us, anyway, it's better than sitting at home by themselves, they like to feel part of the group.'

For the researcher, the meeting provided some insight into the feelings of confusion and powerlessness that this position entails, and, in particular, experience of the (more or less futile) attempts commonly made in such situations to 'piece together' the import of a conversation from the few fragments which are understood.

Equally important as the meeting itself was the discussion which took place afterwards, when group members, researcher and community workers expressed their reactions to the meeting. The community worker's position was that, while she recognised the fact of institutional racism, she felt that she and her organisation (Crossroads) had a good record, in having black people on the management committee, and in being committed to local people's self-determination. My response was that, politically, I accepted black people's right to self-determination/separate organisation, yet as a researcher felt that it was better to do some work than none at all, despite the contradictions. As for the group, one member agreed

wholly with the separatist stance, while the rest tended to think some of her analysis to be unjustified. That is, they felt that, while racism clearly existed and was to be opposed, white people should be judged individually, and if the work they did was useful or relevant to black people's own needs, then they were quite prepared to work alongside whites.

The political stance of the group was complicated by their personal feelings: on the one hand, they were keenly interested in hearing the views put forward by the radical black woman speaker, while on the other hand, they felt uncomfortable at hearing her vocal criticisms of the white community workers and researcher with whom they were working so closely. One member commented:

> 'She was very hard on you, Julia. I don't think she needed to go as far as she did. Of course racism is wrong, but some white people are O.K.'

This ambivalence was compounded by some resentment that their judgement in having participated in the Project's selection of a white researcher had also been implicitly called into question.

The meeting was an important one, taking place at a formative period in the group's development, and it served to crystallize many of their thoughts and feelings on the politics of racism, and of research.

November 1984 - Attendance at meetings

Large numbers attending the meeting on racism contrasts with the generally poor attendance at meetings at around this time. Frequently, only one or two women would turn up, making any real discussion impossible. This attendance pattern raised important issues of principles and tactics for the group. At the core of the group was a small number of women who were both willing and able to initiate action, along with a larger number of irregular attenders who adopted a more passive role. This, of course, is a not unfamiliar pattern among black and women's

community groups. (Mayo, 1977; Ohri et al, 1982). The main issue for the group was whether they would take the easier route of the active members assuming a leadership role, with the intermittent support of more passive members, or whether they would confront the leadership issue and aim for a more anti-hierarchical structure.

The group opted for the latter course, and without necessarily believing that leadership could be dispensed with altogether, they did commit themselves to undermining power structures as far as possible. Putting this principle into practice involved sustained efforts, which were largely successful, to broaden the base of the group, attracting working-class and illiterate women, as well as those from more affluent, educated backgrounds. It meant also a democratic process of decision-making, whereby any action was decided on by consensus, rather than by the influence of one or two powerful speakers: in effect, no decisions were made unless everyone concerned had been consulted, either inside or outside of group meetings. Finally, it meant the time-consuming translation of all group communications - both verbal and written - into both Urdu or Punjabi and English, in order to ensure the fullest possible participation of all group members.

In explaining the sporadic attendance patterns characteristic of A.W.A.G., during this period, there is a myth that Asian women are passive and apathetic, reluctant or unable to engage in collective action (even members of the group have said that 'Asian women are just lazy'). In reality, of course, they are frequently burdened with housework and childcare to the extent that they have no opportunity to attend meetings: equally, they may be socially constrained - 'a woman's place is in the home' - or even physically confined to the house by a husband or other members of the family. Thus, for most Asian women there are many factors militating against their community involvement, and the potential for

action is very limited. Those who do become involved, often drawing on educational, class, or personal resources, face considerable criticism coming from within the Asian community, typically on the grounds that in forming a women's group they are breaking up marriages. This pressure, as in many other women's groups, may well deter potential members.

December 1984 - Showing the video

Once the video was completed, A.W.A.G. members, community workers and researcher engaged in several weeks of discussion, concerning the appropriate venue for the showing of the video, and what was hoped to be gained from the exercise. The consensus was that choice of venue was very important, as this had implications for the type of audience it would reach. For example, the saree shops were used primarily by Muslim rather than Sikh women, while Sikh as well as Muslim women could be contacted through the local nursery school; furthermore, certain groups of Muslim women were more likely to use one rather than another of the five saree shops in Govanhill. Other possible venues considered were the private houses used by the more religiously-observant Muslim women for prayer-meetings on Friday evenings.

In the end, the 'Parents Room' in Annette Street primary school was chosen, for several reasons: firstly, it was a venue familiar to most Asian women in the neighbourhood; secondly, it was equally used by all sections of the Asian community - no-one was likely to feel excluded on religious, kinship or any other grounds; and thirdly, the meetings could be arranged to fit in with the school timetable, thus allowing women to attend unhindered by responsibility for children, or their husbands' negative attitudes to their leaving the house without 'good reason'.

The showing of the video was deliberately planned as a joint action-research event, with Crossroads providing video facilities and welfare advice, A.W.A.G. advising and translating, and myself observing

and documenting the proceedings. It was felt to be important to record the whole event as it was a new kind of activity for A.W.A.G., undertaking outreach, rather than contacting women already known to them.

Around 10-12 women attended each day, first watching the video, then seeking detailed advice on welfare, housing and immigration issues. The set-up was very informal with women forming and re-forming small groups to suit their needs. There was also discussion amongst the women, not necessarily with group members, on personal and family problems. As usual, discussion was in both Urdu and English, much of it being translated so that everyone could understand most of what was said.

It is important to note that, along wih a range of practical aims, these days were also a social occasion. This is an important end in itself, given the extent to which many women were confined to their home, and had few other meeting-places. It is also important in that socialising helps to break down isolation, and is often the first step towards the recognition of shared interests. Later, if women became involved in community action, their personal and social contacts made for a stronger and more cohesive group.

The showing of the video did, in fact, attract some new members. It is interesting to note the process involved in becoming included in the group. One woman's experience can serve as an illustration: arriving early in the day, there were few others there, and she sat alone, obviously feeling awkward. She exchanged a few words with one or two members of the group, then watched the video. Before the video was over she had visibly relaxed, began to enter into more animated conversation, in Urdu, on both practical and personal matters. She met with a warm response and so began her gradual acceptance into the group.

It is interesting to note the transformation of the event from a tense, slightly formal beginning, with community workers taking a lot of

the initiative, to a more relaxed, informal atmosphere later in the day, when community workers had moved slightly into the background, and Asian women were communicating freely amongst themselves.

Conversation ranged from immediate welfare problems, to the question of arranged marriages:

> 'I had an arranged marriage myself, but I don't think I would do the same for my children...mind you, I don't blame my parents, they were just doing what they thought was best for me.'

This reply, after some slight hesitation, to the community worker's question on the subject, indicates a level of trust in the white people present not to judge as 'strange' Asian culture and customs. This pattern of slight hesitation to discuss certain subjects with white people, followed by the decision to trust, was also evident on several other occasions, most notably in relation to the question of arranged marriages, and immigration/nationality issues, both of which are the object of much misunderstanding and prejudice. (Wilson, 1978).

After the meeting, group members discussed the success of the event, and debated the future direction and development of A.W.A.G. They noted that women were much more interested in attending what they perceived as social events, rather than occasions more formally presented as 'community action' meetings. In reality, the distinction between the two, for A.W.A.G. at least, is artificial: 'social' occasions were often the setting for self-help and community organising, while 'action' group meetings were also important in terms of social interaction. Nevertheless, in order to attract new members to the group, A.W.A.G. were beginning to realise that presentation was important, and that they should perhaps organise more overtly 'social' occasions, in order to attract new members, and by this means introduce them to community activism.

May 1985 - the housing interviews

Afte a break of four months in participant observation, it was clear that there were some changes in the group, although attendance at meetings was still variable, sometimes good, sometimes as few as two turning up. Group members were clearly gaining in confidence, and this, along with my own growing knowledge, enabled a detailed series of housing interviews to be conducted. Some agreed to be interviewed themselves, while others arranged interviews, and trans[illegible]ed, where necessary.

One major lesson learnt from the showing of the video was that, as one community worker expressed it:

> 'You should start from where a group is at, not from where you want them to be. So, instead of saying - "we think you've got shared problems and could take collective action on them" - you start by saying - "do you want to make a video?" - and just take it from there.'

This lesson was applied to the next major action - research venture, the housing interviews: the difficulty of discussing housing issues in the abstract was recognised, and the decision was taken, therefore, to begin with more material issues.

The research task of conducting the interviews was preceded by a series of 'home visits' carried out by a community work student, with the twofold aim of following up, contacts made with women at the video presentation, amongst other new contacts, and of offering to them welfare rights advice. These 'home visits' were ostensibly about welfare benefits checks, and indeed large amounts of unclaimed benefits were discovered, but they also highlighted widespread poor housing conditions. Interestingly, few people complained about their housing conditions, focussing instead on welfare benefits, and so the exercise had the effect of uncovering some hitherto hidden housing issues. Community workers

confirmed that Asian people visiting the information centre were far more likely to seek advice on benefits than on housing.

In both the 'home visits' and the housing interviews, the question of selection was a central one. The 'home visits' were arranged on the basis of selecting one household to represent different types of family circumstances, the intention was not necessarily to contact the neediest or most disadvantaged, but to aim for a fairly representative cross-section of the Asian community.

In contrast, the housing interviews were not intended to be 'representative', nor were they intended to provide a 'random sample': the number of interviews was simply too small to be able to make these claims. Selections were made by developing a network of contacts, beginning with some 'key' members of A.W.A.G., and moving outwards from this core, making contact with a circle of their friends, relatives and neighbours. Jeffrey (1976) adopted a similar method of making contacts, in her fieldwork with Asians in Bristol, in line with the shared aim of collecting qualitative data from a small sample, rather than quantitative data from a larger sample.

The housing interviews illustrated the continuing development of a good action-research relationship. A circular process was often in evidence, in this case where action work uncovered hidden housing issues which were further investigated by research work, results of which were later taken up by action workers. As with the video project, the triangular relationship between A.W.A.G., researcher, and Crossroads workers was a productive one, each contributing their own skills and knowledge to a shared undertaking.

In particular, A.W.A.G. played an important role within the research process: making contacts, translating some interviews, posing new research questions and helping to refine the focus of the research. The group at

this stage was steadily gaining confidence in its own skills, was more prepared to take the initiative, and to play a more active role within the action-research project.

August-October 1985 - Domestic and racial violence

After a second break in fieldwork, this time for two months, changes in the group were again apparent. Membership had grown considerably and new interests were being established. Levels of confidence and optimism were high, and the group now felt able to address controversial issues such as racial harassment and domestic violence. In the course of several discussions, they outlined the scope and nature of racial harassment in Govanhill, noting that it was widespread and took many forms, from verbal abuse, to racist graffiti, to physical attacks. Domestic violence was not a new phenomenon, but this was perhaps the first time it had been publicly discussed. Some of the group had experienced it themselves, and were coming into contact with increasing numbers of other women who were subject to violence.

While some women were initially a little reluctant to discuss domestic violence, the strength of feeling on the subject soon overcame their hesitation: discussion of the issue was often intense and prolonged, reflecting the extent to which it had long been a hidden problem, shrouded in shame and secrecy. Some of the most vocal women were, understandably, those who had experienced violence themselves: discussion of their experiences was clearly an important step, the first time they had been communicated to outsiders.

The consensus of the group was that Asian women needed far more service provision, as well as practical and emotional support to enable them to leave violent husbands, and they were of the opinion that sympathy should lie with the woman, not with the man. As one woman expressed it:

'People say you shouldn't leave him, you should give the man a chance. Well, I gave my husband a twenty-year "chance", and it didn't get me anywhere.'

Group members were beginning to take action in support of battered women, and were also very concerned about the quality of help available to them. In addition to the frequent inadequacy of police, legal, and social work services, they were also concerned about the Asian women's refuge. Based on the experience of one member of the group, and their visits to the refuge, they felt that it was inappropriate in several ways: it did not encourage visits from a woman's friends, important as the refuge was twenty miles from the city, and thus women, especially those speaking little English were very isolated (one woman travelled the twenty miles by bus every day, with four children, simply for the help and support she received from A.W.A.). It also seemed that refuge workers were not always supportive of a woman's decision to leave her husband, and sometimes encouraged her to return. Workers were educated, middle-class Indian women and many of the A.W.A.G. women, often illiterate, working-class Pakistani women, felt they could have little in common with them. (See Uberoi, 1965, on the divisions between educated and non-educated Asian women).

