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Ethnography by Proxy: Strategies for research in the Inner City

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I. Introduction[1]

Until quite recently the settings of ethnographic enquiry were always rural. This is not only because social anthropology was from its beginning defined by a specialist interest in small-scale and "whole societies" which members expected no change in their relationships with each other or with the natural environment. It is also because the discipline built its reputation on an appreciation of the context in which events occur and are evaluated, and it knows these contexts to be dauntingly hard to perceive, let alone to control, in town. We have therefore a number of durable professional excuses for not venturing into cities at all—particularly our own cities—and all kinds of professional anxieties to face when we get there. Significant on both counts is the fact that other social scientists seem to have preempted the study of 'us' in general and of the urban setting in particular. Even now we are curiously willing to connive in the rumour that we are working in our own (urban) countries because we cannot get the money or the research permission to go back to (rural) Africa, and to accept the small exotic corners of the urban scene, the residuum of the other disciplines, as our only and proper due. Indeed, what conceptual room is there left? What is there in our professional repertoire that is worth transposing and can be transposed out of the setting in and for which it was developed,—out of the periphery and into the centre of the social research map?[2]

The popular answer tends not to go beyond participant observation. In the popular image, social anthropology is a technique of enquiry, nothing more. By this metonymic logic, its means are equated with its ends, its method with its methodology; if it is not possible to "do" participant observatioin—which, in the traditional paradigm, requires year round isolation from one's own ordinary life and clock round immersion in the ordinary lives of others—then it is not possible to "do" social anthropology. In these terms it is difficult to work as a social anthropologist in any town and impossible in your own.

But these are not the right terms. The proper criterion of the craft is in the perspectives we bring to the analyses we attempt, not in the deceptively simple act of "hanging in". Participant observation is a means to understanding social life in the round, to the appreciation of context and meaning, and to the relational perspective, all of which are distinguishing marks of social anthropology. Leach has put it more elegantly: "... the typically anthropological assumption (is) that a social field does not consist of units of population but of persons in relation to one another" (1967: 80).

This assumption is fundamental to the present enquiry into the ways in which people of different ethnic origin define and manage the resources of the urban environment which they share. Whether a study done in the domestic urban setting and without participant observation can be legitimate anthropology is certainly not an issue for the non-anthropologists involved and has only occasionally disturbed the mind of the principal investigator (who is the only anthropologist among the authors of this paper). The crucial problem has been to devise research strategies that are feasible in a dense urban setting—as participant observation is not—and yet do not distort the realities of ordinary life by dealing with people as "units of population", classified only by characteristics which can readily be seen and counted by outsiders in the way that conventional social survey tends to do. We may agree that the "typically anthropological assumption" is with transposing out of the typically anthropological setting, but do we know what to do with it when we get it home? Is it possible to map context without sitting in the middle of it?

This paper is a summary account of field strategies used in tandem in a programme of research into aspects of livelihood in 'inner' London, and of their implications for extending the scope of social anthropology in the city. The work, which is continuing, is not and has not been a purely anthropological venture. Researchers from several different disciplines have been so closely associated in its design and execution that there is a sense in which this is the report of a collective effort in interdisciplinary ethnography.[3] The methodology of the study includes other-than-anthropological perspectives and certainly not have been put into operation by a lone field worker.

It may be that some form of interdisciplinary collaboration is a necessary condition of effective urban anthropology (as Foster and Kemper 1974). This paper makes no such general claim. We do not here define what urban anthropology is or might be and should not be thought to be offering an all-purpose blueprint of procedures for doing it. These strategies are adaptations of others, each invented to deal with its own combination of theoretical and practical constraints. No doubt they will be used again—not least by the present authors—but not without modification *ad hoc*. Their usefulness to us is in strict relation to the problem we were set to study, to the characteristics of the setting in which we had to study it, and to the generous but still limiting conditions of the research grant.

The results of the enquiry will be reported elsewhere: the present account is concerned only with the way it was done. In this connection we have been explicitly aware of the methodological charters of sociography (Jahoda *et al.* 1972) and mass observation (Harrisson 1976) in the design and execution of the 1st stage neighbourhood survey; of techniques of psychotherapeutic intervention (Speck & Attneave 1974) in the 2nd stage mapping of family resource systems; and of traditional ethnography throughout.

The theoretical and practical contexts of the research are set out in Sections II and III following. Sections IV and V describe the 1st and 2nd stage strategies at issue. Section VI begins to indicate what might be done next.

II. Theoretical Context

The research described here was framed under the rubric of studies in ethnicity within the SSRC (Great Britain) Research Unit in Ethnic Relations and was designed to address current social issues. It had therefore to pay critical attention to the way in which those issues were defined, and to the categories of ethnic difference entailed: the gloss put on ethnicity varies a lot from one country to another, and anthropologists working in their own cultures have a greater tendency to take over the "folk" definitions of their informants than they do when working away from home.

In contemporary England,[4] the term "ethnic" popularly connotes "race", "race" in turn connotes colour, and colour is the distinguishing feature of immigrants. This stands in firm contrast to the North American usage in which "race" means colour, but "ethnics" are the descendants of relatively recent immigrants from non-English-speaking countries. In England up to now there have been no "ethnics" as such, only "ethnic relations"; and because ethnicity and colour are conflated, ethnic relations are loosely assumed to occur only and always in black-white encounters. Furthermore, they are *caused by* non-white immigrants, never by white natives, and are invariable on the grounds that ethnicity (like immigrant status) is fixed by skin colour and is independent of local circumstances or situation (Wallman 1978 a; b).

The starting hypotheses of this study can be designated at different levels of generality. The first is stated above: "a social field is not made up of units of population but of persons in relation to one another". Its implication is that the characteristics of a population—colour, class, age, sex, birthplace etc.—cannot be used to predict the way individuals will relate to each other because neither relationships nor identities can be assumed to be single stranded. The second is that the meaning and the value of any one such characteristic will vary according to context and situation, and to the combinations in which the various characteristics occur. The third is that the significance of difference—i.e. of the characteristics of individuals or of populations—will vary according to the position and the purpose of the classifier.

On these bases we assumed that the significance of ethnic difference is not fixed, and that it would be useful to try to discover when, how, under what circumstances and for whom it becames the central feature of a soical relationship. We took "ethnicity" to refer to the articulation of a social boundary between two sets of people and so to the recognition of a significant contrast between 'us' and 'them'. English social scientists have paid some analytic attention to the terms of that contrast—to colour, class, citizenship, competition etc. as markers of social boundary. But given the English epistemology of difference, it is inevitable that they have tended to ignore the flexibility of that boundary, the contextual shifts in the line between 'us' and 'them', and the fact that both advantages and disadvantages can accrue from keeping that line intact. To balance the picture we proposed to analyse ethnicity as a resource which individuals can, for some purposes and in some situations, mobilise to their own advantage; which will have no value or relevance to them in other situations; and which will, in still others, in which other objectives and identities are paramount, be construed as a liability to be escaped or denied as far as possible (cf. Wallman 1974).

In effect we set out to discover what part ethnicity plays in the total system of resources necessary to the management of livelihood. On the grounds that viability, whether in the city or elsewhere, is never a simple matter of material survival, the notion of the necessary resource was expanded over the classic trio of land, labour and capital to include also time, information and identity.[5] We had then to consider what combinations of these resources were necessary and available to people living in a designated setting—What kind of environment was it? What options did it offer?—and to map the ways in which particular households perceived and used those resources. Because the underlying question was *How do people who come from different places and now live in the same place manage and experience their separate livelihoods in that place?*,[8] the setting surveyed in the first stage of the study was chosen to include a range of ethnic categories, and the particular households interviewed in the second stage to represent numerically important populations within it.

III. Practical Context

It is not a coincidence that the society-as-network metaphor joined the currency of our analytic notions only when anthropologists ventured into the cities. It is a model which allows the ethnographer to consider who knows whom, who goes where, and what kinds of cross-linkages there are in a given social field even when it is not possible for him or her to sit in the middle of that field and watch it all happening. Where that *is* possible, as it is said to be in small, closely-bounded, rural communities wholly unlike the setting at issue here, network as a conceptual tool is neither necessary nor particularly useful. It is not that the quality of relationships differs from one place to another, only that different kinds of abstraction lend themselves to different research environments and different research questions.

