

Living Alongside Railways:
A Discursive Psychological
Analysis of Adapting to Disruption
and Identities of Place

Jenna Marie Condie

School of Environment and Life Sciences
College of Science and Technology
University of Salford, Salford, UK

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Abstract

The concepts of 'place' and 'identity' are increasingly being used to understand the relations between people and physical environments. This research utilised 'place' and 'identity' to examine how people negotiate environmental conditions such as vibration and noise within their talk around 'place' and 'identity'. For the study context, living alongside railways was chosen as an 'ordinary' and 'everyday' physical feature within residential settings and also due to potential upcoming changes to the UK rail network such as new lines and increases in rail freight traffic. Ten qualitative interviews were generated with twelve residents living alongside the West Coast Main Line (WCML) railway in the North of England. Participants were recruited from the Defra-funded study 'NANR209: Human Response to Vibration in Residential Environments' (Defra, 2011). Using a discursive psychological approach, railways were portrayed as an insignificant aspect of 'place' in relation to the wider contexts of finding somewhere to live. Through the 'lived ideologies' of 'the rural idyll' and 'a peaceful and quiet place' that emerged within participants' talk, railways could be considered as 'disruptive'. Participants drew upon interpretative repertoires of adaptation to convey railways as initially 'disruptive' and as something 'you get used to' over time. Participants positioned themselves as being immune to the 'disruption' in that they no longer noticed the railways presence. Living alongside railways was presented as 'commonplace', which enabled participants to manage their identities of place and justify their continued residence within the context of 'disruption'. 'Place' and 'identity' offer a way to examine how people make sense of living in places of 'disruption'. Future research on how people make sense of continued residence alongside railways, particularly the role of adaptational repertoires, could assist in policy development.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The concepts of 'place' and 'identity' are increasingly being used to understand the relations between people and physical environments (Devine-Wright & Clayton, 2010; Patterson & Williams, 2005). Such interest may reflect the changes in our connections to places brought about by modern processes of globalisation (May, 2009), urbanisation (Jansen et al., 2012), and trends towards mobility and migration (Torkington, 2012). How people endow physical environments with "*aesthetic, moral, and personal meanings*" and "*weave themselves into place*" has therefore become of interest in contemporary times (Hodgetts et al., 2010, p. 286). The rise in 'place' and 'identity' research may also indicate the need for more reflexive and contextualised understandings of human relations to physical environments within policy making (Fraser, 2003). For example, recently in the UK, 'place' and 'identity' have been acknowledged as offering promising ways to understand how people manage environmental changes associated with modern life (Foresight Future Identities, 2013). Furthermore, how people might adapt to environmental change in the future has also been anticipated through 'place' and 'identity' (Foresight Future Identities, 2013).

Relatedly, concerns for 'the environment' as a "*(semi-)independent field of attention*" (Hajer, 1995, p. 24) also continue to grow (Dunlap & Marshall, 2007). Urban, global, technological and (post)industrial modern life has led to concerns about environmental degradation and whether the physical environments we inhabit are conducive to our 'quality of life' and well-being (Moser, 2009; Smit & Wandel, 2006; Vlek & Steg, 2007). Questions about the liveability and sustainability of our built environments have therefore come to the forefront within contemporary research (e.g. Campbell, 1996; Moser & Robin, 2006; Moser, 2009) and on policy agendas (e.g. DCLG, 2007; HM Government, 2005).

Situated within this contextual backdrop, the environmental conditions present in the places where we live have often been comprehended through a lens of 'disruption'. For example, environmental conditions such as noise, vibration, crowding, and air pollution have been understood as stressful (Evans, 2003; Stallen, 1999; Staples, 1996), annoying (Miedema, 2007; Pierrette et al., 2012), and disruptive to sleep (Tassi et al., 2012; Öhrström & Hadzibajramovic, 2006). Emphasis has been placed on the implications that environmental conditions can have for health, particularly in the case of air pollution (see Brunekreef & Holgate, 2002; Kunzli & Kaiser, 2000), and more indirectly, environmental noise (see Passchier-Vermeer & Passchier, 2000; Stansfeld & Matheson, 2003). In turn, policy making aims to regulate our environments, often by measuring environmental conditions such as noise levels (e.g. Planning Policy Guidance 24: Planning and Noise (PPG24), 1994) and air quality measures (e.g. The Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, Defra, 2007).