Much of the new membership came from women attending the sewing-classes established by A.W.A.G. in association with the Community Education Department. Funding for these classes came from the E.E.C. Social Fund, A.W.A.G., Crossroads and Community Education having worked hard together to secure funding from this source. This was a considerable achievement within a climate where funding for 'social' causes was increasingly difficult to obtain. There was a greater demand for these classes than could be accommodated, and one session soon grew into two per week. While women clearly did want to learn to sew, for many it was equally important as a social event, and the provision of a free creche

meant that for a couple of hours per week they were free to pursue their own interests. On the surface, sewing classes may not seem a radical step, rather a means of reinforcing women's roles. However, for many Asian women, simply leaving the house and meeting with other women is a radical step. In addition, several group members noted that going to a sewing class, on the surface a 'respectable' activity, enabled them to engage in a range of social and political organising. Consciousness-raising, shared childcare, advocacy, problem-solving, education and planning community action tactics all took place at the sewing classes.

Another area of expansion for the group at this time was its involvement with the Govanhill Area Liaison Committee. This committee had been established by social workers, health workers, teachers, police and others working with the Asian community in Govanhill, with the aim of encouraging liaison between these services and the community, in order to improve the nature and quality of the services offered.

Members of A.W.A.G. attended several meetings, but quickly became disillusioned with the potential for the committee to bring about any significant change. During the meetings they played a very passive role, responding to direct questions, but not volunteering any contributions. After one such meeting they suggested that as researcher, at future meetings:

> '...you should do the talking for us, you know how to talk to these people...they'll listen to you, you tell them what we want.'

Such a comment was in significant contrast to the gains the group had been making in confidence, knowledge and skills, and the more equal part they were beginning to play within the action-research project. They soon stopped attending A.L.C. meetings, partly because they were intimidated by the structure and style of the committee, partly because they didn't

believe it had anything significant to offer, and partly because they disagreed with the approach of some committee members. For example, when the community police officer stated that:

> '...the police department has received some funding to provide a home help service for the ethnics'

group members objected to the police administering a social service which they thought themselves better qualified to co-ordinate, and they also objected to his use of the term 'ethnics', which they felt reduced Asian people to a mere category.

A.W.A.G., then, abandoned their efforts in this direction and concentrated on developing a range of activities within the group, and on their increasing involvement with the Project, which was by then entering its second year. The first year had been spent in awareness of the need to involve Asian women in the Project, particularly within the management structure, but only now were efforts in this direction meeting with a significant measure of success.

In September 1985, several Asian women attended the second Project Review, whereas attendance at the first Review in January 1985 had been all-white. In October, several Asian women began regular attendance at P.M.C. meetings, which had previously been attended by only one Asian woman. Such involvement was deemed to be crucial by existing P.M.C. members, the consensus being that there was a real need for Asian participation in the management structure, and in decision-making processes, if the danger of tokenism was to be avoided.

It is interesting to note the newly-emerging dynamics between Asian and white members of the P.M.C., in that fuller Asian involvement required some adjustment on the part of existing white members. For example, at a P.M.C. meeting in October, there was some initial awkwardness due to changed membership, but this was soon overcome as the realisation grew

that all members shared a common purpose and direction, even if they had different backgrounds and perspectives.

In terms of approach to meetings, it soon became clear that different attitudes prevailed: white women tended to be more concerned with punctual timekeeping, agendas, and focussed discussions, while Asian women took a more relaxed approach, focussing on changing individual needs and responses, rather than formal schedules and procedures. For example, as researcher I attempted a formal presentation of research issues to the group, an attempt which was soon subverted by the group's own approach: the result was a detailed and prolonged discussion of racial and domestic violence (the group's own immediate priorities), rather than a consideration of housing issues (the researcher's own longer-term interests).

Reversals of earlier patterns also took place at more social occasions, for example, the attendance of white community and research workers at a celebration of eid-ul-fitr. Despite enjoying the celebrations, the white people there shared a sense of unease, conscious of being in the minority, and of not being familiar with the meanings of the event, nor with the conventions of behaviour. One of the community workers commented:

> 'Look at us huddled together in a group, we don't know where to put ourselves, do we? They must feel like this with us all the time...it makes you think, doesn't it?'

Such incidents during participant observation provide valuable information on how the dynamics between black and white groups are played out within an everyday context. While such reversals in numerical and social dominance are interesting, the very fact that they are unusual occurrences worthy of note signals the fact that the balance of racial power has shifted hardly at all, at a wider level, whatever the degree of mutual respect and co-operation which may exist at an interpersonal level.

March-April 1986 - Expansion of interests

The Spring of 1986 saw heightened activity within the group, with diversification into a number of new areas and consolidation of long-standing interests. These fell into two main categories - adult education, and housing and community.

In terms of education, the group arranged for talks, e.g. on health care, which aroused great interest. Many women were worried about their own or their family's health, but were often reluctant to approach doctors. In any case, they felt there was never enough time for things to be explained properly. Thus, information from a health visitor on a range of health issues, especially reproduction, was welcomed, as was the opportunity to ask questions. Half-a-dozen members of the group attended a course on welfare rights, feeling that they wanted to lessen their dependence on Crossroads, and to be able to advise women themselves.

During this period the group continued to develop their interest in housing issues, and began to discuss the potential for housing action. Their interests lay in several areas, but in particular they were concerned with refuge provision for battered women, and with access to public housing. In the short-term, they were mainly preoccupied with hostel accommodation, as this was in line with their overwhelming concern with the safety and welfare of battered women within their community. A lot of their action at this time was directed towards this issue, in particular the nature and quality of provision at Gryffe Asian women's refuge.

In contrast, action directed towards housing access was likely to take place only in the medium to long-term. Concern over the issue was great, as they were aware that Asians were seriously under-represented within the public housing sector, and several had themselves faced serious obstacles in gaining access. Typical comments included:

> 'You go down to Argyle Street [housing allocations department for City Centre and South, which includes Govanhill] and they just don't want to know, no-one shows you how to fill in the forms, or helps you to decide which choices to make.'
>
> and:
>
> 'They're all right on the 'phone, then when you go down and they see a black face, that's it, you know you've got no chance.'

However, despite their concern the group was not at that point ready to take action: they realised the extreme difficulty of tackling the whole question of the operation of the allocations system, although in the longer-term they did aspire to having some influence on housing policy, and on the decision-making processes of the Housing Department. (See Dunleavy, 1980, on the importance of recording non-action over housing issues).

While this was a significant block to the potential development of community action within the group, they had reached a level of maturity which enabled them to decide priorities for action: their decision at that time was to aim for shorter-term, more realistic goals, in line with their concern to steadily build-up the skills and confidence of the group, postponing wider, more difficult issues, such as housing allocations, until a later date.

However, this by no means represented an abandonment of housing issues: rather, the group broadened out their interests on the one hand to a more community or neighbourhood level, and on the other hand, to an interest in housing at the city-wide level.

At the neighbourhood level, they became involved in the newly re-formed Govanhill Residents Association, a mixed white and Asian association formed to address issues affecting all Govanhill residents. One of the important issues addressed by the association early in 1986 was the question of the proposed new community facility. A.W.A.G. took a

great deal of interest in this issue, seeing in a new community centre the potential for a significant expansion in the group's activities, as well as improved provision for the Asian community in general.

The possibility of a new community centre arose from a deal agreed by Glasgow District Council and the Scottish Development Association. Under this deal, G.D.C. would release some of their land in Govanhill to the private builders, Laing, in exchange for securing the Garden Festival of 1988, to be sited on the South Side of Glasgow, on the understanding also that a 'community facility' would be built in Govanhill.

Local councillors attended the first G.R.A. meeting to explain this deal, in particular, why they had released land for private development, instead of using it to build new council housing. They said:

> 'We only released the land under the threat that the Garden Festival wouldn't go ahead...but now we feel that we were conned...as yet the S.D.A. haven't offered us anything concrete...instead of a community centre all we've been offered is a BMX track!'

Thus, to a large extent the question of a new community centre was hypothetical: nevertheless, local people took the possibility seriously, and entered into a great deal of discussion as to the future use of such a centre. Members of A.W.A.G. attended meetings in order to represent the interests of Asian women, in order to ensure their full participation in any community development within Govanhill.[1]

At a city-wide level, some members of A.W.A.G. attended the 'Inquiry into Housing in Glasgow', organised by G.D.C. Statutory and voluntary agencies, as well as housing action groups, made representations to this 'Inquiry', in an attempt to identify the major housing problems in Glasgow, and any possible solutions. A.W.A.G. made a written submission to the 'Inquiry', but made no verbal contribution, as they felt slightly intimidated by the formality of the proceedings. In this case, as with the A.L.C., it seemed that A.W.A.G.'s growing confidence as a group did

not extend to dealing with official bodies whom they perceived as representing the white Establishment.

Summer 1986 - End of the fieldwork period

The Summer months saw my final withdrawal from the action-research project in order to begin to write up the research findings. The last major involvement was with the Third Project Review, held in June 1986: after this, the P.M.C. went on to prepare for the beginning of the new work in the Autumn. This work consisted of a new E.S.R.C.-funded Project, with the aim of researching Asian women's experiences of domestic voilence. At this period the A.W.A.G. was steadily gaining both in numbers and in strength, and played an increasingly active and central role in the work of the Project Management Committee.

A.W.A.G.'s involvement in the third Project Review, and in P.M.C. meetings during this period, illustrated the steadily increasing skills and confidence of the group. At the Review, several important issues were raised, and many interesting exchanges took place between Asian women, community workers and researchers.

Domestic violence continued to be an important issue, with Asian and white women comparing the similarities and differences between their perceptions and experiences. The following extracts from the discussion highlight some of the issues covered:

Nasira:	Most battered women won't go to the authorities, they're scared to go to the police, they might suffer badly with their relatives if they did. Asian women won't speak out or complain about their problems, they'll only discuss them amongst themselves.
Carol:	Yes, the problem does seem to be hidden.
Julia:	Would women speak to a researcher, if they could be sure it was confidential?
Nasira:	Some would, some wouldn't.
Carol:	What about involving the women from Gryffe?

Nasira: But women won't go to a refuge, people will talk, say she's a bad woman.

Ellen: But your group doesn't condemn these women.

Nasira: No, but we have a bad reputation ourselves...but we will defend ourselves against these accusations...I still believe women should leave violent husbands.

Carol: But they often don't, as there's nowhere for them to go.

Nasira: Men just think women are their property.

Amarjit: This is all nonsense, I could knock a man down, I'd just hit him back if he hit me.

Rehana: But not all women are as strong as you.

Ellen: What you need then is a class in self-defence...you know, you should remember that it's not always easy for white women either, we've had much the same problems.

Nasreen: But it is easier for white women, they can just leave their husbands.

Ellen: No, not always, they face the same problems of money and housing, and are often still condemned as bad women. We haven't had refuges that long, it's been a struggle. I remember the first women's hostel in Glasgow, people set the door alight, they did everything to get them out. I thought it was a terrible place myself, very poor conditions, but for the women there it was a safe place, it was what they needed.

Carol: Yes, those refuges were only set up fifteen years ago, they faced lots of difficulties...it's the same for you now, but you have to start somewhere, start in small ways and build slowly on that.

Sheraz: I know one woman, her husband used to tie her hands and leave her in the house all day, he'd come back to untie her so she could cook his meal, then tie her up again. She's in a refuge now.

Nasira: Perhaps you do have lots of the same problems, but it's still different for us, we have no choice, we have to marry just anyone.

The discussion moved from violence against wives to child abuse. Here, comments by the Asian women became noticeably more guarded and hesitant: indeed, they were reluctant to use the term 'sexual abuse' at

all, referring to it only in an indirect fashion. Clearly, this type of abuse is even more hidden than marital violence.

Ellen: Have you come across any cases of child abuse within your community?

Nasira: Well, there's been at least one case of abuse, against one small girl.

Carol: You mean sexual abuse?:

Nasira: Yes.

Amarjit: There's too much abuse taking place.

Carol: Who carries out the abuse?

Amarjit: Oh, I don't know, not the parents.

Nasira: Well, this does happen sometimes.

Much of the Review, then, concentrated on domestic violence, understandably as this was the focus of the forthcoming Project. However, some housing issues also emerged, notably the group's response to the venue for the Review, a sheltered housing complex in the Gorbals: the Review was held in the communal recreation room, with a lunchtime break in the pleasant gardens outside. The group was very favourably impressed with the setting, and commented both individually and as a group that a similar housing complex would be ideal for their own needs, enabling them to cater for both individual and family housing needs.

The community worker responded to their comments, saying that their only real hope of securing such accommodation would be to form their own Housing Association. Clearly, this would be a long-term project, but not an impossible one, if the group continued to increase their confidence and skills. In the shorter-term, they considered, albeit half-jokingly, more immediate direct action:

> 'What if we just stayed here, refused to leave? There's a lot of us here, and we're quite powerful.'

The group had no serious intention of taking that course of action, but it is interesting that they even suggested it, and that they felt themselves to be 'quite powerful'. This indicated the group's readiness to begin to address difficult housing issues, and was a measure of the progress the group had made over a period of two years, since they had first begun tentatively to address welfare rights issues, in the making of the video.

Asian Housing Group (A.H.G.)