The network notion can be—has been—articulated in a number of ways (see Hannerz 1980: Ch. 5). The two used in the two strategies described in this paper are normally contrasted: one involves drawing an arbitrary line around a total social field and mapping "all" the linkages and cross-linkages happening inside it; the other conceptualises an ego-centred social field and involves following one person (at a time) through the universe of his or her contacts. The first, it is said, is like describing the activity in a fish tank; the second is like tagging one fish and watching to see where it swims and who it swims with. By this analogy it is clear that neither *as such* tells us anything about the meaning of the relationships or the contacts involved.

The constraints on mapping relationships in a densely populated setting and of using the network metaphor to analyse them are probably standard elements of the practical context of anthropology in the city. Others are peculiar to particular urban areas and to the political and economic conditions affecting them. It is significant to this programme of study that our designated field area it not just "city", but "inner city", and that the label implies and entails a number of special assumptions. They are summarised here with reference to the British scene it provides the first level context for an ethnography of London.[7]

The "inner city" districts of the great metropolitan centres have been considered problem areas by politicians, administrators and researchers in Britain for a number of years. They are the new *terra incognita* of the establishment: no one knows what really goes on in them, and they are thought to be too remote and too hostile for anyone to find out. This 'no go' reputation is only half founded in fact, but the facts are persuasive. The inner city has traditionally been described by urban geographers as an area of transition and population turnover. Both the turnover and the loss of population have lately been accelerated by housing stress and blight,[8] and all of these have assaulted the fabric of the physical environment. Anyone who can leave is assumed to have left. The population "remaining" must, by this logic, be "socially disadvantaged" and, whether as cause or effect, deprived of ordinary resources and amenities. The same districts are characterised as containing concentrations of minority ethnic groups and/or by unusually high proportions of people classified as deviant. In short, the inner city is by current definition a problem area, more often identified by economic, social or political pathology than by the spatial criterion implied in its name.

These conditions and prejudices entail that it is more difficult to gather information about the people living in inner city areas than about those living in suburbs, new towns or rural villages. They are underenumerated in the National Census and on the Electoral Roll, and they show exceptionally high non-response rates in market research surveys. Their relative lack of participation in the national political process is indicated by a below average turnout to vote in elections and a lower than average rate of membership in formal organisations.

It is of course in terms of "formal" and official structures and processes that the inner city is remote or hostile. This is the environment in which "the informal economy" flourishes—which means only that many inner city transactions and activities cannot be enumerated because they do not fit into the categories and specifications which the official system imposes. It is also true that the population of the inner cities is largely low status, socially distant from the political and managerial elite and from the majority of social researchers.

But if people living in these areas are alienated from the mainstream, they should not be assumed to be passive about it. Certainly they are more articulate and openly suspicious of enquiry than they were in Victorian times. Charles Booth's interviewers, who were mainly clerics and school board officials, could apparently enter a person's home on demand and badger the residents with their questions (Booth 1891). The period of such obedient cooperation with high status investigators has long passed.

The clearest and most recent evidence of the contrast between the uncooperative inner city and the rest of Britain appears in the field results of the 1977 National Dwelling and Housing Survey (NDHS). The London results alone indicate that survey success varies with social and spatial indices—i.e. inversely to inner-city-ness. The overall success rate at the sample addresses in Greater London was 75.9 %, but the range within London is enormous: the (suburban)borough of Bexley shows a response rate of 85.4 % against the (inner)borough of Kensington and Chelsea's 60.7 % (Department of the Environment 1979). Moreover, in sixteen London boroughs the NDHS fieldwork had to be extended as so many addresses needed to be revisited even after four calls.[9]

The NDHS report itself suggests that non-response was most likely in pre-1919 properties, and that problems arose with 'properties subdivided internally'. Doubts about the validity of the results for inner London led local authority officials to publish a paper itemising their reservations. The 'most frequently mentioned criticisms' were that the number of pensioners, of one person households in shared dwellings, and of households sharing facilities were all underestimated in inner areas. The statistical corollary multiplies the effect of the fault: it entails that other types of household are over represented as proportions of the total, and that the total number of households is itself underestimated. Non-identification of addresses and non-contact at sample addresses were described as inner city phenomena, and the paper concludes: '. . . It seems likely that non-response is the prime cause' of doubts concerning the reliability of the 1977 NDHS as a basis for policy and decision-making in inner city areas (London Housing Research Group 1979).

IV. The Neighbourhood Survey

The aim of the survey was to study the ways in which people of different ethnic origin but now living in the same area use the resources available to them, and to examine the significance of ethnicity as one of those resources.

The survey was therefore carried out in a relatively small area, covering the total population. This made the process of communicating with the potential respondents easier than when the sample of people to be surveyed is randomly dispersed. However, the problem of gaining credibility and acceptance among the residents of the area and of getting their cooperation remained. The decision to include local people in the process of the survey, both as contributors to the questionnaire and as interviewers, was made on that basis: one member of the research team had pioneered the approach in an earlier study of a dispersed ethnic community (De Lange & Kosmin 1979). It was obvious that the practicalities of studying a co-residential population would be different, but we had not initially realised how much extra *qualitative* material could be reached by involving the locals directly. Figure 1 represents a flow chart of the survey sequence and shows that their participation constitutes the mainstream of the research activity. The left hand side 'technical and support activities' and the right hand side 'methodological functions' are common to most social survey procedures—except perhaps for the fact that the latter have in this case combined the approaches of a number of different disciplines.

The "neighbourhood" of this study is situated in Battersea in South London, close to Clapham Junction. It has clearly defined geographical boundaries: to the north and east it is bounded by a railway, to the south by a busy main road, and to the west by a housing development site. The houses in the areas were built at various times during the second half of the nineteenth century. The streets adjacent to the railway and the development site are made up of small terraced houses and cottages; those in the centre of the area contain large Victorian houses. The area has some retail and small industrial premises.

The number of households in the area was estimated at 526 in August 1978; the total population approximately 1370. The main ethnic categories were English, Irish, West Indian and African, but there were also residents with origins in the European continent, South Asia and the Far East.

In the early 1970's the Local Government Authority put forward a number of different proposals to demolish and redevelop parts of the area. These plans were vague and left residents uncertain as to what was likely to be the future of their neighbourhood. In many instances the effect of extended indecision of this kind as been a (further) loss of community morale and an acceleration of the condition described as "blight" (above, and note [8]). In this instance it led instead to the creation of a Residents' Association which, in 1974, persuaded the Borough Council to declare the neighbourhood a *Housing Action Area.*

It is significant that the area selected had some measure of localist identity and leadership. Having H.A.A. status meant, by the terms of the *Housing Act 1974,* that it was eligible to receive government grants for '... co-ordinated and continuous renewal ... in ways which avoid the disruption of, indeed provide for the enhancement of, established communities' (Circular 13/75, para. 5—quoted in Wallman 1975). The likeli-