Most prominently, the disruptiveness of environmental conditions has been investigated via an exposure¹-response approach, where 'human response' is measured and correlated with 'objective' measurements of exposure (e.g. noise levels, vibration magnitudes). For decades, researchers have adopted this approach to establish exposure-response relationships for environmental noise (e.g. Cawthorn et al., 1978; Fields & Walker, 1982; Miedema & Vos, 1998; Schultz, 1978). Such research efforts have led to internationally accepted exposure-response relationships, which now underpin a variety of guidance documents and assessment procedures for noise (Woodcock et al., 2012). Researchers are also applying this framework to establish exposure-response relationships for other environmental conditions, most notably environmental vibration (e.g. Waddington et al., 2011; Woodcock et al., 2012).

'Human response' has been largely measured in terms of annoyance and other associated concepts such as disturbance, nuisance, discomfort, and dissatisfaction (Guski et al., 1999). Subsequently, 'human response' appears

¹ 'Exposure' is also known as 'dose'

well-established as a negative evaluation of environmental conditions (Condie et al., 2011; Guski et al., 1999). Although often defined as a psychological phenomenon, Stallen (1999) noted that there is a relative absence of theoretical work to develop our understanding of annoyance in comparison to the vast amounts of research underpinned by the concept. Furthermore, in reviews of exposure-response research, 'objective' measurements have been found to account for around one third of the variance in annoyance responses to environmental noise (see Guski, 1999; Job, 1988; Miedema, 2007 for reviews). Exposure-response relationships can therefore be limited in explaining how one person may report high annoyance and another person may report not being annoyed at all by the same level of exposure. Schulte-Fortkamp and Lercher (2003) argued that *"it seems we have forgotten that the size of variance explanation of the standard dose-response curve is limited (Job, 1988) and varies from location to location"* (p.1).

Although efforts have been made to identify other social and psychological factors that influence annoyance (e.g. Guski, 1999; Miedema & Vos, 2003), the social context in which environmental conditions are considered to be 'disruptive' requires attention (Maris et al., 2007; Moser, 2009; Wapner & Demick, 2002). In addressing the complexities of experiencing physical environments, Moser (2009) argued that being asked to evaluate a single environmental condition in isolation negates the broader context where environmental conditions *"are only part of the story"* (p. 1). To use environmental noise as an example, although recognised as an enduring 'problem' spanning across centuries (Landry, 2006), Truax (2001) pointed out that the 20th century has seen noise elevated to *"a political problem, an environmental issue, an economic factor, a health hazard, grounds for legal action, a business for consultants and occasionally even a hot issue for journalists and radio talk shows"* (p. 94). Such observations can be linked to findings about aircraft noise, where residents living near an airport developed

their evaluative frames² in relation to policy rhetoric, reproducing and opposing aircraft noise as an annoyance (Kroesen et al., 2011). Kroesen et al. (2011) concluded that annoyance arises within a “*particular evaluative context*” where contemporary policies have provided a “*necessary condition to feel annoyed*” (p. 147). As such, policy discourse can be seen to operate discursively, influencing the ways in which airport residents experienced noise.

Environmental conditions can also be considered within the wider and complex relations between people and ‘place’. Environmental psychological research has emphasised the importance of ‘place’ in the constructions of who we are, our identities (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000; Knez, 2005; Proshansky, 1978; Sarbin, 1983). In their study of environmental conditions, Bonaiuto, et al. (1996) found that residents who strongly identified with ‘place’ perceived their nearby beaches as less polluted in comparison to beaches in other places. Furthermore, residents’ evaluations of beach pollution did not relate to “*traditional*” socio-demographic variables such as gender, environmental concern, and interest in or use of the beach (Bonaiuto et al., 1996, p. 162). Other studies have also explored how residents living in places of ‘disruption’ negotiate environmental conditions for ‘identity’ purposes by (e.g. Bush et al., 2001; Hugh-Jones & Madill, 2009; Parkhill, et al., 2010). In Teeside, an industrial area in the North East of England, Bush et al. (2001) found that the historical association with heavy industry, air pollution, and poor health stigmatised those living nearby. Residents managed a ‘spoiled identity’ (Goffman, 1963) within their talk by disassociating themselves with the most ‘disruptive’ aspects of place and contesting Teeside’s identity as polluted (Bush et al., 2001).