The Asian Housing Group was very different in nature than the Asian Women's Action Group, never being a cohesive or consistently active group, and, in fact, only staying together for a period of six months. In order to make sense of the patchy and shortlived existence of this group, it will be useful to give a thematic, rather than chronological account of its activities.

These themes, under the broad headings of sharing interests, recognising interests, and mobilisation, provide for a clearer analysis of the development and activities of A.H.G., and later in the chapter, provide a framework for the analysis of community action groups and urban social movements, in general.

Sharing interests

Members of A.H.G. all lived within the council housing sector of North Govanhill, and represented around half of the fifteen or so Asian households living in this area. The group came together partly because they were an easily identifiable minority, and partly because they had all experienced serious levels of racial harassment. There were a range of conflicting interests between group members, notably between those of different national and class origins, and considerable obstacles to communication on the basis of gender, with male members frequently feeling unable to relate to women on the equal basis essential to the success of a community group. Mr. Sharma, for example, commented that:

> 'I would prefer to be in a group with men, I don't know what to say to Asian women...in our culture women are second-class citizens, they don't know how to relate to men. I can talk to you, though, that's different.'

His unease within the group arose also from the fact that, as an Indian, he was in the minority, and had some misgivings about working together with Pakistanis. These misgivings were betrayed by the contradictions apparent in some of his statements:

> 'I live alone, so I'm not too bothered about myself, really, I'm in the group for the sake of the families, to help those with children.'

Yet at the same time he appeared to be blaming the families to some extent for the harassment they suffered:

> 'Pakistanis tend to have such big families, you know, they're dirty and very noisy...you can't always blame the neighbours for being annoyed.'

However, the group's overwhelming desire to oppose racial harassment was sufficient - at least for a short period of time - to overcome these divisions.

Racial harassment was experienced by Asian households at home, at school, and in the neighbourhood. Attacks were carried out on homes both during the day and at night, children were attacked on their way to and from school as well as in the playground, and particular danger spots in the neighbourhood included public playspaces, telephone boxes, and local shops. Types of harassment ranged from verbal abuse to attacks on property, to serious physical assaults. However, there can be no clear distinction here as verbal abuse commonly accompanies physical assault, while attacks on property often result in injury to people, for example when stones are thrown through windows.

Inevitably, families suffered extreme stress as a result of this harassment. In all cases, people were reluctant to leave the house, in particular parents were fearful for the safety of their children, often

not allowing them out to play, if they were small, or to visit friends, if teenagers. However, families were not safe even in their own homes, where they experienced frequent incidents of verbal abuse, stone-throwing, door-banging and break-ins, frequently late at night. The effects of this were felt particularly severely by women and small children, who unlike men had little opportunity to escape from the house. Case-studies of three households will help to highlight the nature, and consequences, of such sustained racial harassment.

Shah household (names have been changed)

This household was headed by a woman in her mid-twenties with two children under the age of five. The house consisted of two bedrooms, living room, bathroom and kitchen, but the family use only two rooms as they could not afford to heat the whole house as the only income is supplementary benefit. The living space was cluttered with children's clothes and toys as a result of living in a small space, often only one room in winter. Heating was from the sole source of a single-bar electric fire, and the house - especially the kitchen and bathroom - was damp. Much of the time, the children seemed to be distressed and/or hyperactive. Mrs Shah felt that the elder of the two, especially, suffered as a result of the racial attacks, becoming very frightened and unable to settle when they occur. Her own health was deteriorating, for example, experiencing severe panic attacks when harassment occurred at night. She said:

> 'My own health is poor anyway, and it's getting worse with all the stress...but it's the children I worry about most, they're so small and can't understand what's happening.'

Mrs Shah was desperate to move, and had already explored a number of options. Given her limited income she knew she could not afford to buy a house or rent privately, so her options lay within the public sector. She had tried to apply to Govanhill Housing Association, but they have a

policy of not accepting existing council tenants on to their waiting-list. As far as transfers within the council sector were concerned, she had too few points to be considered, so she had no hope of moving from her house in the worst part of North Govanhill.

Mrs Shah was by no means a passive victim - she had taken every possible step to attempt to improve her situation. In addition, she had a clear analysis of the structural causes of the problems - she referred to racism, police inaction, housing authority complacency and central Government cutbacks on resources. She said:

> 'If anything happens to me, I hold the Government responsible.'

Nevertheless, there was very little she could do to improve her situation.

Thus, her main hope of achieving any change lay in her joining the Asian Housing Group - an articulate and resourceful woman, she also had a lot to offer the group. In common with several of the key A.W.A.G. members, her husband was absent from the household, thus making group membership easier: unlike them, however, she had to relate to men within the group. She did experience some conflict with them, partly because she felt they treated her as an inferior, and partly because she felt that they had supported her husband within their marital dispute. However, she proved able to resist their tendency to dominate group meetings.

Ahmed household

This family consisted of a woman in her thirties with six children under the age of twelve. The household has been decanted from their own property to enable housing improvements to be carried out, so their stay in North Govanhill was temporary. Partly because of this, and partly because of poverty, the furnishings were very bare, and internal decoration poor. This, in conjunction with the repeatedly broken windows gave the impression of "camping out" rather than any semblance of home.

This contributed to the atmosphere of despair, largely created by the hopelessness of the situation, the extreme difficulty of doing anything to improve things, to tackle the daily experience of racial harassment.

The school age children frequently experienced harassment at, or on their way to school. Commonly, Asian people felt that the parents of the aggressors were to blame, believing they knew the attacks were taking place but were either indifferent, or else condoned their children's acts. Most people reported that perpetrators of attacks tended to be young males, aged 10-19. Police inaction was a major factor, but in the case of those below the age of criminal responsibility, the attitude of the school was important. In the case of the school attended by her children, Mrs Ahmed felt that the headmaster was unwilling to take any action concerning the pupils responsible, but that a positive stance on the part of the school could go a long way towards alleviating the problem.

Harassment was equally severe at home, with stones being thrown at the children, and money stolen from them, the dupatta being torn from Mrs Ahmed's head, and racist abuse being shouted at the whole family, as well as being written outside their front door:

> 'All the time, it happens nearly every day, they call us "black bastard" and "Paki"...what can you do, there's so many of them and so few of us?'

Mrs Ahmed's husband was also absent from the household, thus facilitating her attendance at group meetings. However, her participation was very different from that of Mrs Shah, as she spoke little English, and the meetings were largely conducted in English. She seemed also to be more contrained by gender than Mrs Shah: with women she talked freely, despite language barriers, while with men she spoke little, frequently watching them as if to learn from their expressions what she should - or shouldn't - do, and displaying a subservient attitude in preparing food and drink for them, and attending to their smallest needs.

In terms of taking action, Mrs Ahmed alternated between depression and a fatalistic approach to her many problems, and an energetic, vocal attempt to improve her situation, though largely in an individual rather than collective fashion.

Mohammed Household

A married couple, both in their thirties, with seven childen under the age of eleven, and an eighth child soon to be born. As the house had only two bedrooms, there was serious overcrowding: as a result the woman, heavily pregnant, had to lie on a bed in the living-room, surrounded by several small children. The house was in very poor condition, with dampness, defective wiring throughout, and inadequate plumbing, bare stone floors, and peeling walls in the bathroom and kitchen. The feeling in the house was one of quiet despair, the parents desperately seeking - but quite unable - to do something for the sake of the children. The children were rarely allowed outside to play, as they were usually attacked, so their energies had to be suppressed indoors, or they had to play in the small, communal, back courts, bringing complaints about noise from the neighbours:

> 'The house is far too small for nine of us, the children are still young and need to play outside, but we can't let them because the neighbours complain all the time. Anyway, we're afraid to let them out, in case they're attacked again.'

This family were subject to perhaps the worst racial harassment. On separate occasions, a bottle containing live bees, another containing urine, and lighted fireworks, were all put through their letterbox. These took place against the backdrop of daily harassment:

> 'It's just happening nearly every day now, over the past two weeks the children have had bricks thrown at them - one had to go to hospital for stitches - my wife is shouted at in the streets, they're writing on our doors, and keeping us awake at night. I don't know how much longer we can take it.'

This took place over several months, culminating in the most serious incident when the front door was set alight, late at night. Luckily, the family were still awake, and thus avoided serious injury or death. Following this, community workers made urgent requests to the Housing Department that they should be rehoused. The first offer to the family was unacceptable, as they feared they would experience similar harassment in the new area, but they were eventually satisfactorily rehoused.

It is on the basis of such experiences that Asian households in North Govanhill can be said objectively to share interests, and to belong to a group which has a potential to act to defend those interests, specifically to take action to oppose racism and racial harassment.

Recognising interests

However, a group must not only share interests, but must recognise the fact of those shared interests, if social or community action is to take place. Asian households in North Govanhill did not identify any shared interests with neighbouring white households, although objectively they shared a similar class position, and were subject to the common experiences of poverty, unemployment, and poor housing conditions. Race was the single factor which overrode this common class position, racial hostility leading to a division, not unity, of interests.

Asians, therefore, tended to identify with the Asian community in Govanhill, rather than with their white neighbours. In practice, however, those living in North Govanhill had limited contact with the general Asian community, largely because of their geographical isolation, an isolation exacerbated, of course, by racial harassment which restricted their mobility.

There are three further reasons why direct action on racial harassment took place only in North Govanhill: firstly, while harassment took place throughout Govanhill, the more serious and violent incidents

occurred in North Govanhill. Secondly, as council tenants, households had an easily identifiable agency on which they could focus their attention. Thirdly, there was a realistic objective - rehousing - which they could hope to achieve.

Mobilisation

Thus, mobilisation took place largely on the basis of residential community, albeit a narrowly-defined community, consisting of Asians in a certain geographic area. This geographic dimension was reinforced by consumption interests, that is, their position as council tenants. (Lowe, 1986).

This group of people, then, began to meet, to discuss their experiences and problems, and to consider possible courses of action. The mood of the meetings swung from optimism to pessimism, initial enthusiasm at taking some action, alternating with the realisation of the enormity of their task. However, they agreed that the first step in their struggle was to collect systematic information on their experience of harassment, to be used in their meetings with councillors and housing officers. It was agreed that the research project would be a useful means of gathering this information, and a series of interviews with the families concerned was carried out, and these formed the basis of the case-studies presented above.

Following this initial step of gathering information, the group moved on to use this material as a campaigning tool. The group had two main aims: rehousing of households suffering racial harassment, if this was their wish, and improved policing techniques to protect those remaining in the area. To further these aims, the A.H.G. made representations to three main groups or agencies: the local authority Housing Department, local councillors, and the police.

The group's main aim in terms of the Housing Department was to seek rehousing for its members, and to this end they sent details of harassment incidents, underlining the seriousness of these cases, and the urgency of their needs. Such efforts met with a measure of success in that some, but not all, households, were rehoused. However, while some individual circumstances may have been improved, the problem was not solved. In even a practical sense, the council took no measures to combat racism. For example, quickly repairing broken windows and removing racist graffiti may not end racism, but it does make the point that the council finds such actions unacceptable. Similarly, within housing management, there was and is no staff training on racism awareness. Indeed, some housing officers seemed to be unaware that there were, in fact, any Asians in the council housing in Govanhill, or else to have no knowledge of the racism they experienced.

On a broader policy level, no-one, either the A.H.G. or the Housing Department, questioned which households should be rehoused, and why. Understandably, the group were too concerned with their own survival, but the District Council did not consider evicting the aggressor, rather than the victim. Indeed, they were reluctant to accept the fact of racial violence, preferring to define the problem in terms of poverty and deprivation, or simply in terms of 'neighbour disputes'.

Other councils have adopted a policy to evict the perpetrators of racial harassment, but in some cases this has resulted in a white 'backlash'. In Tower Hamlets, for example, white tenants organised public meetings to protest against the eviction of a white household which had carried out systematic racial harassment. Clearly, this is a politically and emotionally charged policy, and one which many councils would be reluctant to adopt, unless under considerable pressure from action groups.

While meetings with local councillors took place with the group, the approach was very much an individual one, with councillors intervening to help individual families, rather than the group as a whole, still less the Asian community in general. Elliott and McCrone (1984) have noted the tendency amongst local councillors towards patronage as a feature of the urban political scene. Individuals are helped, thus defusing the potential for more sustained and collective forms of activism. This individualist bias led councillors to concentrate on problems at the household level, rather than attempting to bring about changes within housing policies and practices, despite their being in a position to do so. The newness and vulnerability of the group meant that they were in no position to challenge the power of councillors to thus set the terms of the debate. (See Bryant and Bryant, 1982).

In terms of relationships with the police, there was little evidence of Asian households displaying fear or hostility towards them: the overwhelming feeling on their part was that the police were simply ineffective, particularly in dealing with racial attacks. Common complaints were that police either failed to respond to calls for help, or else were reluctant to take action over incidents of racial harassment.