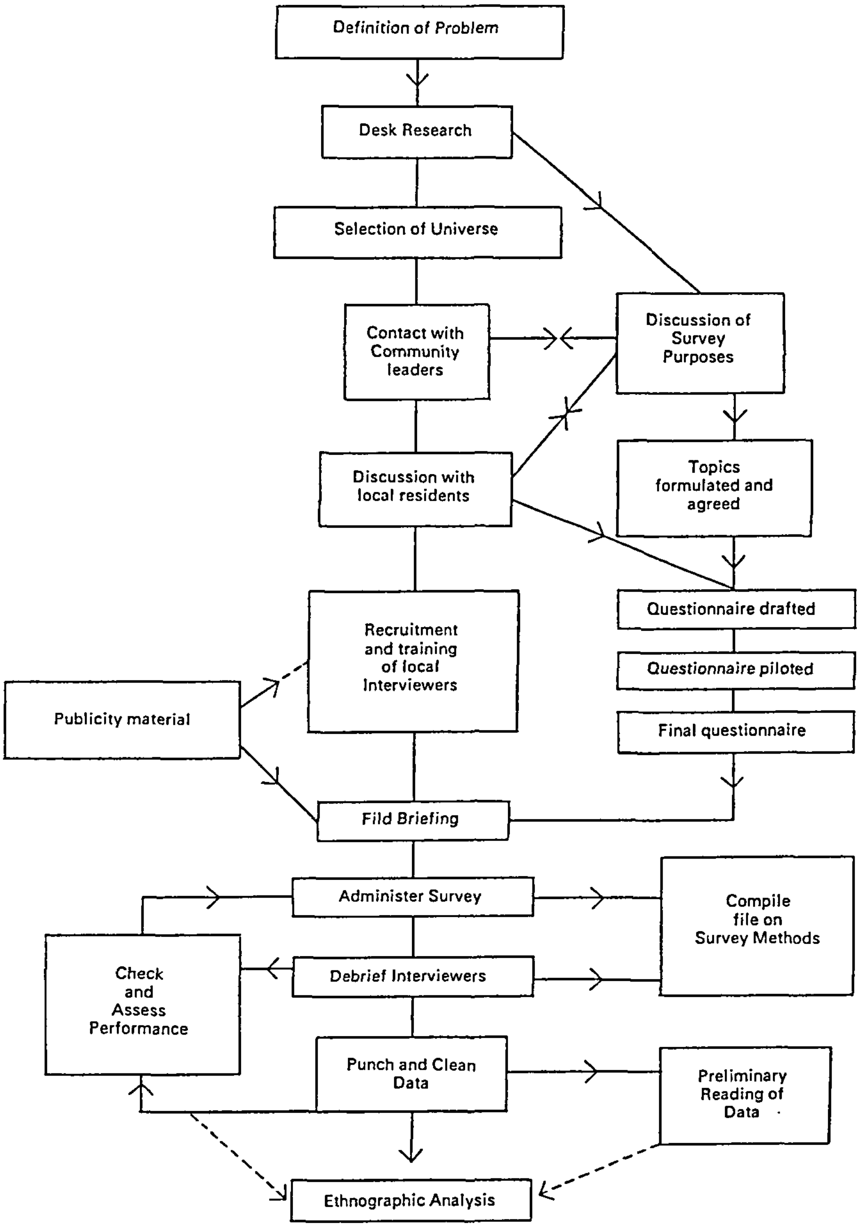

Figure 1: *Sequence of Inner City Neighbourhood Survey*

hood that community identity in this case followed the *Housing Action Area* designation (Wallman 1978) is not pertinent here. Whatever the circumstances of its beginning, at the time of the survey the area improvement programme had reached its fifth year. There was a need for updated demographic data, particularly since a change in local government had made the continuation of the housing improvement programme uncertain and the local organisers were aware they might have to defend the area's rights to 'renewal'. The survey could collect new population figures and could at the same time enquire into the residents' perception and use of local facilities, and their expectations of the area's future. For the second purpose a special section on "Neighbourhood" was built into the questionnaire. The inclusion of locally-oriented questions in turn enhanced the general acceptability of the survey: the fact that residents/respondents could identify with some of its aims increased their willingness to cooperate with the study.

The decision to employ locals instead of professional interviewers and to pay them at commercial rates to interview their neighbours could be justified simply as a means of injecting extra cash into the local economy, but it was taken in the light of several more strategic considerations. The first is that some of the difficulties experienced in trying to get people to cooperate with social investigations in inner city areas are a product of their concern that personal information might fall into the wrong hands. This concern is more likely to be directed against the authorities and outsiders than against one's friends and neighbours who probably already have it by informal or indirect means, and who constitute quite a different kind of intrusion into ordinary life. On all these counts amateur local interviewers are more likely to get willing cooperation than professional non-local interviewers. Second, success of a survey in terms of response rate and completeness of information is also related to the level of motivation of the interviewers. Employing interviewers who are interested in the survey because it is of some direct relevance to their own livelihood ensures a highly motivated fieldforce. Of course the promise of payment for interviews achieved was significant, but not to an overriding extent. At best the fees constituted only a small additional income. Third, local interviewers are more knowledgeable about gaining physical access to households: they know the layout of buildings and the number of occupants. Fourth, local interviewers are less worried about calling on homes after dark, not having the inhibitions about walking in their own neighbourhood which outsiders have. And fifth, the use of local interviewers has a time and money saving effect: it minimises the time spent travelling to and from respondents, and as local interviewers often know when people are at home, it reduces the number of unsuccessful calls.

The remainder of this section will be concerned with the organisation of the neighbourhood survey, and of the way in which it reflected and benefitted from the personal networks of the interviewers and the researchers.

PREPARING THE FIELD

The survey itself took only a few weeks to complete, but was carried out in the second half of a five year research programme. As a research strategy it was dependent on the fact that some members of the research team had made informal contacts in the area many months before the survey began. The most influential of these was a longstanding resident who had been active in the setting up of the local residents' association and in applying for the government grant to convert a part of an underused local church into a community centre. Through him other local organisers were approached and the general intention of the survey explained. It is striking that at that stage the content of the questionnaire was less interesting than the local connections of the research team. We were encouraged nevertheless to write a formal letter to the residents' association in which we set out the purpose, method and sponsorship of the reserch and asked for their cooperation with it. This letter was printed in the association's monthly newsletter to inform the residents at large. The survey was then discussed at a public meeting of the residents' association which allowed the residents to ask questions about it. It was during these initial contacts with local organisers that the questions relating to local interests were suggested and added to the questionnaire.

The more detailed field work preparations began in August 1978. A small survey office was set up in the main road bounding the survey area and an able and experienced field researcher was appointed to coordinate the preliminary work, recruit and train interviewers and administer the field work—all tasks whose crucial importance to the success of a survey tend to be underestimated. The next step was to build up a descriptive profile of the houses and the households in the area. The presence of a Housing Office facilitated this task enormously. The Housing Officer had been involved in the housing programme since the declaration of the *Housing Action Area* and, although in her official capacity she dealt only with properties owned by the borough Council and by Housing Associations, she had an extensive knowledge of the total area. With her assistance a detailed map of the survey area was drawn up indicating the number of households in each building, the size and ethnic composition of each household, and the empty housing units in the area. Over the same period the fieldwork supervisor extended our contact with local organisers and spent time in the community centre, but decided that to build up a social network among residents *other than* these leaders, and to gain the necessary credibility and acceptance, active participation in local activities would be more effective. August was the month in which the community centre organised a holiday programme for local children; as extra help was needed, she volunteered to assist as a play-group leader. In this role she met a range of local people and so prepared the ground for the recruitment of interviewers. Conversation with residents on and about these children's outings was also an invaluable source of data on interaction processes and attitudes towards living in the area.

The publicity campaign was another important aspect of preparing the field. Besides personal communication about the survey more formal methods were used. Advertisements were placed in the monthly newsletter issued by the residents' association. In the middle of August children participating in the holiday programme were asked to design posters around the theme 'Living in the City'. Every child who did so was given a small prize and was eager to show the results, which were displayed in and outside the community centre and Housing Office to his or her kinsmen and neighbours. Closer to the field work date professionally printed posters were distributed to the local pubs and shops. Finally, in the second week of September, one week before the field work started, cards were sent to each household, explaining the aims of the survey and asking for cooperation. The content of these items was friendly and informal, but their style was as glossy and professional-looking as the survey budget would allow.

RECRUITMENT OF INTERVIEWERS

On the basis of the information obtained from the Housing Office the number of households living in the area was estimated at 526. To survey these households we anticipated a field work period of six to seven weeks.

We recognised that working with a field-force which had no experience in interviewing would require intensive training before the field work started, and continuous guidance while it was happening. We knew also that a good relationship between the interviewers and the survey staff was vital for successful field performance and that therefore the number of "supervisors" involved during the field work period should be kept to a minimum. To realise these conditions and at the same time keep the supervisory and administrative work manageable we aimed for a fieldforce of 30 interviewers.

The interviewers were recruited through four channels: 1) personal contacts with local organisers and residents; 2) announcements in the community centre and the Housing Office; 3) advertisements in the residents' association newsletter and 4) the social networks of interviewers.

The success rate of these channels differed. The advertisements in the newsletter and the announcements in the communal buildings produced only a small number of replies (three of twenty-two). On the other hand recruitment through personal networks was very effective (the remaining nineteen). This points to the importance of a preparatory stage in which members of a research team are seen to be actively interested in local life, and it supports the observation that the willingness of people to cooperate with social investigations and, as in our case, to assist in the gathering of information depends to a large extent on their knowledge and opinion of those in charge of the project (see e.g. Whyte 1955: 300). And there is no doubt that the mere existence of a community centre and a residents' association was of great value for the recruitment of interviewers. It made it easier to contact people and to participate in local activities. Once the first contacts with prospective interviewers were made, they tended to talk about and to recommend our proposals to their relatives and friends and so opened up their social network to recruitment. Nevertheless, we succeeded in recruiting only twenty-two interviewers, eight less than the number we had planned.

A PROFILE OF THE FIELD FORCE

All but two interviewers were residents of the survey area. The two outsiders were taken on when it became clear that there were some households that local interviewers preferred not to visit, and a few which refused to cooperate at the first call. Except for the two boundary roads (which are busy urban throughways), all streets were represented in the fiedl force; but nearly one third of the interviewers lived in one street—the one whose residents had taken the initiative to oppose government plans for the area and who had played a crucial role in the formation of the residents' association. The fact that their interest in the area was still very much alive and many were involved in local activities explains their over-representation in the field force; the survey had achieved the status of a local activity.

The interviewers came from different backgrounds: they included five housewives, three clerical assistants, two old-age pensioners, two teachers, two employment advisers, two students, two unemployed persons, a nurse, a domestic help, a market researcher and a computer operator. The level of education of the field force also varied: eight interviewers had no formal qualifications, two had CSE certificates, three had 'O' levels, another three had 'A' levels and six had postsecondary school qualifications. Classified by ethnic origin, two interviewers were Irish, two West Indian, one "European", and the great majority English. In terms of our enquiry it is significant that nine of the seventeen English were born and bred in South London, having lifetime knowledge of and identifying with the survey area—a category that we have constituted as "south London ethnics" in the survey analysis.

Of the twenty-two interviewers, only two were men. This could be attributed to the difference in work commitments between the sexes, the necessity to declare the earnings from the interview sessions to the Inland Revenue, and the fact that interviewing is generally regarded as a female job. Twelve of the total were under thirty years of age and two were old age pensioners over sixty. A handful of the young women had pram-stage babies and regularly took them interviewing or brought them into the survey office. The most diligent and successful of all was a woman under twenty, with a small baby, and without formal education or job experience.

It would not have been useful, even had our situation allowed it, to have recruited interviewers on the basis of particular characteristics or experience. Interviewing is a self-selecting process; people who feel ill at ease conducting an interview or trying to get cooperation give up of their own accord soon after their first interview sessions. The questionnaire designed for the survey was highly structured. The range of answers to the closed questions were set out in columns and only had to be circled. Open questions were kept to a minimum and any necessary instructions for the interviewers were printed on the form. The questionnaire took thirty-five minutes to complete. In combination, these design features made it relatively simple to administer. But even with a highly structured questionnaire, people unfamiliar with interview techniques cannot be expected to achieve a good performance unless attention is paid to training and debriefing them, and continuous support is given during the field work period. At no time did we underestimate the skills involved in carrying out an interview.

TRAINING THE INTERVIEWERS

The preparation of the prospective interviewers , most of whom were entirely unfamiliar with questionnaires and interviewing techniques, was organised in three stages spread over one week. One week before the field work started, they were invited to an introductory session, most of which was devoted to explaining the questionnaire and telling them how to record the answers to the various questions. The aims and administration of the survey were also discussed, and we gave the interviewers some guidelines on how to introduce themselves and the survey to potential respondents. All these points served equally to explain the survey to the interviewers themselves. Following this session, printed notes referring to specific parts of the questionnaire and the ways to record answers were given to the interviewers along with a copy of the questionnaire. They were asked to look at them at home and to write down anything they did not understand or wanted more information about.

At the end of the week an individual training session was arranged with each interviewer. Because the interviewers were also residents of the survey area, they were included in the survey as respondents. The individual training sessions were used to interview them, and made it possible to demonstrate again how to handle the questionnaire and how to record the answers. When the interviewer's own interview had been completed, any difficulties he or she had experienced with it or while reading through the questionnaire and the notes at home were discussed.

Throughout the training the interviewers were told that the success of the survey depended importantly on the precision with which they handled the questionnaire. But since they tended more often to underestimate than to overestimate their ability to conduct interviews, the need to make them aware of the problems of interviewing had to be carefully offset against their need for reassurance. We sought the necessary balance by training them in stages, by encouraging them to select the addresses they were to visit, and by debriefing them regularly and at length about every interview they attempted or completed.

FIELDWORK MANAGEMENT

The seasons appropriate to a survey of this kind are limited by the annual cycles of livelihood and climate. In the inner London setting one such period comes in early autumn, — after the schools have reopened and anyone taking a summer holiday away has returned, and yet before the days become so short and the weather so unpleasant that sensible people stay indoors to avoid the dangers and discomforts of the street. We therefore started the field work during the third week of September. The interviewers were given an identity card, questionnaires and a list with ten addresses. Where they had no preference for particular addresses, the lists were compiled by the survey staff. In most cases, however, the interviewers selected the addresses. While going through address lists we compared our data on the number of households in each dwelling and on vacant housing units with the knowledge the interviewers had of their neighbourhood. We asked them to check the number of households in each building and to inform us of any inaccuracies in the status of vacant properties. In the first week of the fieldwork the interviewers were instructed to return to the survey office as soon as possible after they had completed a single interview so that one of us could through each person's first questionnaire with them in detail. This round of checks showed such a high standard of accuracy thta we told them instead to report back once a week, or after every five completed questionnaires, which ever was the sooner. Some consistently called in more often, whether because they preferred be paid *ad hoc* as each questionnaire was completed, because the survey office or the survey staff had for them some extra social or personal function, or for some combination of these reasons (*vide* Debriefing, below).

An address list was made out in duplicate—one copy given to the interviewer—and one kept in the office. The form of these lists was such that interviewers could readily record completed interviews, appointments, refusals and reasons for refusals. At the debriefing sessions the information on the interviewer's copy was transferred to the office copy and any information on empty housing units or households not recorded in our files added to our list of households. We also kept a list for each street on which we entered the interviews obtained, the names of the interviewers who had made the calls, refusals and reasons for refusals. The same information was therefore recorded by street and by interviewer. Because the interviewers were so familiar with the area's residents we were able even to record accurate basic information on non-respondent households. When asked about his or her neighbour, everyone knew or could find out the size of the household, age of the household members, ethnic origin and in many cases also the type of employment. In order to see how the survey progressed we kept weekly maps of the whole area. Through these different methods of record keeping we kept a full and up-to-date account of the each interviewer's performance and of the level of local cooperation throughout the survey period.

Our response to refusals varied. When a household refused cooperation because of a serious illness or a long-term crisis, we did not revisit it. Where the refusal seemed to be due to a temporary problem, we postponed the second call till the end of the survey. In cases where the respondents seemed to refuse cooperation because the interviewer was either too closely acquainted with the household or totally unknown to it, a second interviewer would be sent, sometimes on the specific recommendation of the first, to conduct the interview. Finally, the households who objected to the questionnaire itself were approached by a personal letter from the field work supervisor before any other visit was attempted.

We had planned a field work period of six to seven weeks, but we had not taken into account factors which could slow down the progress of the survey. For example, we lost three interviewers at a very early stage of the survey: one interviewer withdrew because she felt ill-at-ease during interview sessions, while two others were unable to continue for medical reasons. The most influential factor was the necessity to declare earnings to the Inland Revenue: many interviewers, particularly the old-page pensioners the unemployed and those with part-time jobs, literally could not afford to be taxed on their interview earnings.[10] They therefore adjusted their weekly performance to the amount of money they were allowed to earn tax free. After six weeks of field work 25 % of the households had still to be interviewed. As this shortfall was connected not with an unwillingness to cooperate but with a lack of manpower, we felt it justifiable to extend the field work period. The number of available addresses was by then so small that it was difficult to supply all interviewers with enough addresses to keep them going. Only four were kept on to visit the remaining households. The field work operation was finally terminated at the end of November.

DEBRIEFING THE INTERVIEWERS

The debriefing was a one-to-one procedure and enormously time-consuming both for the survey staff and the interviewers, but it was crucial to the training and the data gathering, and an invaluable source of informal ethnographic detail about the neighbourhood. For the interviewers it provided a routine source of support and assistance and the chance to discuss experiences and anxieties which they might not otherwise have had the confidence to initiate. On each occasion the returning interviewer was asked how the respondents had reacted to the questionnaire, and whether he/she had had any special problems getting or recording answers. Most interviewers found the residents very cooperative and regarded their involvement in the survey as an enjoyable and interesting experience: those who consistently did not would have dropped out of the field force. But even the more successful of them sometimes expressed frustration, particularly after having failed to get an interview. In such cases a debriefing session helped them to rationalise a bad experience or refusal.

The debriefing also involved a detailed examination of the questionnaire. Every entry was checked for accuracy, completeness and legibility. Whenever information was missing, the interviewer would be asked to drop in to the respondent's home a second time to get the missing data. This procedure, which was nearly always successful, was possible because we were working with interviewers who lived locally and knew the respondents as neighbours.

The debriefing not only ensured that the interviewers maintained a consistently high standard of performance, it made us aware of certain weaknesses in the questionnaire. This knowledge was useful when we came to analyse the data. Finally, as we have said, the debriefing sessions were a major source of qualitative data about the area. Some of it came through as interviewers filled out what was written on the questionnaire with their insider knowledge of the informant or the neighbourhood. More was added as the researchers—notably the survey organiser—became significant nodes in the interviewers' local networks.