Notwithstanding this lack of confidence, the group were willing to communicate with the police department, in order to try to obtain a better service. The community police officer met with the group, and expressed a wish to receive a regular report of all incidents - however 'small' - in order to establish whether there was any pattern to the occurrence of racial violence. For instance, attacks might take place most often in certain areas and/or at certain times. This knowledge, he felt, would allow extra policing resources to be allocated where they were most needed.

There are two main objections to this seemingly reasonable suggestion. Firstly, A.H.G. felt that it already knew from their own experience where and when attacks were most likely to occur, and secondly, that many attacks took place at home, where there were usually no independent witnesses, and a place where it would be difficult to locate sufficient police resources, short of a 24-hour police guard. While police co-operation appeared to be well-intentioned, their definition of the problem was different to that of the group: A.H.G.'s priorities were that the police should demonstrate a commitment to tackling racial harassment, and help to create a climate in which racial violence could no longer be tolerated. In practical terms, this would mean prompt and determined action in dealing with each case, rather than simple 'community relations' exercises.

Within the group's activities in relation to the police, councillors and the Housing Department is the trend towards the individualisation of problems. This was partly a function of the often extreme vulnerability of the households concerned who often needed an urgent change in their situation. However, the group was able to overcome this to a certain extent, and did function as a group, at the same time transcending barriers of gender, religion and class. Nevertheless, this cohesion was shortlived, undermined by their vulnerability, internal divisions, and external pressures from agencies who sought to define the situation in individual rather than collective terms. The group achieved some of its aims, but disbanded before it could carry out a long-term campaign against racism and racial harassment.

From these group case-studies two central issues emerge, themes which are to recur throughout the chapter: the processes of group identification and mobilisation. Questions arise as to how and why people adopt a particular identity, and the extent to which they are willing or able to

take action on this basis. A brief comparison of A.W.A.G. and A.H.G. with Asian, Asian women's, and housing groups in Glasgow, illustrates both the wide variety of identities that are available to Asian women, and the various types of mobilisation that are possible.

Asian Associations in Glasgow

While 'Asian' constitutes a major source of identity, there is little evidence of a city-wide consciousness, of a sense of Asian unity within the city. Rather, there is a significant split between Asians living North and South of the river, with little communication or co-operation between the two. This geographical split is also true of course for the white community, who have a clear sense of identity based on their location in relation to the river.

Thus, there is a clear division amongst Asians and, while there is significant interaction between those living in Govanhill and East Pollokshields, it is nevertheless true to say that there are three distinct communities, and that inhabitants of each strongly identify with their local area. Within each area, there are various associations which have been formed on the basis of a shared ethnic identity.

In the Gorbals, the traditional settling area for various migrant groups, there are now relatively few Asians, most having moved southwards to Govanhill and Pollokshields under the pressure of the slum clearance schemes of twenty years ago. However, the area is still important in two major respects: first, the city mosque is situated there, an important social and religious centre, and second, the area accommodates a number of Asian businesses, and is therefore a significant source of employment. Both the mosque and the businesses are run almost exclusively by men, men who have established a range of ethnic associations in connection with their work, and who have come to be seen as the official community

leaders. These associations appeal primarily to the male, middle-class, and 'respectable' sections of the community.

In East Pollokshields, a major influence was a special project sponsored by the Social Work Department to promote Asian community groups. While these groups operated at first within a consensus framework, and were facilitated by white workers, there soon emerged a demand for black workers, arising from an increasingly radical black consciousness. However, both black and white workers continued to work with black and white community groups.

Two main associations operated within the West End of Glasgow (Woodlands/Charing Cross area): Woodlands Advice Centre, and Scottish Asian Action Committee (S.A.A.C.). Woodlands Advice Centre was run by professional workers, some with a legal background, who adopted a somewhat paternalistic attitude to the community, believing them incapable of independent action, and discouraging grass-roots activism. All workers were Asian, as were all community groups connected with the Centre, and a majority of those using the Advice Service.

Similarly, S.A.A.C. was run largely by, and for, Asians, but with the emphasis on community groups rather than an advice service. The orientation was clearly towards community development rather than community action, groups being geared to social and cultural needs, rather than engaging in any campaigning or pressure group, activities.

Asian Women's groups in Glasgow

Various women's groups were associated with these organisations, allowing Asian women to identify on the basis of gender as well as ethnicity. Clearly, very few women were involved in the religious or business worlds, except when playing a subordinate role, and there was little or no opportunity for them to organise to defend their interests in these areas.

Social and community organisations provided more scope, and it is here that women came together to form groups. In East Pollokshields, a range of women's and young women's groups emerged, catering for changing needs during the life-cycle. This compares with Govanhill, where one group catered for all ages, and reflects the general lack of emphasis in Govanhill on the needs of young people. Workers were mainly women, both Asian and white, and they tended to encourage group autonomy.

In contrast, the Woodlands Advice Centre had only male workers, and facilitated only mixed groups, not separate women's groups. Elsewhere in the West End, S.A.A.C. had mainly women workers, and had in the past facilitated Asian women's groups, but in 1984 had moved towards an emphasis on the 'family', with the result that most groups included family members, and separate women's groups were discouraged. This contrasts with A.W.A.G. who were often in conflict with the rest of their community, and had been accused of 'breaking up the family'. A.W.A.G. contrasts with all other Asian women's groups in Glasgow, both in terms of priorities - bringing about radical change rather than simply reforming society - and strategies, notably adopting a series of pressure group techniques, rather than confining their activities to a consensus framework.

Housing groups in Glasgow

While some of the Asian groups addressed housing issues, there was little Asian presence within other housing groups within Glasgow: quite simply, these remained predominantly white. This situation existed despite a frequently-expressed wish by Asians in Govanhill to have mixed rather than separate community groups. For some reason, then, white housing groups must appear uninviting to Asian activists. Reasons for non-involvement may be simply geographic: the Hickbrook housing group in Govanhill, for example, was located in streets where there were simply few or no Asian council tenants. However, the Daisychain, A.B.C.D., and

Primary groups were located in the private sector, where Asian and white owner-occupiers and private tenants lived alongside each other. Asian non-involvement in these groups may be explained by language barriers, differing traditions of community organising, different perceptions of housing problems and solutions, or real or feared racial hostility.

Whatever the reason, the outcome is clear, and has important implications for a study of Asian community activism. In Govanhill, as elsewhere in Glasgow, there are several, mainly white groups addressing housing issues, as well as Asian groups which may or may not be concerned with housing problems. More often than not, they address general community, rather than specifically housing issues, perhaps largely because they do not share in Glasgow's long working-class tradition of housing activism.

An understanding of the extent to which a local community action group shares in wider social movements is essential, each group existing, not in isolation, but as part of a wider tradition of activism. Groups may organise on the bases of class, race, or gender, or a combination of all three, and are thus, to a greater or lesser extent, a part of the working-class, women's, or black movements.

Working-class struggles

The interest lies here, not in general working-class activism, notably Trade Union organisation and the Labour movement, but in action taken in relation to housing issues. There have been a variety of housing action groups, notably the squatters' and ratepayers' movements of the 1960's and 1970's, but it is perhaps tenants' associations which have been most consistently active, over a long period (Lowe, 1986). Council estates provide a base on which this urban movement can be formed: in addition to this geographic base, council tenants are usually further unified by a shared working-class background, by common interests which

they may seek to defend against bureaucratic local authorities, and by their experience of the low social status and stigma attached to council estates. (Bryant and White, 1976).[2]

While many tenants' associations have existed, there has been little formal record made of their existence, most of their activity being contained within the oral history tradition.[3] Lowe, however, attempts to collect together the available evidence, and provides us with a history of the public housing movement. The Glasgow Rent Strikes of 1915 were organised by private tenants over the issue of rent-levels, but their actions led not only to rent restrictions but also, indirectly, to the first systematic public house-building programmes under the 1919 Housing Act. Glasgow women played a crucial role within the Rent Strikes, and formed effective links with the Trade Union and Labour movements then active on 'Red Clydeside'. (See also Melling, 1983).

The 1920's and 1930's saw massive public house-building programmes, and with these new council estates the emergence of the council tenants movement. These new associations were usually involved in assisting tenants in the 'settling down' process, in negotiating with the local authorities, and often in defending tenants from the hostile reactions of neighbouring private house-owners. There were also more militant protest groups, but little record has been kept of their activities. (Lowe, 1986).

The inter-war years were, however, more notable for militant action within the private rather than public housing sector. Rent strikes were common, notably those taking place in the East End of London during the late 1930's. However, the decline of the private rented sector throughout the century, but particularly after the Second World War, has led to a break in the solidarity of private tenants, and so to a decline in their militant activism.

In the early post-war years, council tenants' associations continued to carry out largely social functions, but entered into more explicitly political activities during the 1960's and 1970's, in response to attempts by local authorities to increase rents to 'market' levels. Rent strikes at this time showed a continuity with the 1915 Glasgow Rent Strike in their adoption of the slogan - 'not a penny on the rents'. However, the strength of this tenants movement was undermined by two factors, the threat of evictions, and the co-option of leading activists into the mainstream of the Labour Party.

The rents issue was lost and the tenants' movement began to decline. In the late 1970's some new issues began to emerge, notably concern over dampness, heating and repairs. In Glasgow, many groups were concerned with these issues, for example in the Gorbals a group of tenants campaigned extensively over the serious dampness problems within the Hutchesontown 'E' flats. Following flood damage the flats were closed, and ex-residents were still campaigning in the mid-1980's for the rehabilitation of the properties, which would allow for their eventual return to their former homes. (Crossroads, 1986).

Most recently, the introduction under the 1980 Housing Act of 'right to buy' legislation has led to tenants becoming sharply divided over the issue, and to a subsequent further decline in the tenants' movement. The selling-off of council houses has led to the breaking-up of council estates, undermining their former cohesion, and the move of many established community activists into the owner-occupied sector has contributed to the decline of the movement. In Govanhill, community workers commented on the changes in housing action, noting that the council sector was no longer known in Glasgow for its militancy, partly because it seemed that - 'all the Communists have bought houses now'. The

Communist tradition was particularly strong in Glasgow, with activists involved in housing and community, as well as industrial issues.

The Women's Movement

The activities of working-class tenants' associations is located firmly within the urban sociology tradition, and in particular within the analysis of urban social movements. The particular contribution of the work of Castells (1977) and others has been to point to the importance of domestic consumption and social reproduction as bases for social, as opposed to purely class, struggles. However, Rose (1978) notes that urban sociologists have failed to perceive the women's movement as an urban social movement. She argues that while such writers may be in sympathy with the women's movement, their Marxist framework precludes the exension of their analysis to feminist struggles, and feminist perspectives on patriarchal power relations.

This omission is highly significant as, of course, it has been, and is, mainly women who engage in struggles over consumption and reproduction issues. This tradition dates back to the Glasgow Rent Strikes during the First World War, and the tenants' associations from the 1920's onwards, and is carried on today in feminist campaigns around issues of health, housing, childcare and income maintenance. (Mayo, 1977; Ettorre, 1978; Melling, 1983).

The range of activity within the contemporary women's movement is too vast to cover here, but an outline of action over housing and related issues will give some indication of the priorities and practices common within the movement. The issue of battered women points up some of the differences in emphasis between the activities of women operating within the community action and women's movements. During the late 1960's and early 1970's, community activists were much concerned with the problem of homelessness. The King Hill Campaign in Kent, for example, aimed to end

the separation of homeless families, the practice at the time being to keep homeless men and women apart within Part III accommodation. (Rose, 1978). This emphasis on the needs of the family resulted, albeit unintentionally, in a situation where battered women could no longer see hostels for the homeless as a safe refuge from violent men.

In contrast, feminists have not tended to tackle the general problem of homelessness, but have directed their energies towards the housing, social, and emotional needs of battered women.[4] Following the establishment of the first women's refuge in Chiswick in 1972, a national network of refuges has developed, co-ordinated by the National Women's Aid Federation, which in 1975, established as a central aim the provision of:

> 'temporary refuge for battered women and their children on request.'
>
> (Rose 1978:529)

Thus, while the N.W.A.F. was not essentially a housing movement, one of its central activities was the direct provision of accommodation, along with other housing-related issues, for example, helping women to secure permanent accommodation.

In common with other feminist struggles, many of the refuges developed an anti-hierarchical, collective style of operation, and were committed to the principles of self-determination and self-help. Thus, in principle and in practice, if not in content, there has been a marked similarity between community action and women's groups. Both share a concern for the material conditions of women's lives, challenge women's enforced isolation within the home, and attempt to bring about more collective forms of consciousness. However, a central difference lies in the contrast between community activists' emphasis on class struggles, and feminists' insistence that women's interests transcend class barriers. Rose argues that while class is an important variable, women and men from

the same class are often in conflict - as in the case of battered women - and that, therefore, organisation on the basis of gender is important.