The fact that the survey office was always manned by one of only three researchers, that it was situated so near to where the interviewers lived, and that it could be contacted 12 hours a day contributed to the development of this kind of relationship. Initially, the interviewers visited the office only to ask for assistance with their interviewing or to be debriefed. As the survey progressed and relationships between researchers and interviewers became more friendly, many began to regard the office as a place where they could drop in any time for refreshment and chat. They also began to stay on after the debriefing sessions and the conversations automatically became more informal. These conversations often centered around personal, family, employment or educational problems. Although the interviewers would sometimes ask for advice, on the whole they just wanted somebody who was prepared to listen. Because we were known to the interviewers but at the same time outsiders, we were structurally appropriate to this intermediary function.

In relation to the respondents we played a similar role, but less directly. Some respondents came to regard the survey staff as people who had access to all kinds of information. They used the interview sessions to indicate what they wanted to know about, and the interviewers brought back to us their requests for information on crèche facilities, English language classes, training courses, provisions provided by the community centre and even on accommodation. Some enquiries we could handle ourselves, others we referred to the organisers of the community centre. Either way we came to know many of the problems and preoccupations of the residents and of the area.

THE FIELD WORK RESULTS

By employing a local field force we had hoped for a higher than usual response rate, but we had not anticipated the quality and extent of its effect. The results were impressive. Of the 526 households—an estimate based on the data from the local Housing Office—445 households were successfully interviewed. This is an interview success rate of 84,6 %. As housing tenure in inner city areas is extremely fluid, the estimate of the Housing Office might have been inaccurate. An alternative way of calculating the survey response rate is to add all non-respondents, including households not contacted or located, to the number of completed interviews and to exclude only the vacant dwellings. On this basis there were 76 non-respondents out of a total of 521 households and the overall response rate was a "suburban" 85,4 %.

The 76 field work failures comprised 41 refusals, 10 households where cooperation was not possible because of serious illness or a crisis, 24 addresses where the residents could not be contacted or located, and one household which gave inaccurate information. The non-response profiles were very similar to those of the respondents. Except for the single person households, who consituted 41 % of the nonresponding compared with 27 % of the responding households, the proportion of all other types of household amongst the non-responders corresponded with their proportion amongst the responding households. As for 'ethnic origin', by which we mean here only place of birth, the main discrepancy occurred in the figures for residents born in the Caribbean: 24 % of the non-respondents were of Caribbean 'ethnic origin' compared with 17 % of the respondents. The other groups showed no great differences.

Non-respondents were not distributed equally over the various streets. Sixty-three per cent of the total were concentrated in three streets. But since these three are the largest in the survey area, the figure ells us nothing about reasons for refusal or non-contact. If however we calculate non-response per street, as a proportion of the total number of households in that street, the size of the street become insignificant, bottom place is taken by a different set of three, and a number of possible explanations of low rates of survey response can be offered. One clue is given by the types of household living in these roads. They contain a large proportion of young single and two person households. Because of work commitments they could not be contacted during the day, and they tended to spend the evenings and weekends away from home. Another possible reasons is the type of buildings. Two of the same three were the only streets in the survey area which had buildings with three or more housing units. As other surveys have demonstrated, areas containing such buildings tend to produce a relatively high non-response rate. The fact that we worked with local interviewers did not solve this problem completely. Indeed, the interviewers' networks coincided with it. Many preferred to interview households they were in some way acquainted with. None of the interviewers lived in either of the two roads with multi-occupied housing; and a large proportion of the households who refused to cooperate or could not be contacted or located were marginal households, not involved in local activities and not personally known to any of the interviewers.

THE PERFORMANCE OF THE INTERVIEWERS

It took the interviewers about ten weeks to try to contact the 526 households and to complete 445 interviews. During the first and second week of the field work period the interviewers obtained 122 interviews (27.4 % of the total interviews), during the third and fourth weeks 164 interviews (36.9 %), during the fifth and sixth weeks 110 interviews (24.7 %). At this point we decided to continue the field work with a reduced field force of four interviewers. In the extended period 49 households (another 11 %) were contacted and successfully interviewed.

The performance of the interviewers differed. Three achieved less than five completed questionnaires; two managed each more than fifty. The rest were distributed across the range between, the mode being ten to fifteen questionnaires per interviewer.

There was no relationship between interview performance and educational qualifications. The interviewers without any formal education completed 40 % of all interviews, those with CSE, 'O' or 'A' levels did 24 %, and those with postsecondary qualification 19 % of the interviews. The remaining 17 % were obtained by the field work officer and a social science student from outside the area.

Of more significance to the difference in performance were job and family commitments and outside interests. As already mentioned, the amount of money interviewers could earn before being taxed affected their output. Our data on the interviewers' performance suggest that the difference in performance can also be explained in terms of *localism*, i.e. the extent to which the interviewers had social ties with in the neighbourhood. Of the interviewers who did not choose the household addresses, some were relatively new to the area and only had a few local contacts, while others had been living in the area for many years and were actively involved in neighbourhood activities. The former tended to need more time to obtain interviews than did those who had an extensive social network in the area. The importance of localism to the interviewers' performance was even more evident for the category of intervewers who did choose the interview addresses. They started off interviewing people they knew well. A number of interviewers for whom the neighbourhood was not such an important focus of social interaction stopped after having completed these addresses. Others continued, but must of them did not go beyond their own street. Within the boundaries of the area their networks and identities seemed to be concentrated in the street where they lived: residents of other streets tended to be perceived as 'the others', or even as 'strangers' irrespective of colour, birthplace or economic status.

The progression of the survey through the neighbourhood demonstrated the various levels of the interviewers' individual local networks quite graphically. The first interviewed households whose members were *relatives, friends* or acquaintances of some kind. These households were dispersed over the area. They then started to operate in their own streets. The roads not represented in the field force and marginal households were left to a much later stage of the field work period.

The flow chart indicates that the tasks and procedures of the neighbourhood survey were in many ways the same as those used in conventional social survey. Our innovation is represented by the extent to which the area's residents participated in the survey not simply as respondents, but also as contributors to the questionnaire and as interviewers. We involved the neighbourhood in these ways in an attempt to compensate for the low response rate which characterises survey work in inner city areas. On the evidence of the response achieved, the strategy was by this measure successful. Furtheron the basis of the checks we carried out during and after the field work period (we interviewed a 10 % sample of households for a second time), we can be confident that the employment of local residents as interviewers did not reduce the validity of the survey results. On the contrary: the survey's *ethnographic* scope.—i.e. its validity as an indicator of patterns of social relationships as well as a count of units of population—is a direct product of their involvement.

V. The Network Diagram

If the *Neighbourhood Survey* can be described as an effort to map the resource dimensions of the "fishtank" of that neighbourhood, then the *Network Diagram* is concerned to chart the resource systems of particular inhabitants. The appropriateness of the metaphor is however limited in one essential respect: the survey questionnaire was designed to *exclude* matters of personal interpretation or meaning—whether of the researchers, the interviewers or the respondents themselves; this second stage strategy deliberately broaches these questions. The first stage of the study seeks to find out what the resources of the setting are; the second to account for variations in the way they are used.

The device is adapted from the family therapy work of Attneave (Speck & Attneave 1974) who proposed that the very activity of conceptualising resources and relationships would provide members of the family in therapy with information about their 'universe', and would indicate the moment of intervention for the therapist wanting to change patterns within that family. Members of the family acted as a unit in the dynamic of the mapping. With the clarification of points of apparent conflict, or the demonstration that action or resolution was hindered by a lack of resources or perceived resources, the family's problem might begin to be dealt with constructively. In effect, the network diagram could help to make the family situation plain.

In this study, following the logic of the family therapy model, we adapted the network conceptualisation technique to the non-interventionist study of family resource systems. The diagram was introduced to see if the way families expressed and organised their lives could be graphically represented, and whether the placing of people on a map in relation to each other would allow us to record and compare the meanings they attributed to the individuals in their networks. It is important that the families selected for study in this context were not "problem families" or families with an expressed need for psychotherapy. Rather they were ordinary families who had ordinary problems from time to time (as Bott 1957).

The reactions of non-psychotherapist researchers to the map varied, but because it came from a therapy setting, it was the focus of some anxiety even before we took it into the field. It seemed irresponsible to provide such a powerful intervention technique without providing also the means of working through any discomfort aroused in the respondent, and it was clear that not all researchers, whatever their disciplines, are willing or able to cope with the expression of affect. This is a personal matter, but it does influence the research product: the extent and quality of the data recorded on the network diagram will depend more heavily on the respondent's perception of the receptivity or resilience of the researcher than anthropologists are accustomed to expect. We therefore practised doing network interviews and discussed them at length within the team, most importantly with its psychotherapist member, before inflicting them on any potential respondent in the survey area. Ideally, those who continue to feel uneasy with the device should use a less explicit means to elicit and to record network information. In any case it is not a research strategy for amateurs—being in this respect quite unlike the interviewing described in the previous section.

Figures 2 and 3 are the network diagrams of two separate families living in the same inner city neighbourhood. They are chosen as being visually very different from each other so that some of the variation we have encountered and the kinds of information that can be stored on and read off such a map can be itemised for the purposes of this paper. Obviously we can make no comparative or generalised statements of content on the basis of only two examples so do not attempt analysis here. Before drawing out of the implications for the study of networks and resource systems however, it may be useful, in parallel to the section on the Heighbourhood Survey, to set down the procedures and problems involved in using the strategy at all.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE DIAGRAM

The diagram or map consists of concentric rings around a central core which represents the household. It has left and right segments which distinguish kin from non-kin in the network. Each concentric ring denotes a degree of intimacy or propinquity and is carefully named so that both researcher and informant have the clearest possible indication of where individuals should be placed on the map. The bottom pie-slice segment encourages the subject to express difficult, hostile or ambiguous relationships which are also placed in one or other of the distance rings. Ample space is left around the central circular map so that detail, specific to particular entries on it can be entered, whether by the subject(s) at the time of the interview, or by the researcher afterwards. These notes are a way of storing observations and intimations and will anyway thicken the description of the case when it comes to be written up or analysed.

VARIATIONS IN THE PROCEDURE

In our experience in polyglot areas, the diagram provoked a variety of responses. Response does not seem to have varied with ethnic origin as

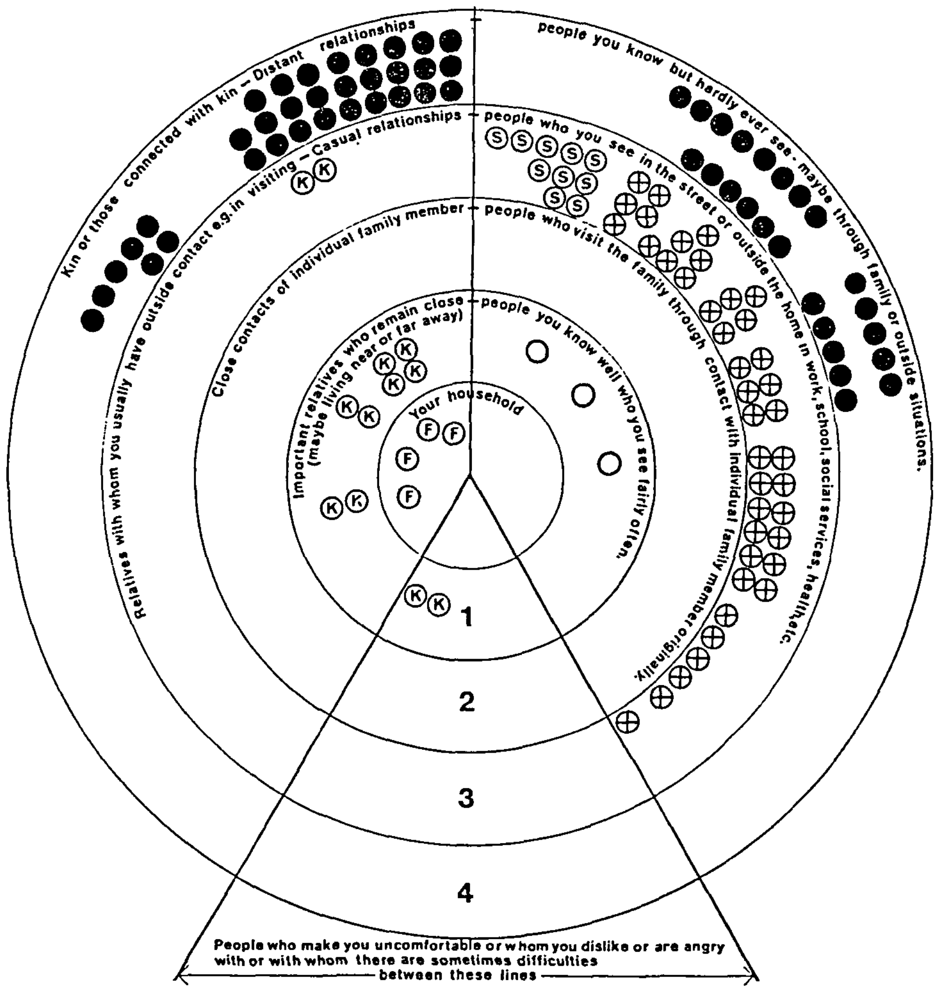

Figure 2

such, but it is possible that some cultures will take to the mapping exercise more readily than others. In our sample (altogether about 30)[11] the initial responses showed interest, confusion, total indifference and shades of persecution. The response was different where some alliance already existed between the researcher and the informant; it tended to reflect how long and how well they each other before the network diagram was presented.

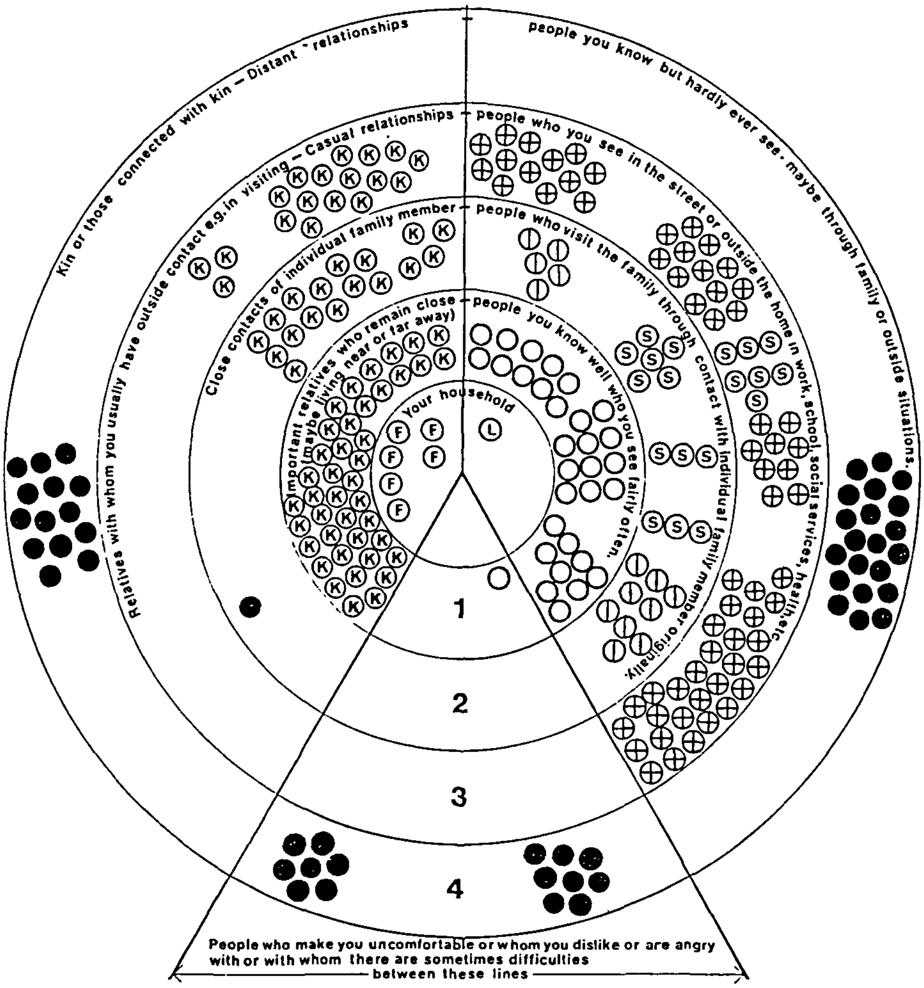

Figure 3

The map can be presented to a single member of the family, to the marital couple, or to the whole family. It is not necessary to insist that every case is dealt with in the same way, althoug it is essential that details of person and situation are taken into account when the maps come to be analysed. The map could be achieved in the course of one interview or constructed over time by the researcher as information came in. One