Recently, however, there is evidence that these two urban movements are, if not converging, at least developing a more closely shared perspective. Some established community action groups are developing a feminist as well as a socialist analysis, while feminists are beginning to address the long-neglected issue of women and housing. (Austerberry and Watson 1981, 1986). In July 1987, both community activists and feminists attended the Our Homes:Ourselves Conference, organised within the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, specifically around issues of women and housing.

The conference identified the main issues as being women's low incomes, dependence on men, limited access to housing and community services, and isolation within the home. A wide range of groups were represented, their activities reflecting the wide range of concerns within both urban movements. The Bayswater Project for the Hotel Homeless works to support homeless women in Bed and Breakfast hostels, and campaigns for an end to the use of such hostels as temporary accommodation for the homeless. The Nottingham Open Door Housing Association aims to provide permanent rehousing for women in battered women's refuges. In Tower Hamlets, the Maternity Services Liaison Scheme attempts to make links between the poor housing conditions and health problems of Black and Asian women, as well as tackling problems of racism and racial harassment. (Shelter, 1987).

Black activism

Throughout the post-war period, black communities in Britain have developed a range of self-help and community associations, as a means of defending their interests, and organising against racism and oppression. These organisations originally developed mainly around housing issues, for

example, the arrangement of informal money-lending systems to help in buying houses. These systems developed amongst both the black and Asian communities, in the face of institutional obstacles to their gaining access to either public or private housing. (Sivanandan, 1983).

External pressure on the black communities often took the form of white tenants' and residents' groups organising to keep black households out of the white suburbs, and concentrated in the inner-city areas. Black women were often active in organising against these pressures towards segregation and ghettoization; this activism was simply one aspect of the central role played by women in a range of housing and community struggles. (Bryan et al, 1985; Williams, 1987).

This tradition of Black resistance has long been hidden, with Asian women in particular being seen as passive and unlikely to engage in any form of militant struggle. In fact, Bryan et al argue that black women draw on a tradition of activism dating back at least to colonial times, a tradition continued more recently in Third World independence struggles in countries such as Angola, Mozambique, and Eritrea, where women campaigned around specifically women's, as well as nationalist issues. Similarly, Indian women were involved in India's struggle for independence, and Pakistani women played a significant role in national development (Davies, 1983; Hussain, 1984). Asian women in Britain today continue to draw inspiration from women's struggles within the sub-continent. (Kishwar and Vanita, 1984; Foster-Carter, 1987).[5]

In Britain, black and Asian women have engaged in both community and industrial struggles. During the 1970's, there were a series of strikes in which Asian women workers played a major role, often with little support from the Trade Union movement. Grunwick (1976) is perhaps the most famous but the strikes at Mansfield Hosiery Mills (1973) and Imperial Typewriter (1974) also represented important struggles over racial

discrimination, in the form of lack of promotion prospects, and lower wage-levels. (Foster-Carter, 1987). These disputes gained strength and solidarity from Asian kinship and community networks, with strikers being provided with practical as well as moral support. (Sivanandan, 1983).

The tenacity of the Asian women strikers at Grunwick greatly contributed to the strength of the emerging black women's movement. Women who had previously organised within either the black movement or the white women's movement began to articulate their need for an autonomous black women's movement, which would address their experience of triple oppression, on the bases of race, class, and gender.

In 1978, the establishment of the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent (O.W.A.A.D.) represented the first national black women's network in Britain. This network promoted black women's unity, led to the establishment of black women's centres, and contributed to the growth and development of groups throughout the country. However, while Asian and Afro-Caribbean unity was a central aim of the organisation, in practice it proved difficult to organise across both communities, and Afro-Caribbean women tended to be in the majority. (Bryan et al, 1985).

Nevertheless, despite their different histories and traditions, Asian and Afro-Caribbean women were united on the basis of their common experiences of racism and sexism, and were able to address a number of issues together. Major campaigns focussed on issues of immigration, police treatment of black youth, the education of black children, and black women's health issues, notably the use of Depo Provera. As in the case of Depo Provera, an international perspective was often adopted, with links being made with Third World women's issues and struggles. (Bryan et al, 1985; Williams, 1987).

While, of course, many issues were held in common with the white women's movement, black women argue that there are significant differences

between the two movements, not only in terms of content, but also in terms of priorities:

> 'It just didn't make sense for us to be talking about changing life-styles and attitudes, when we were dealing with issues of survival, like housing, education and police brutality.'
>
> (Bryan et al 1985:149)

In addition to those women active in the black women's movement, black women have continued to be active in black community struggles over the provision of health, housing and education facilities, and in campaigns against deportation, immigration controls, racism and racial harassment. (Foster-Carter, 1987).

Making connections

Several general points emerge from this outline of these three urban social movements, and it is possible to make some comparisons between the working-class, women's, and black movements. Firstly, while each movement shares a concern with welfare provision, and seeks to defend the interests of those disadvantaged on the bases of class, gender or race, tactics, priorities, and perspectives differ between the movements. Of particular importance is each movement's definition of the 'enemy' as this conditions both the tactics adopted, and the nature of alliances that are likely to be made. Black women, for example, may be more likely to unite with black men in opposition to racism, rather than to identify closely with white women. White women may see white men, even of their own class, as the 'enemy', as a result of their knowledge or experience of male violence, and thus tend to organise on the basis of gender rather than class.

Secondly, despite these divisions, any one group may draw selectively on elements from more than one movement, for example, black women's groups may have reference to the tenants' movement, the white women's movement,

and the tradition of black self-help, although they identify and organise specifically as black women.

Thirdly, it is precisely towards this question of identification that attention should be directed, if an analysis of the social mobilisation process is to be formulated. Interest here lies with the reasons why Asian women adopt this specific identity, rather than choosing to identify with working-class, women's, or black groups generally.

A thematic analysis of the identification and mobilisation processes can be developed, based on both fieldwork material and urban sociological literature. This framework was sketched in within the portrayal of the development of the Asian Housing Group, but will be discussed more fully here: while comparisons are made with the Asian Women's Action Group in Govanhill, similar analyses could be made of other housing, and community action groups. Three major theses are contained within this framework: firstly, the degree to which individuals share interests, secondly, the extent to which they recognise these shared interests, and thirdly, the action - or non-action - which takes place on this basis.

Sharing interests

Castells (1977, 1978, 1983) has contributed greatly to the study of urban social movements, providing us with definitions of what constitutes a social movement, analysing the nature and range of their activities, and placing his theories within a comparative framework. However, he does not fully explore the social bases on which collective action may take place. (Harloe, 1981). Lowe (1986) develops and extends Castells' work, identifying two major bases for social action: residential communities, and consumption-based interest groups. These two themes recur throughout earlier chapters, much debate centring on the importance of community identity, versus consumption groups or classes, notably housing classes.

Both bases were strong during the 1950's and 1960's, and generated a great deal of social and community action. However, during the 1970's and 1980's both have had their strength undermined. Working-class neighbourhoods have been weakened or destroyed by the slum clearance and redevelopment policies of the 1950's and 1960's, thus undermining their sense of community.[6] Consumption patterns have also changed considerably, for example, the traditional division between working-class tenant and middle-class owner-occupier have become blurred, following recent housing legislation.[7] Thus, consumption-based interests may cut across traditional class lines.

Nevertheless, both community and consumption of welfare resources remain important social bases for working-class and black households. While, of course, there is overlap between the two categories - council tenants for example share both community and consumption interests - any particular community group is likely to place greater emphasis on one or the other category. The Asian Women's Action Group, for example, organised largely on a sense of community, while the Asian Housing Group took action to defend its consumption interests.

As was highlighted in the earlier discussion of urban social movements, Asian women share interests with the working-class, women's and black movements, yet often choose to identify primarily as black women. Furthermore, the geographical separation of the Asian communities in Glasgow has led to a strongly localised identity amongst Asians in Govanhill. Taken together, these two trends have resulted in Asian women identifying with others within their local community, and thus forming the Asian Women's Action Group.

Clearly, this is not an arbitrary process but one which arises from a strong sense of shared interests amongst these Asian women. They are conscious of their class position, of racial oppression, and of the

position of women in society, but have a specific identity, based on their experience of the triple oppression of race, class and gender. This is intensified by their marginal position, and a degree of exclusion from other social groupings, from white working-class culture, white women's groups, and male Asian society. Identification as Asian women is not solely a political process open to a radical minority, but is quite simply a fact of life. Many Asian women associate almost exclusively with other Asian women and children, their everyday lives spent in such a shared community. Asian culture, far more than British culture, has a tradition of female association and solidarity, not necessarily based on feminist analysis, but arising from the material reality of women's lives. (Wilson, 1978).

Members of the Asian Housing Group had no such everyday patterns of community: although they shared a geographical base, they had little sense of belonging together, of constituting a community. On the contrary, they experienced serious divisions on the grounds of gender and class, and to a lesser extent religion and nationality. They were united in their defence of housing interests, and opposition to racial harassment, but this unity was insufficient to sustain them for long as a group, in the face of considerable external pressures, and the extreme difficulty of their invididual problems. In essence, they were a single-issue group, and did not find themselves sharing interests on a multitude of levels, as was the case with A.W.A.G.

Recognising interests

The simple fact of shared interests does not automatically lead to a recognition of those interests. The interest here is equally with those who do not recognise their shared interests, as with those who become active group members. Only a minority of any group, class, or community ever become activists. In the case of Asian women in Govanhill,

identification of common interests is by no means automatic. 'Communities' do not exist in a vacuum but share societal values of individualism and competition, and these values are as likely to characterise social relations as are co-operation and a sense of community. Individualist values are often reinforced by the sheer struggle for survival experienced by many households. Furthermore, while women associate primarily with each other, their more immediate allegiance may be given to male members of the household. Thus, women's role within the family may militate against their identification with other women. Nevertheless, a significant and growing minority of individuals did identify explicitly as Asian women, and began to organise socially and politically on this basis.

In terms of the recognition of consumption interests, if, as was argued in Chapter Four, there are objective housing classes, the question arises as to how likely members of these classes are subjectively to recognise their shared interests (Lowe, 1986). From the available evidence, it is clear that in Govanhill there has been little identification on the basis of housing class. It was argued earlier that two of the lowest housing classes were those most likely to mobilise, and take action to defend their interests. However, as we have seen, members of one of the classes - homeowners of the older tenemental properties - have tended to identify on bases other than housing class, in particular Asian women began to come together as a group, identifying a range of common interests, housing as well as non-housing. Members of the other class - North Govanhill council tenants - did recognise their shared housing interests, but were unable for long to sustain this shared identity.

Lowe notes that there are various alternative bases of consciousness which may militate against the adoption of a housing class identity. For

ethnic minority communities in particular, he argues that a range of voluntary associations provide for the identification of a range of ethnic, social, political or religious interests. In addition, there is a considerable degree of conflict inherent within the housing system, and members of the same objective housing class may find themselves in competition for scarce resources. Finally, there seems to be no clear structure within which a housing class could develop and organise, become, in Marxist terms, a 'class-for-itself'.

All three of these themes can be illustrated by actual developments in Govanhill. Firstly, there was indeed the possibility of alternative forms of consciousness, rather than housing class identity, ranging from active participation within the mosque, to social and recreational activities at the Neighbourhood Centre, to welfare-based groups such as the Asian Mother and Toddlers Group. Secondly, there did exist considerable competition between members of the same housing class; this was expressed most obviously between white and Asian council tenants in North Govanhill, whose relationships were characterised by fear and hostility. Thirdly, some individuals and groups, for example, A.W.A.G., did recognise their housing class interests, but were unsure as to how to mobilise on this basis. On several occasions group members expressed concern over the housing allocations system, and were aware of Asian households' disadvantaged position. It was difficult for them to take action, however, partly, because of the complexity of the system, but largely because there existed little or no precedence of community action over this issue. An important factor here may have been this housing interest group's lack of a shared geographical base, a common basis which has aided other, public sector, tenants' movements. (Lowe, 1986).

Mobilisation

Clearly, then, there are a range of forces which militate both towards and against mobilisation and which therefore affect the potential for the transformation of recognised interests into community or housing action. In the context of Asian community groups in Govanhill, factors which facilitate action include the existence within Glasgow of a strong tradition of activism; the work of Crossroads which is to encourage the emergence and development of community groups; the existence of shared interests, whether on the basis of community, or shared consumption interests; personal history is often important, for example, a family tradition of political or community activism, as well as the existence of personal and material resources essential to any sustained political involvement; and finally, the existence of realistic targets, often a crucial factor in decisions over group action or non-action on specific issues. (Curno, 1978).

To offset these predisposing factors, however, are a range of forces which impede mobilisation. Isolation in the home is clearly important here, but equally important is Asian women's marginal position, a sense of 'not belonging' to society, resulting from their triple oppression on the bases of race, class, and gender. In terms of class, they have restricted access to resources necessary for political involvement - not only money, but also limited time, and limited access to information and media resources. On the basis of gender, women's role as housewife and mother further restricts their available time and energy, while they may also be directly prevented by male members of the household from attending group meetings. Mixed groups such as A.H.G. also face a number of obstacles, from their 'invisible' position within a racist society, to the tradition of patronage amongst some local councillors which tends towards the individualisation of problems. (Bryant and Bryant, 1982; Lowe, 1986).