Key to the network diagrams. See also the appendix

Ⓕ	= family, members of the household
Ⓛ	= lodger, non family. (This category is rare in the inner London setting.)
Ⓚ (ring 1)	= important relatives. These may not live nearby, but their involvement with the household makes a difference to its livelihood or quality of life. Often they have figured in the lives of members of the household from birth; sometimes they occupy positions of power in the dynamics of the family though they may be far away. Dead relatives have been mentioned in this category.
Ⓚ (ring 2)	= Kin who are in close contact of some kind but may have a particular relationship with one member of the household.
Ⓚ (ring 3)	= Kin who are seldom well known directly and have therefore limited resource value except as sources of information. They are often but not necessarily of the same ethnic group as the respondent. (For our purposes it made sense to indicate ethnic origin when the informant made a point of it, but to note it as a characteristic of people on the map if we had learnt it from the informant or knew of it from elsewhere.)
Ⓢ (all rings)	= Statutory worker, someone employed in the state social, medical or educational services who is perceived as having professional contact with the household—although this perception may change. This category often embodies a lot of information about the network: the informant is likely to remember how, for what reason and through whom the contact was made in the first place, and to be specifically aware of the resources made available through it.
○ (ring 1)	= Non-kin who are well known to all the household and likely to provide resources not available through kin or statutory workers by virtue of consistent involvement and committment to the household and all its members.
⦶ (ring 2)	= Non-kin who are accepted into the household and who become known to all members of it, although intimacy and closer contact continues with the introducing member. Friends of children, workmates of one adult would be likely to appear here.
⊕ (ring 3)	= Non-kin known in the more public sphere and occupying more public roles, although they may know a lot about the household. Much of the success of the Neighbourhood Survey was a function of this category of relationships.
● (ring 4)	= These may be kin or others but are not considered integral to the household's livelihood in any way. They would be recognised and acknowledged on encounter, but often contact no longer exists. When it occurs it is likely to be through other links in the network, activated by a kin-keeper (as in the matter of weddings and funerals), or in relation to a specific public or institutional event (a political meeting or a local or occupational issue). Hannerz's *traffic* and *provisioning* relationships might be perceived here. In our study there is evidence that locals once placed in ring 4 'moved in' to ring 3 in the course of the Neighbourhood Survey when simple recognition was activated and residents "got to know each other better". Processes of this kind may be graphically recorded by inward or outward arrows.

family's map could be made initially and finally, or compounded from the separate maps of family members. The choice of approach and ways of 'staying with' the diagram could be left to the judgement of the interviewer in the light of his/her knowledge of the household, but in no case was it found useful to leave the respondents to fill in the diagram without support and some detailed help in making decisions about categories. In the early stages a few families were allowed the option of filling in information "at leisure" or "in privacy" overnight. In each of these cases the map became a source of considerable anxiety. Either there was difficulty in finding suitable slots for what the respondents felt to be important information, or they were made uncomfortable by the affective load that this kind of information carried. Many of those who had begun the map on their own tailed off in their response, lost the paper or asked directly for help with it. Even with help, a few respondents niggled over the validity of their projections; others on the contrary found the mapping effort a revealing and rewarding experience.

PROBLEMS OF INTERPRETATION

The coherence of the operation has a lot to do with the capacity for abstraction. Where relationships and resources are freely verbalised by the informant and adequately understood by the researcher, the diagram can be used as a ready framework for ethnographic data and little time needs to be spent in explaining it or getting the informant to engage with it. In these optimal circumstanes the notion of a resource 'universe', and the difference between *actual* or geographic distance and *experienced* or affective distance from the household or members of it still needs to be carefully explained. Under all kinds of circumstances—we have now completed the maps of families and individuals of different class, age, sex, ethnic origin and designated role—the map can be useful in concentrating information about relationships, resources and meaning *provided that the researcher him/herself is prepared to interpret some of the responses to fit in with the map.* This interpretation can be validated by asking if the respondent had meant categorically to distinguish between two people, or had placed them in different parts of the diagram in respect of a particular experience. For example: the bottom segment is provided so that conflict in relationships can be explicitly recognised. But it will not be clear from an entry in that segment whether conflict should be interpreted as a fixed quality of the relationship or only as an indication of inconsistency within it. Spelling out the alternatives of the map can itself clarify the content of a relationship or lead to the recognition of ambivalence.

Some respondents enjoy having coloured pens or stick-on patches available to them as they work on the diagram. This enables them to use different colours or shapes in ways which further classify the people on the map—whether male or female, alive or dead, first or second cousins, sharing religion or ethnicity etc.—and gives the material extra dimensions. It is not necessary that such colour coding be standardised to be useful; there is no suggestion here that the constructs of two people can be directly compared. The value of the diagram lies in the possibility of syphoning vast amounts of personal ethnographic information into manageable categories. It structures the universe of relationships in a way which allows comparative inferences to be drawn. The meaning of such categories will not be the same for each respondent or indeed for each researcher, but it is negotiable between researchers in their briefing and between respondent and researcher throughout the interview—exactly as it is or should be in a conventional fieldwork situation. It could even be argued that an ethnographic strategy which entails discussing the informant's 'universe' with him as it appears on the diagram is more likely to lead to an accurate formulation of the meaning of experiences or relationships than one in which interpretation is the relatively private business of the researcher.

Whatever the filling-in procedure, we imposed no time limit on it. Given the theoretical context of this study, however, we found it more useful to complete one diagram on the current state of family patterns and to return at some other time to add to or change the overall picture on another if it became necessary. The alteration of information or the interpretation of it is not a question of error, but of the fact that the constructs of respondents vary from day to day; shifts in bias or value are normal and inevitable (as Gellner 1973). It is just this inconsistency which is a key to discussion in the interview situation and an illustration of the boundary processes which are the focus of this research.

READING THE NETWORK DIAGRAMS

The entries on the map may be classified only by their positions—left and right of, near and far from the centre. Additionally they may be numbered and any information about the content of the relationship noted next to each number in the space down the sides of the map. They may also, as we have noted, be colour coded by the informant or the researcher or in a system agreed by both. The originals of Figures 2 and 3 were built up of nine different colour dots which have been translated, for the sake or reproduction here, into black-white symbols. There is deliberate redundancy in the coding: kin and non-kin in the inner rings are distinguished by sign as well as by appearing on opposite sides of the map. In this way the balance of people resources is highlighted by visual contrast and is more likely to catch the interest and so to provoke the comment of the informant. Note also that some of the entries are clustered to reflect the constellations in which they were perceived. The key to this notation system is given here to show the range of relationships that can be distinguished: there is no reason to expect the same distinctions to be equally useful in every study.

The amount and depth of information that can be read off these network diagrams can be enormously enhanced by using them in combination with other research strategies. Our network data for this study are backed up by the general and specific material collected and collated in its *1st Stage,* and by the localist framework provided by the methodology and the procedures of the neighbourhood survey itself; and we have augmented the *2nd Stage* with additional interviews on work histories and time budgets of the households at issue and have realised that a full genealogy of each would be necessary if the kin entries were to be properly understood—i.e. if we were to know whether few kin entries means few kin, or few *useful* kin (as Wallman 1974).

But a number of ethnographic items can be read off the diagrams alone. At the simplest level, it is possible to count the number of resource people designated by the informant(s). Comparing one diagram with another on this basis we get something like a measure of social or affective energy: some people recognise/define/feel something about few others, some about many others. Similarly the diagram shows the number of people placed in particular relationship categories and at each degree of intimacy and makes the balance of *kinds of* relationship perceived by the informant immediately visible. The essential usefulness of the diagram is not, however, in its mathematical or quantitative accuracy; but in the levels of meaning it makes available. It allows the mapping of the *affective* network—which, for the sake of clarity, must be distinguished from the *effective* network (as defined in Epstein 1969; the question of *affect* is raised in Epstein 1978) —and indicates that links of kinship or propinquity cannot be used as indicators of intimacy or resource value. It also shows that neither categorical distinctions of colour or ethnic origin, nor structural distinctions between personal and official resources are consistently significant to the informant. They are not therefore reliable predictors of his/her actions and identities. If public sector employees, brought into the family circle by virtue of professional role performance, can be placed in ring 2; and named kin or fellow ethnics relegated to rings 3 or 4 (as in the figures shown), then we have evidence that the classification of relationships in terms of any one set of characteristics of the individuals involved misses the basic anthropological point: relationships are not units, they are processes whose meaning and value changes in response to other things going on at the time. By the same token it can be demonstrated that even if kinship solidarities *are* displaced or replaced by bureaucratic support systems in the city as many models of urbanism and urbanisation propose (see Hannerz 1980: Ch. 3), the new resources are not necessarily any less personal than the old.