Given these forces both towards and against mobilisation, how far was the potential for community action in Govanhill realised? In terms of housing class, the only clear action was taken by the Asian Housing Group, which did achieve some of its aims - rehousing of its members - even if this was on an individual rather than collective basis. In contrast, the Asian Women's Action Group tended not to address specific housing issues, but sought to defend its members' interests in more broadly social and welfare terms.

In terms of membership and organisation, A.H.G. involved around half of the, admittedly small, number of Asian households in Govanhill, and the group relied heavily on Crossroads in terms of direction and support. A.W.A.G. initially had few members, drawn mainly from Asian women in the older, private housing sector, but worked consistently to widen is membership base; at the same time, the group became less dependent on Crossroads, and steadily tackled a widening range of issues.

Action taken by groups represents only some aspects of the wide range of possible forms of action: we should also be aware of less formal types of action, as well as some of the reasons why action may not be taken at all. It may be useful not to consider 'community action' as a fixed concept, but as part of a continuum, ranging from 'non-action' to 'radical action'.

Dunleavy (1980) argues that 'non-action' on housing issues is just as interesting and important as the action which is taken: non-action, he believes, is, in fact, the norm and illustrates the complex series of obstacles inherent in the housing system which serve to inhibit any trends towards political action. This feature has already been noted in terms of A.W.A.G.'s non-action over changes in the housing allocations system.

Another common response to a disadvantaged position is the taking of 'individual' action, with the aim of furthering the interests of

individuals, or their immediate kin or friends. Such action would take the form, for example, of carrying out housing improvements to one's own property, rather than campaigning for the public funding of improvements to all substandard properties. An interesting illustration of this is one member of A.W.A.G., who had carried out extensive home improvements, who appeared to be on the periphery of the group, often being perceived to have made judgements on the moral and material standards of other group members. Her attachment to individual improvement seemed to run counter to the collective ethos of the group.

The Asian Housing Group may be more properly referred to as an 'interest group', rather than a community action group. They did adopt some typical activist tactics, for example, lobbying local councillors, but they adopted a narrower frame of reference than most community action groups. That is, they defined their aims as defending the interests of group members, rather than identifying with a wider reference group, such as Asians throughout Govanhill. In particular, they concentrated on seeking rehousing for group members, rather than attempting to tackle racial harassment in general. This response was clearly conditioned by external pressures: the isolation and vulnerability of group members, as well as the enormity of the problem, a problem whose solution would lie, not only in changing the policy and practice of the local authority housing department, but in radically altering the racist attitudes of their white neighbours.

'Community action' can be distinguished from 'interest group' action on the basis of its attempts to defend wider interests than those of the immediate group. A.W.A.G., for example, attempted to improve the position of all Asian women in Govanhill, not just those closely identified with the group. Many such groups are 'single-issue', particularly the white housing groups in Govanhill, but A.W.A.G. addressed a wide variety of

issues, and employed a range of tactics, from advocacy, to self-help, to campaign work.

At the other end of the scale from 'non-action', 'radical action' aims at a fundamental restructuring of society, rather than simply at the reform of existing policies and practices. In Govanhill, there was certainly an awareness of the need for radical changes, such as a redistribution of wealth, or an end to racism, but in practice no groups were formed with these explicit aims in mind.[8] Action was far more likely to be directed towards more immediately achievable ends, with a more radical analysis forming an undercurrent to both group action and discussion.

Both A.H.G. and A.W.A.G. engaged in action at a variety of levels, although A.H.G. tended to be more of an 'interest group', while A.W.A.G. conformed more closely to the 'community action' model. The activities of both groups can be located within a wider context: firstly, they belong to the community action tradition within Glasgow, and both influence, and are influenced by, Asian, Asian women's, and housing groups throughout the city. Secondly, they are part of social movements at a national level, notably the working-class, women's, and black movements.

Local community groups may draw selectively on the perceptions, tactics and priorities of these movements, Asian women being in a particularly complex position as they may belong - to a greater or lesser extent - to all three movements. Thus, the decision by Asian women to identify primarily on the basis of race, class or gender largely determines the nature of the social action in which they subsequently engage.

Asian women activists in Govanhill tended on the whole to emphasise race and gender, with class as a secondary or implicit identification. This may explain their relative lack of identity as a housing class, the

potential for this identification being overridden by the recognition of other shared interests. Those who did seek to organise on the basis of housing class interests worked in mixed groups and met with some conflict on the basis of gender. This lack of unity tended also to allow for the emergence of other conflicts - on the bases of religion, class or national origin - conflicts which were more often transcended within a group united on the basis of gender.

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1. See Chapter Two for a fuller discussion of some of the issues involved in this question of a new community centre.

2. While there is more widespread acceptance of council housing as a 'normal' tenure in Scotland, in comparison with England, nevertheless, certain council schemes are heavily stigmatised.

3. See, however, Henderson et al (1982) for accounts by community workers of tenant action groups, and Leonard (1975) for a case-study of housing action in Glasgow.

4. There are, of course, exceptions, with some feminists in recent years beginning to address the question of women's homelessness. See Brion and Tinker (1980) and Watson with Austerberry (1986).

5. Benazir Bhutto, leader of the Pakistan People's Party, was elected Prime Minister in November 1988, ending many years of military rule under General Zia ul Haq, and becoming the first woman prime minister of a Muslim country.

6. While the notion of working-class community has been romanticised by the 'Community Studies' strand of urban sociology, nevertheless, community solidarity and mutual support networks have been - and to some extent still are - an important feature of inner-city neighbourhoods. (See Wilmott and Young, 1957; Bell and Newby, 1971).

7. The 'right to buy' council housing, under the 1980 Housing Act is an important example. (See Whitnam, 1982).

8. While there was a city-wide, anti-racist black women's group, only one or two women from Govanhill attended meetings, the majority remained involved in local community politics.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion: social-spatial processes

This concluding chapter has two main aims: firstly, to draw together the major issues covered in earlier chapters, and to summarise the main research results; and secondly, to make explicit some of the hidden issues which have not been covered in detail. These issues for further research have not been selected arbitrarily, but are firmly grounded in fieldwork data; nor are they unrelated to each other, but have a common basis in a range of social-spatial processes. 'Social-spatial processes' are taken to mean the relation between social structure and the built environment, that is, the physical expression of social and cultural values within the home and the neighbourhood.

Research results

The research project was undertaken with several aims in mind, and proceeded on a number of different levels: its major aims were to produce a general study of Govanhill as a community, to document the self-help and community action of Asian women, to contribute to the development of community work and community action by means of an action-research methodology, and to inform the provision of social and welfare services in both the voluntary and statutory sectors.

To achieve these aims, various methods of investigation were employed: literature sources were important throughout as a means of identifying research questions, secondary sources of data such as Census material and local plans were useful in building a picture of Govanhill as a community, while of course the major methods were interviews and participant observation.

The scope of the study ranged from a focus on the local and the particular, such as a family's experience of racial harassment, to more city-wide concerns, such as the nature of local authority housing provision, to a more national perspective, as in the comparison of local community group activities with trends within wider urban social movements.

Chapter One identified two major lines along which the thesis is organised, the first being a chronological account of the work of the research project, and the second an account of the research process itself. Under this second scheme the introductory chapter was concerned with the formulation of research questions, the adoption of research roles, and the development of theoretical perspectives. My own research role, conditioned by aspects of gender, race and class, was identified, with an emphasis on maintaining a marginal position while 'in the field', thus ensuring a reasonable degree of 'role flexibility'. (Papanek, 1964). In terms of theory, a synthesis of Marxist and Weberian perspectives was attempted, along with a commitment to bridge the traditional divide between theoretical and policy-oriented research, in short, to engage in 'grounded theorizing'. (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Chapter Two goes on to 'set the scene' for the research project, examining Govanhill as a neighbourhood: its people, institutions, service provision, and housing conditions. The differences in housing conditions and housing tenure between Scotland and the rest of Britain were identified as an important factor, research based in a Scottish city marking a departure from research conducted largely within English cities. Links were made with environmental conditions and the differing attitudes of white and Asian households towards the community. (Barr, 1978).

In contrast to the emphasis within many studies of black inner-city communities on 'culture', this research was concerned with cultural forms and expressions only insofar as they help to explain experiences of community, or the development of social identities which may form the basis for political action. Thus, interest lay, not in the system of purdah as such, but in the effects purdah may have on female and male experiences of community. (Saifullah Khan, 1976). Similarly, interest in the cultural maintenance of ethnic boundaries centred on the implications these boundaries may have for the social and physical segregation of white and Asian Govanhill residents. (Jeffrey, 1976).

Chapters Three, Four and Five present the main body of research results, and as such are a record of the fieldwork period itself. Chapters Three and Four are largely concerned with access to housing, analysis moving from individual case-studies to the institutional level of housing agencies' allocations systems to a more structural analysis of disadvantage within the housing system on the bases of race, class or gender. While much sociological explanation is focussed on one or other of the individual, institutional or structural levels, these three chapters attempt a synthesis of all three levels.[1]

The housing histories at the beginning of Chapter Three provide a local, particular dimension, highlighting the many obstacles any individual household may face in seeking access to decent housing. The detailed analysis of the allocations policies of the two housing agencies - Govanhill Housing Association and Glasgow District Council - documents the various forms of both direct and indirect discrimination faced by Asian households.

Chapter Four relates Asian households' position within Glasgow's housing system to a broader context, the influences of race, class and gender. Clearly, Asian women face disadvantage in all three respects, and thus we would expect them to be amongst the most vulnerable households, and to occupy the worst available housing. This conclusion of course, leads back to the case-studies at the beginning of Chapter Three which identified two Asian female-headed households - a battered woman, and a single parent - as occupying some of the worst housing in Govanhill, and facing the greatest difficulties in any attempts to improve their housing situation.

The concept of housing class was employed in order to provide a more theoretical explanation of the mechanics of the housing system. Rex's theories were developed and updated in an attempt to improve our understanding of housing classes today, especially in relation to black and female-headed households.

Chapter Five took this concept of housing class and examined the potential for social mobilisation on this basis, in comparison with mobilisation on the bases of race or gender. Theoretical analysis was closely related to the development and activities of two community groups in Govanhill - the Asian Women's Action, and Asian Housing groups.

These two groups were placed, firstly, in the context of housing, Asian and Asian women's groups in Glasgow, and, secondly, in the context of the working-class, women's, black and black women's movements in Britain. Both groups shared concerns and priorities with both other local groups and the national movements, but also formulated their own distinct analyses and approaches in response to their own specific situations.

Data from both the local and national levels contributed to the formulation of a framework for the analysis of the mobilisation process. This process was conceived of as consisting of three main stages: the fact of shared interests amongst a group or class of people; the recognition of these shared interests; and the decision to take action on the basis of these shared interests. Forms of action taken can vary considerably, and can be located on a continuum from non-action - individual action - interest group action - community action - radical action. The two groups in question engaged in various types of action, although A.W.A.G. tended more towards community action, while A.H.G. more closely resembled an interest group. Other groups, of course, could be analysed within this framework.

Up until the present, Asians in Glasgow have been unlikely to take action on the basis of their housing class position: the action which has taken place on housing issues has tended to be narrowly-defined, and has met with limited success. In Govanhill, A.H.G. was explicitly concerned with housing issues, and brought together members of one of the lowest housing classes, but the group was largely defeated by a range of internal and external pressures. They had to contend with internal divisions as well as widespread racism within the neighbourhood, bureaucratic housing agencies and remote political processes.

Nevertheless, as outlined in Chapter Five, they did address a number of important issues, notably racial harassment, and the quality of the environment. In addition, there are several implicit issues which will be considered later in the chapter, notably the issue of segregation versus integration, which is implicit in the racial harassment debate, and the question of differing attitudes to home and

the community, which arises from a discussion on the nature and quality of the environment.

Community action has been more well-developed, consistent and successful within Asian women's, rather than Asian housing groups. Although A.W.A.G. also faced some internal divisions on the bases of class or religion, their shared gender proved sufficient to override these divisions and enable a cohesive group to be formed. While the group addressed general welfare and community, rather than specifically housing, issues, housing was nevertheless a central factor in their lives, and tended often to underlie their other concerns, to be an implicit rather than explicit issue.

Chapter Five identified the major concerns of the group over a two-year period, and if we look at these more closely we can see that most are related in some way to housing. The early concern with welfare benefits had the unintended consequence of revealing the poor housing conditions commonly experienced by those living on Supplementary Benefits. Similarly, a general concern with health standards highlighted the connection between poor housing conditions and health problems. Finally, the recurrent theme of Asian women's isolation is of course, closely connected with women's relationship to the home.

Other important issues were not addressed, either because of lack of time and resources, or because they were not considered to be immediately relevant to the research project. One notable omission has been a consideration of Asian women's homelessness, which is clearly a consequence of women's inferior position within the housing market, and thus of direct relevance to the central thesis. A few observations on the nature of Asian women's homelessness are made below, but otherwise the topic has been largely excluded from

discussion, mainly because a full examination would entail a research project in itself.

Other unexplored issues include women's specific experience of the home and the environment, notably women's position within a 'man-made environment', the use of space within the home according to gender, and the effects of housing design on women's roles as housewife and mother. These are newly-emerging issues within feminist and sociological literature, and again, the brief commentary below can be little more than a prelude to further detailed research.[2]

Aspects of community

Turning first to the experience of community on the basis of ethnicity, frequent reference has been made to the Asian and white communities, with the implication that the two, while sharing the same geographical location, are somehow separate entities. There has been a debate, notably within the Scottish Geographical Magazine, over whether in fact the two populations are segregated or integrated, (McEvoy, 1978; Kearsley, 1979), although there is agreement that Asians are clearly regionally concentrated. Kearsley maintains that McEvoy's index of segregation simply measures distribution of population, not segregation per se, and that there is in fact local integration, with perhaps closes but not whole streets having a majority of Asian residents. This may well be true, and does indeed seem to be the case in Govanhill, but this concentration on physical distribution of households, and at the local level, obscures two important points. One is that there is nevertheless a significant level of segregation at the city-wide level, Glasgow's 69-73% comparing with levels of racial segregation in English and North American cities, and higher than sectarian segregation in the North of Ireland. Kearsley attributes this to class position, and to Asian's

own cultural choices, while McEvoy maintains that while a measure of choice does exist, this can only operate within the limits set by a white-dominated property market.[3]

The second point is that even if populations are physically integrated, they may in fact be socially and culturally segregated. Jeffrey (1976) notes the processes whereby boundaries between ethnic groups are maintained, for example, the use of separate sets of social and community facilities, hostility between neighbours, or discrimination within council housing allocations. (Jackson and Smith, 1981). Cultural content, she argues, is less important than the significance attached to any differences, differences which can be emphasised or minimised by either group, thus affecting the degree of segregation or integration. Jeffrey concludes about the Pakistani households she studied in Bristol that there was little assimilation, or integration between the Asian and white communities: little cultural integration, in terms of close relationships between members of the two communities. Much the same holds true for the white and Asian populations in Glasgow.

This reference to social and cultural integration is an important balance to much of the housing literature which concentrates on the physical dimension, concerned primarily with the debate over individual choice versus institutional constraint in terms of access to housing. While this is an important debate, and one which has been fully covered in Chapter Four, it should be remembered that the move from owner-occupation to council tenancy does not necessarily lead to integration. Robinson (1980), for example, argues that moves into council housing can reinforce, rather than reduce, spatial concentrations, given the continued desire and need to be close to Asian community facilities and support networks. The numbers of Asian

households moving into council housing in Glasgow have so far been too small to indicate whether a similar process is taking place, but it seems likely that it will, given the increasing numbers of Asian households moving into public housing, and given the widely-shared desire to maintain a cultural identity, and preserve the existing community structures.

Women's use of space

Gender, as well as race and class, is an important dimension to a study of community and the environment. Recent work has highlighted the extent to which we live in a 'man-made environment', (Matrix, 1984; Loyd, 1981; Signs, 1980), an environment created by male architects, planners, and local councillors, and geared to male values, needs and perceptions. This is equally true of the private family home, geared to men's leisure needs, but often a trap for women and children, and of the layout of cities which separates the functions of home, work and leisure, again, suited to the needs of employed men, but leading to alienation and isolation for women, the unemployed, and the elderly. Essentially, buildings and the spaces between them, express ideas about social life, what people ought to do, and how they should relate. (Ashcraft and Scheflen, 1976; Kirk, 1980). This ideology is complex, but central elements are that 'a woman's place is in the home', and that women's space is private and domestic while men's space is public and visible. These spheres are not 'separate but equal', different status is involved, women's space is undervalued, and consequently underfunded, the struggles of, for example, nurseries and community centres to survive contrasting with the expensive, high-prestige business and financial institutions of the male world. (Ardener, 1987).

Women's lives, then, are home-centred, domestic, local, and this is also largely true of women in paid employment, their identity is still closely linked with the home. Along with lower status, and low levels of mobility, a major consequence of this home-centredness is isolation. (Gowron, 1968; Hobson, 1978). In the Govanhill context interest lies in the point at which the isolation of women in the home coincides with the social and cultural segregation of Asian people, resulting in an extreme degree of isolation for Asian women. Jeffrey (1976) notes that Asian men and children have at least some form of relationship with the wider society, by virtue of their participation in the worlds of work and school. Relatively few Asian women are in paid employment, and a large proportion speak little or no English, thus reducing their interaction with the world outside the home.[4]

In everyday terms, Asian women in Govanhill live very local lives, occasionally going shopping in the city centre, but mostly using local Asian food and clothes shops. In terms of social and leisure activities, their freedom of movement is heavily circumscribed. One woman commented:

> 'Pakistani women aren't allowed to go out to restaurants or the cinema, people will talk, saying "Why is that woman out on her own?"'

They have little to do with the city's institutions except perhaps for visits to the Housing Department or D.H.S.S. offices, and unless the household is headed by a woman, these in any case tend to be dealt with by the men. There was also little use made of Asian public facilities, notably the city mosque in the Gorbals. This was clearly a male space, many of the women expressing an interest in visiting the mosque, but feeling perhaps that they should not. Within the mosque there is a small, separate women's space, but the women tended not to use this for private prayer, which was usually conducted within the

home, but visited the mosque only for community events such as a wedding. (See Imray and Middleton, 1983, on 'Men's Houses' and the preservation of male space).

Much has been written about purdah, indeed this is usually the main topic in any discussion of Asian women's lives. This preoccupation with 'culture' in general, and 'purdah' in particular may amount to a form of cultural imperialism, particularly when Western values are used as a yard-stick to judge what is desirable or normal. (Saifullah Khan, 1976). It is interesting to note that there are few comparable studies of the culture of powerful groups such as white businessmen or politicians, or of the subculture of the suburbs. The main focus of the research project was on the housing inequality experienced by groups on the bases of race, class and gender, and on responses to that inequality, in the form of self-help and community action. The focus of the study was not on the internal structure of the Asian community, but on the articulation between the white and Asian communities.

However, in examining women's use of space, a brief consideration of purdah is relevant. Purdah is maintained in two major ways: the use of clothing, or management of personal space, and the division of space within the home. (Jeffrey, 1976). Basically, women are not meant to mix with unrelated men - any such contact that does occur may be managed by the appropriate use of clothing to cover or conceal the body (the dupatta, chaddar, or burqa). At the same time, women may not move freely outside the home, in order to limit their possible contact with men. Interestingly, Saifullah Khan (1976(a)) notes that, contrary to the popular expectation of the 'liberating' effect of contact with Western culture, observation of purdah may in fact be stricter in Britain than in Pakistan. This arises from the fact that

firstly a city in Britain will be full of unrelated men, in contrast with the extended network of kin common in villages in Pakistan, and secondly, from the separation of work and home, whereby the women no longer have links with the world of men's paid work, and have few outside tasks such as the collection of water and firewood.

In practice, the observation of purdah in Govanhill varied considerably. In matters of dress, all women wore shalwar-qamiz, but with variable use of dupatta and chaddar to cover head and body to suit a range of social situations. For example, a woman may leave her head uncovered most of the time, but cover it in the presence of her uncle, and fully cover both head and shoulders for a visit to the mosque. In terms of style, manner of dress is not meant to draw attention to the body, yet many of the younger women wore close-fitting, rather than the usual baggy, shalwar, in order to be fashionable. In contrast, a few of the more religious women adopted the completely-enveloping burqa. While conforming to dress conventions themselves, some women expressed resentment about the restrictions placed on their daughters:

> '...people tell me to dress Shehana in shalwar-qamiz, but I think that's ridiculous, she's still only a child.'

The majority of women spend most of their daily lives with other women and children, men and women of a household leading largely separate lives, sharing a house mainly in terms of eating and sleeping. Attitudes to mixing with unrelated men varied, from women who would not attend meetings if there were any men present, to those who were prepared to work with male students from Crossroads. In the latter case there was opposition from men within the community who were concerned that women were not fulfilling their proper role, and

accusations were made, for example, that the Asian women's group was 'breaking up families'.

Thus, forms of social organisation, in this case purdah, can influence the use of space: at the same time, the spatial can influence the social, the built environment at least partly determining the expression of social values. Thus, while the ideology of purdah governs the behaviour of households, the forms it takes in practice vary according to the built form. In Pakistan, or in Britain, only the wealthiest families can maintain strict purdah, as this requires a large house capable of being divided into men's and women's quarters, servants, and the women not in paid employment. (Saifullah Khan, 1976(b)). Further down the socio-economic scale, much smaller terraced houses in Britain may be adapted to meet the requirements of purdah: Saifullah Khan, for example, notes the division of Bradford terraced housing into men's and women's space, women and children using the room at the back of the house, men and their guests using the front room. If the same room has to be used, women and men would sit on separate sides of the room.

In contrast, there was little evidence of a similar process taking place within the tenements of Glasgow: while women and men did lead largely separate lives, this did not appear to be expressed as a formal division of space within the house. This may have been due to a simple shortage of space, tenements lacking the two small living-rooms present in many terraces. Many Asian households occupied the basic 'room-and-kitchen' (or two rooms-and-kitchen), with living-rooms frequently doubling as sleeping-space.[5] Here there is an interesting similarity with life in Pakistan in terms of use of space. In both cases, all rooms are multi-purpose, with furnishings basic, and overcrowding common. This contrasts with the tendency within

white British homes for each room to be clearly associated with the separate functions of work, sleep, eating, and leisure, though of course, this is a fairly recent development, dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. (Matrix, 1984).

While there are thus some similarities between life for women in Pakistan and in Britain, there is one major difference and that is the shift from a predominantly outdoor life, centred around the courtyard and the village, to the indoor life of Britain. Saifullah Khan (1979) documents the stresses involved for those making such a transition, including ill-health caused by a change in climate, lack of playspace for children, and adaptions to different traditions in clothing and diet. Perhaps the greatest stress is isolation within the home. Just as observance of purdah may be stricter in Britain, so may women lead more restricted lives in terms of their contact with other women. In Britain, there may be less help from female relatives with housework and childcare, less social contact, and a reduction in communal spaces for socialising outside the home.

Isolation is of course a fact of life for many women, white and black, middle-class and working-class (see e.g. Wekerle, 1980), but was evident to an extreme extent amongst Asian women in Govanhill, and became a recurrent theme during the research period. This isolation, and the centrality of the home to Asian women's lives is a major justification for the separate consideration of 'Asian women and housing', the argument being that they have experiences of housing qualitatively different to those of men, and different in some respects to those of other women.

Homelessness

Women may well be at the centre of the home both ideologically and in everyday life, but their needs and aspirations with regard to

housing are denied, ignored, and not even well-documented, a literature on women and housing only beginning to emerge in recent years. Women's experience of poorer housing conditions, and unequal access to housing have been recorded in Chapters Two, Three and Four, but little mention has been made of other issues, such as women's homelessness. Most studies have focussed on men's homelessness, the majority of hostel provision is for homeless men, and the popular image of the homeless person is certainly male. Women's homelessness has been largely hidden, and this, combined with their low economic status, lack of organisation, and lack of cohesion as a group, has meant that documentation has been scarce, and no systematic measures have been taken to resolve the problem. While research has begun to be undertaken into women's homelessness, there has been as yet little or no documentation of Asian women's experiences of homelessness. (See Brion and Tinker, 1980; Watson with Austerberry, 1986). However, this general picture of women's homelessness, along with fieldwork findings, can give some indication of the particular experience of Asian women.

An important first point to make is that the homeless are not just those approaching agencies, but also those staying with friends, and relatives, as well as the potentially homeless. There is, in fact, no clear division between the 'housed' and the 'homeless', rather a 'home-to-homelessness' continuum exists. (Watson with Austerberry, 1986). This may be especially true for Asian women, who may be less likely to know of existing agencies, and who in any case face language and cultural barriers, along with potential racism, as deterrents to the use of hostel provison. Now living in North Govanhill, Nasreen Hassan had previously been offered accommodation by the Homeless Persons Unit, but felt she had to refuse as:

'...this is very looked-down on by the Asian community, they think it is very bad to stay in a hostel for the homeless, especially for women. So instead I went to stay with my mother, even though her house was already overcrowded.'