Equally there are aspects of structure and process that the diagram does not and cannot show. Because every entry appears in some direct relation with the centre, whatever its affective distance from it, all the entries represent first order relationships. Relationships one link (or more) away from the informant(s), and relationships between the people that the informant knows do not appear: the digram cannot cope with range and "reach", or with density and connectedness. Indeed, it is not required to. These are matters that relate to the logistics of the "fishtank" which will again become relevant to this material in the 3rd stage of the study (projected below), when these household resource systems are traced, through the content and processes of the Neighbourhood Survtey, back into the local resource systems. What it *is* required to do, we would argue, it begins to do very well. It gives us a way into understanding how a variety of individual households conceptualise the people they know, how they experience the inner city, and how they manage the business of livelihood in that setting.

VI. Implications

We began with a number of particular methodological problems, some endemic to anthropology in the city as such, others a result of the special inaccessibility of "inner city" populations. These problems were compounded by the nature of the questions we were set to ask. We needed research strategies that would reveal—as participant observation might—the ways in which people who come from different places and now live in the same place manage and experience their separate livelihoods, and yet would be feasible—as participant observation is not—in a densely polyglot setting whose residents are united only or most significantly in their distrust of interference from 'outside'. On both counts we needed research strategies that actively and explicitly involved the people we were studying.

The two strategies outlined in this paper are called *ethnography by proxy* not because informants are involved in collecting and recording ethnographic data, but because they are also involved in its interpretation.

Neither strategy is quick or easy: each needs periods of preparation and briefing, discussion and debriefing that are not readily justified within the conventions of anthropological or even sociological research. The Neighbourhood Survey entailed weeks of preparation before and clearing up after eight weeks in the field and *apart from* the theoretical input, the design of the questionnaire and the processing and analysis of the responses on it (Figure 1). But the only extra cost was the fieldwork supervisor and this extra outlay on one short term appointment was offset by savings in travel and subsistence payments for interviewers. The Network Diagrams are expensive by virtue of the time that must be spent in pre- and post-mapping involvement with informants, and of the high research: respondent ratio they demand, but probably not in terms of the ethnographer-hours investment of a participant observer. In either case they are cheaper than other urban research strategies if the scope and quality of the information they yield is taken into account.

The most immediate practical application of this approach is to the monitoring of social policy issues, and the assessment of the appropriateness, availability and take-up of social services in areas—notably inner city areas—which are otherwise *incommunicado*. A series of cluster areas surveyed in these ways could become the basis for longitudinal studies of continuing issues around the country. The research process would be cheaper and quicker than those described here: the field would not have to be defined and prepared anew for every survey, and the build-up of background information would allow shorter interviewing schedules and reduce the time necessary for their introduction and explanation.

In the same framework, a next theoretical effort, which we may designate as a possible 3rd Stage of the study, will be to fit the (2nd Stage) family case material back into the local area of the (1st Stage) neighbourhood survey. This will allow us to assess the qualities of the inner London "village" as a territorial field (as Barnes 1954), and the significance of localism to the various population groups living in it. It will also clarify the nature of neighbourhood as a function of the connectedness of locally based individuals on the various network diagrams, and set up a further test of the hypothesis which correlates the internal dynamics of family life with the pattern of its external relationships, and so, again, with the neighbourhood itself (as Bott 1957; Hannerz 1980: 167). Most importantly, it will consolidate our understanding of the resource options available to people living in the city, and of the 'capabilities' of the inner city environment.

NOTES

1. This paper reports aspects of an Ethnicity Research Programme run by the senior author for the SSRC Research Unit in Ethnic Relations, then baesd at the University of Bristol under the direction of Professor Michael Banton. In addition to the authors of this report, the programme has, at different stages, involved I. H. Buchanan, D. J. Clark, J. I. Gershuny, V. Saifullah Khan and R. Webster as associate researchers. It has benefitted in various ways from the advice and assistance of M. Assinder, S. d'Orey, W. E. Elkan, C. Evans, H. Flett, J. Geake, M. Wann and C. B. Yamba; and from the patience and generosity or the residents of the field research area. A full account of the Programme's research strategies and findings is in preparation and scheduled to appear in 1981.
2. These observations reflect the senior author's participation in discussions on and around the topic *The Uses of Anthropologists* which have been held in the period 1979/80 at the Department of Social Anthropology of the University of Stockholm, and in a series of colloquia on the Social Anthropology of Europe, convened by Dr Ralph Grillo of the University of Sussex and sponsored by the SSRC.
3. The disciplines involved in the programme include social anthropology, political and applied sociology, economics, economic history, systems analysis, urban planning and psychotherapy. Of the authors of this paper, Wallman is a social anthropologist, Dhooge and Kosmin are sociologists (directly concerned with the Neighbourhood Survey) and Goldman is a psychotherapist (responsible for the development of the Network Diagram).
4. There is evidence that these meanings are substantially different in Wales, Scotland and Ireland, so we do not intend reference to Britain as a whole.
5. This model is elaborated in the publications now being prepared. See in the meantime Wallman 1979: 6.
6. This question implies a "best view" assessment. It takes a lead from the famous landscape gardener who was known as "Capability" Brown because he is said to have asked himself, when called upon to assess a property, "what are the capabilities of this environment". Others would have focussed on problems, counstraints and disadvantages. Our view of the inner city and, indeed, of race relations in it is neither unrealistic nor rosy. We are simply asking capability questions.
7. It will be obvious that this context has not been extended to include the wider issues of colonial immigration and industrial or urban decline.
8. Blight refers to the deterioration of an environment said to be caused by uncertainty and speculation about its future. See e.g. Wallman 1975.
9. Evidence for the City of Bradford underlines these patterns. In 1979, in the same national survey, the overall response rate was 80 %. But in the inner city wards of University and Manningham it was 55 %, and in the suburban wards of Baildon and Tong it was 83 % and 86 % respectively.
10. The recipients of particular kinds of state benefit in Britain are not only only taxed if they earn above £15 per week, they run the more significant risk of having the benefit stopped altogether.
11. Because the Network Diagram was piloted in another part of the inner city, not all these thirty pertain to the area of the Neighbourhood Survey.

Appendix:

SUMMARY INSTRUCTIONS FOR FILLING IN NETWORK DIAGRAMS

(i) Make good contact with the respondent(s) before entering into any discussion about the diagram.

(ii) Make it clear that this map is not about where people are in the world around them, but about how they feel about people and where they are inside their heads. Explain that someone who lives in another country or someone who is now dead may influence the way they see themselves or organise their lives *now*. This can be illustrated by reference to rings one and four of the diagram as levels of intimacy, not of geographic distance.

(iii) Not all intimacy is comfortable. In order to allow the expression of closeness inspite of anger or some other uncomfortable feeling, the section at the bottom of the diagram and the one-to-four divisions within it should be clearly but rather matter-of-factly pointed out. Questions about the placing of individuals should be allowed to stem from the respondent.

(iv) Try not to 'lead' the filling in in any one direction. Remain as quiet as possible while the effort is being made to respond or ponder over the suitability of any statement, but remember that some decisions about the placing of a mark on the paper may need support from and/or a transfer of power to the researcher. Something may be said like: "While you are thinking, I will help by marking your decisions down on the diagram."

(v) Proceed slowly until the respondent is satisfied that the map reflects the personal or family network. Sometimes it is useful to draw attention to the balance of the information — e.g. "You seem to have lots of people who you know outside the home". If this reflects the situation but overemphasises it by, for example, excluding detail which would show that there are also lots of people who come into the home, it may trigger another level of discussion.

(vi) Make sure that time is left to talk about experiences which are important to the respondent, and that emotionally charged material is not activated and then left hanging. Notice its place in the personal or family history: respondents regularly slide from the present into past experience and back again, but it is essential to get a good account of 'now'. Current problems or situations maybe shirked in the historical interest or concealed in the telling of some remote story.

(vii) Thank the respondent(s) for sharing such important things and assure them (again) of confidentiality. Some respondents may have asked about this from the beginning, or at moments during the filling in of the map. Some, despite all assurances, may suddenly refuse to proceed. Try and accept this as a defense on the part of that respondent (not as a personal rejection of the researcher) and terminate the interview or curtail the investigation altogether. The explicit initiative for stopping usually has to come from the researcher.

(viii) Make notes on the paper immediately afterwards to remind yourself of the time of day and the time taken; who was present at the interview session, who spoke and who interrupted; the degree of reluctance or difficulty with which entries were made or the diagram completed; any doubts about the validity or accuracy of the information.

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