Again, women's role as wife and mother is central to their experience of home and homelessness. It is generally assumed that the male as 'bread-winner' and 'head of household' will be the main provider of accommodation for the family: this holds true despite some increase in the trend towards joint tenancies and mortgages. It is particularly true for Asian women who are unlikely to be in paid employment, and are thus without the means of providing their own housing. References to the 'household' may therefore obscure the very different housing situations of people within the household: the adult male may be securely housed with the house in his name, along with a good earning capacity, while the female partner and any children may be vulnerable, with little security of tenure and liable to eviction by the male partner, in short, potentially homeless. This is particularly true in the case of battered women, and legal safeguards contained within the Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection)(Scotland) Act 1981 do not necessarily safeguard a woman's access to the marital home.

While earning power is thus an important factor in gaining access to accommodation in the private sector, whether rented or owned, a woman's role as mother may be equally important in determining access to public rented housing. Local authorities have a duty to rehouse households with children, or pregnant women, but not childless households, under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act, 1977. In all tenures, then, women's access to housing - or homelessness - is determined by their role within the family, the role as housewife militating against economic independence, and thus any independent

access to private sector housing, while motherhood represents the main route to alternative housing within the public sector. (New Society, 25 July 1986).

While Asian women share in this general position, there are some aspects of housing specific to their experience. Although some middle-class Asian women are employed and lead fairly independent lives, it was the case that in largely working-class Govanhill, very few had any paid employment, and virtually none left the parental home, except on marriage. On breakdown of marriage a woman would either return to the parental home, or find alternative accommodation, but only if there were children. In such a situation, there seemed to be little concept of the marital home being shared, it was unquestioned that it belonged to the man. A short exchange during an interview highlights this attitude towards property:

Q. Do you own your own home?

A. No.

Q. Is it a council house?

A. No.

Q. Well, do you rent from a landlord?

A. No.

Q. Who owns the property, then?

A. My husband.

In contrast, a white woman would tend to reply that "Yes, we own our home", whether or not her name was on the title deeds, and whether or not she would receive any share of the house on breakdown of marriage. An Asian woman's 'real' home is considered to be her parents' home. (Hirschon, 1984).

Ideology of the home

Just as the ideology of the family, and women's position within the family, is central to housing policy and provision, stereotypes of Asian use of, and attitudes towards, housing may be equally important in determining their access to housing. Chapter Four highlighted some of the popular myths about Asian housing preferences and use of housing, notably that all Asians prefer owner-occupation as a tenure, and that all or most Asian households consist of large or extended families. The debate concerning tenure preferences continues (see e.g. Robinson, 1980), but, in Govanhill at least, many households were either indifferent to tenure in their search for decent housing, or showed a clear preference for public rented housing. There may originally have been some truth in this conception, in that households becoming established in the 1950's and 1960's tended to come from a background in Pakistan where there is little tradition of municipal housing, and this combined with insufficient knowledge of the housing system in Glasgow to prevent many applications being made for public housing. In contrast, however, the new and emerging households of the 1980's consist of people born and brought up in Glasgow, familiar with its housing system and traditions, and applying in increasing numbers for local authority and housing association housing. (See Peach et al, 1981, on this process of municipalisation).

Within an often defensive struggle for access to the dwindling resource of public sector housing, for the improvement of rapidly-deteriorating housing conditions in both the public and private sectors, and for increased provision for the homeless, it is tempting to focus on quantity rather than the quality of housing, and it is particularly easy to overlook the hidden meanings of the housing we do have. Houses are not just bricks and mortar, but embody a

society's values and attitudes towards those occupying them. Much of the housing we have now, particularly that occupied by inner-city communities, was built during the nineteenth century, and reflects the values of that time. Many Victorian tenements and terraces have been retained, and often improved, and now house both Asian and white working-class households. Matrix (1984) note the social-spatial distinction between the back and front of the terraces, with friends coming to the back of the house via an alley, and more formal visitors coming to the front, to be received in the 'best' room or parlour. Echoes of this practice can be noted today in Bradford, within Asian households, the front room used as public, male space, and the back room as domestic, female space. (Saifullah Khan, 1976). In Glasgow, as elsewhere, what are now working-class homes in the inner-city were once Victorian town houses for the respectable working classes, and the merchant and industrial middle classes. (Worsdall, 1979). While little remains of the Victorian townscapes, households now share some of the, then-emerging, values of privacy, security and stability, values achieved now - or not achieved - by means of owner-occupation rather than the earlier common practice of private rented housing.

The model homes built by middle - and upper - class philanthropists in the nineteenth century for the labouring classes were, in both design and management, the forerunners of council housing. Ideals of privacy, morality, cleanliness, and the maintenance of the nuclear family were embodied in the provision of this early rented housing. (Matrix, 1984). Many of these values are continued within the provision of contemporary public housing, as in the visits by housing officers to assess a household's 'housekeeping standards', and the prohibition, until 1980, on council tenants having lodgers within their homes. (Gallagher, 1982). These values, and the

consequent nature of housing provision, have implications for Asian households moving from owner-occupied to council accommodation. Almost invariably, housing is designed for the smaller nuclear family with little or no provision for the large or extended household, or, at the other end of the scale, for the single person. Available housing is not suited to the needs of those coming from a more collectivist tradition, there being little or no provision for extended kin networks, non-family lodgers, communal space, multi-purpose rooms, or the mixing of home with paid work.[6]

Similarly, housing design is often not appropriate to the needs of women and children, who are, after all, the principal consumers of housing. The allocation of amounts of space reflects the value attached to each function, for example, cramped, poorly-designed workspace indicates the low status accorded to housework, while the lack of separate playspace overlooks the needs of both women and children. Kitchens are small and isolated from the rest of the house, adding a spatial dimension to women's social isolation.

Such social-spatial values profoundly influence the lives of women within the Asian and working-class communities, but this is not to suggest that women are merely passive recipients of influences 'from above'. While the power of planners, architects and politicians to shape women's lives is considerable, and the effects of society's normative values on home and the community are far-reaching, there have always been forms of resistance, both individual and collective.

Women's resistance

Chapter Five explored the potential for community action in relation to a range of housing and community issues, by working-class, women's and black groups. At the turn of the century, women campaigned consistently for the provision of a parlour, and for large

kitchens, to make domestic tasks easier, and to allow for some privacy within the home, but their demands went largely unmet, and male values on housing design prevailed. (Matrix, 1984). In the U.S.A., there were various experiments and designs concerning the collectivisation of housework, aimed at ending the isolated nature of most women's work within the home. (Hayden, 1981). In Britain, during the First World War, working-class Glasgow women led successful rent-strikes against profiteering landlords, which led to the enforcement of rent restrictions under the Housing Act of 1919. (Melling, 1983).

Rent-strikes again took place during the 1960's and 1970's amongst council tenants, most notably in Sheffield, but this time they met with little success in preventing rises in rent-levels. (Lowe, 1986). This period also saw other, sometimes more successful, tenants movements on issues such as dampness, and rehousing. At the same time, there was also a range of women's activities concerned with the environment - from campaigns over the provision of nursery facilities, to Reclaim the Night marches aimed at making the city a safe space for women. Black women were active in both the Women's and Black movements, and were involved for example in the establishment of black women's centres throughout Britain, and in the setting-up of Asian women's refuges.

In the context of continuing cutbacks in public expenditure, the privatisation of public assets, and increasingly conservative ideologies on the correct 'place' of women and black people, the need to understand the processes whereby interest groups are formed to compete for scarce resources, and the potential for unity, or division on the bases of race, class and gender, becomes of paramount importance. From the evidence presented in Chapter Five it seems clear that in Glasgow there will continue to be a vigorous tradition

of community action, involving most sections of the population. Council tenants, owner-occupiers, working-class, women's, Asian, and Asian women's groups are all organising to defend their interests.

However, the most vulnerable groups, particularly the private tenants and non-English speakers, tend not to be organised, and the diversity of action amongst other groups can obscure their lack of organisation. Similarly, there are several important areas where action does not take place, and the reasons for non-action can be ignored if the emphasis is placed solely on recording the community action which does occur. For example, there was a noticeable lack of action on the, admittedly difficult and complex, question of changes to the local authority housing allocations system, or on the lack of an Asian presence amongst Govanhill Housisng Association tenants, management, or staff. Reasons for this non-action may lie in the fact that housing class identity was fairly undeveloped in Govanhill, Asian people tending to organise on the basis of ethnicity or gender, rather than housing class. Any such potential identification was weakened both by racial conflicts of interest, and frequent moves between tenures.

Conclusion

While these and various other issues are subject to further research, research carried out to date provides a picture of Govanhill as a neighbourhood with distinct Asian and white communities, with general unemployment, poverty and poor housing conditions, yet a high level of community organisation, with housing as a central issue, in which Crossroads plays an important role both as a community resource, and as a catalyst for community action. The community is not static, but subject to change and development, both internally in terms of the relations between Govanhill residents, and externally, in the

interaction between Govanhill and the wider society. The Action-Research project represented an attempt to record, analyse, and contribute to that process of change.

The second Action-Research Project, currently in progress, addresses issues of domestic violence in relation to Asian women. While this is clearly of great importance in itself, domestic violence also covers several implicit housing issues of interest here: issues such as women's isolation within the home, an isolation accentuated by violence, women's lack of access to, and control over, housing resources, and the importance of the ideologies of the home and the family.

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1. Although this framework was applied to housing, the analysis could of course be extended to other welfare services and resources, such as health care or welfare benefits.

2. Note, however, that while these issues appear at the moment to be 'new', utopian and socialist feminists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were much concerned with questions of women's relationship to housing and the environment. (Hayden, 1981; Matrix, 1984; Vicinus, 1985).

3. See Clapham and Kintrea (1986) who note a significant index of segregation on the basis of class, within Glasgow.

4. While the percentage of Asian women whose main activity is keeping house is 53% (in comparison to 33% of white women) this rises to 78% for Muslim women, with only 18% in the labour market. (Third P.S.I. Survey, 1984, Table 80). Similarly, the 52% of all Asian women speaking English slightly or not at all rises to 70% for Pakistani women (Op. Cit. Table 66).

5. This relative lack of segregation may also partly be due to the shift from a collectivist to a more individualist tradition, spatial segregation of the sexes, and a marked male-female public-private divide being characteristic of collectivist cultures such as exist in the Indian sub-continent. Duncan (1981) notes a world-wide change from collectivism to individualism under the impact of Westernisation, resulting in less sex-segregation, the house becoming a status symbol, and men moving into the realm of the home. These trends, to a greater or lesser extent, were evident in Govanhill.

6. In the West End of the city, 'Fourwalls' women's housing co-op have experimented with the idea of adapting tenements within a close to be suited to both private and communal needs, incorporating different sized houses, along with shared spaces for both domestic tasks and leisure needs. This reflects a tradition, dating from the nineteenth century, of women's experiments in communal living, and collectivisation of household work (Hayden, 1981). Future Asian housing co-ops may experiment along similar lines.

APPENDIX A : Housing and community agencies contacted, Spring 1985

Asian Sheltered Residential Accommodation, Leicester

A housing association providing sheltered accommodation for the Asian elderly in the Highfields area of Leicester.

Asian Resource Centre, Birmingham

An advice centre in Handsworth, Birmingham, catering for the individual and community needs of the Asian population.

COPEC Housing Trust, Birmingham

A large housing association in Birmingham, housing a significant proportion of Black tenants.

Harehills Housing Aid, Leeds

White and Asian workers carrying out advice and community work with the local Asian and White communities.

APPENDIX B : Glasgow District Council allocations system.

Housing Allocation Points System

Date of Application points
New applicants, 5 per year for every year on list.
Transfer/existing tenants.....1-14 years..... 5 per year
15-19 years..... 7 per year
20 and over..... 10 per year

Local connection points:
(a) Residence.....2 per year
OR
(b) Travel to work..... 20 points
OR
(c) Essential service.... 20 points

Essential incoming workers..... 250 points
National Mobility Scheme..... 300 points.. (2 offers)

Overcrowding points:

First additional apartment.....30 points*
Each additional apt. thereafter.....35 points
Single persons in overcrowded conditions receive standard 30 points, in addition to points for shared amenities.

Under-occupation points:

For each apt. more than required.....15 points

Children at height above 4th floor:

Under 5 years.....30 points
5-14.....20 points

Urgent Rehousing:

Receive 150 points, and are regarded as priority 6

Lacking Amenities:

As determined by criteria in Housing (Scotland) Act, Section 14.
Maximum of 200 points.
No inside W.C.; unsatisfactory cooking facilities; no fixed bath/shower; deficient ventilation; inadequate hot water supply/drainage; unsatisfactory access to external doors/outbuildings.....received 40 points each amenity. Must be confirmed by Environmental Health Dept. of G.D.C.

Shared amenities:

Receive standard 40 points, irrespective of which amenities are shared, e.g. 1/room, kitchen, bathroom, W.C.

Medical Priority points:

A receives PRIORITY 2, require specifically worded letter from G.P.
'A'.....160
'B'..... 50

Social points..... 50 points. Requires support of G.P. and/or S.W.D. (e.g. relative in need).

*'Apartment' in this context simply means 'room', i.e. a living-room or bedroom, but not a kitchen or bathroom.

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