The notion of identity as ‘spoiled’ by environmental conditions can also be related to Hugh-Jones and Madill’s (2009) study which explored how residents made sense of living near a working quarry. Through a discursive analysis, Hugh-Jones and Madill (2009) found that living near the quarry presented two

² Kroesen et al. (2011) employed the concept of ‘frame’, which they defined as “*a coherent set of beliefs, attitudes and feelings that people use to observe and give meaning to reality*” (p. 198).

dilemmas for residents: how to justify living with 'disruptive' environmental conditions such as vibration, noise and dust, and how to complain about the environment whilst maintaining positive identities of place. Residents minimised the implications of living near a quarry by talking about other environmental conditions such as road traffic and low flying aircraft. Residents also emphasised a compromised relationship between themselves and the quarry, tolerating the negative aspects of the quarry in light of its positive contributions to place such as being respectful of local wildlife. Hugh-Jones and Madill (2009) highlighted that the complexities of talk about the environment "*is never disinterested*" (p. 1) when the importance of 'place' for 'identity' is acknowledged.

Contributing to the growing body of work on 'place', 'identity' and environmental conditions, this research examines interview data generated with participants living alongside the West Coast Main Line (WCML) railway in the North of England. Living alongside railways provided a study context to explore the complexities of how residents make sense of living in places with environmental conditions such as vibration, noise, dust, and visual impacts. A discursive psychological approach was applied to analyse interview data generated with residents living alongside railways and to examine their constructions of 'place', 'identity' and environmental conditions. The research was underpinned by a social constructionist epistemology³ to attend to the ways in which "*no two persons see the same reality*" and how "*no two social groups make precisely the same evaluation of the environment*" (Tuan, 1974, p.5).

1.2 Research Aim

In this research, the primary aim is to examine how people negotiate environmental conditions within their constructions of 'place' and 'identity'.

³ Social constructionism can be described as a methodological approach that is "*chiefly concerned with rendering accounts of human meaning systems*" (Gergen, 1985, p. 270). Social constructionism is also known by other names in other social science and interpretive disciplines (see Chapter Four).

Living alongside railways, specifically the West Coast Main Line (WCML) in the North of England, has been chosen as a study context to explore environmental conditions from the perspective of residents. I have chosen to adopt a social constructionist epistemology, where language is regarded as action orientated and rhetorical (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Thus, an additional aim is to examine the discursive strategies, interpretative repertoires, and lived ideologies drawn upon by residents in their accounts of living alongside railways. Through a discursive psychological inquiry, this research aims to understand the relationship between 'place', 'identity' and environmental conditions.

By attending to the complexities of 'human response', this research hopes to contribute to the body of research on environmental conditions and environmental annoyance. In turn, this research also aims to explore the contribution that 'place' and 'identity' could make to environmental management policies.

In light of the research aims outlined, I now consider the relevance of 'place' and 'identity' in more depth and situate their construction within language and social interaction. Firstly, I examine the concept of 'place' and argue for its use in research to enable more contextualised understandings of environmental conditions. 'Place' is then considered in relation to 'identity', where 'place' and 'identity' are considered as mutually constitutive. The importance of language and how 'place' and 'identity' are constructed and negotiated in dialogue is then discussed. To conclude the chapter, I explain how living alongside railways was chosen as an appropriate study context, and provide an outline of the thesis structure with overviews of each of the following chapters.

1.3 The Relevance of Place

The concept of 'place' has been used extensively within research covering physical, geographical, architectural, historical, religious, social, and psychological meanings (Knez, 2005). Although 'place' as a research concept is far from new (Speller, 2000), in recent decades it has been adopted by

researchers as a conceptual framework for understanding the relations and interactions between people and their physical environments (e.g. Butcher, 2010; Day, 2007; Dixon & Durrheim, 2000; Hugh-Jones & Madill, 2009; Low & Altman, 1992; Proshansky et al., 1983). 'Place' has enabled the environments we inhabit to be understood as more than concrete physical settings and as symbolic contexts that people imbue with meaning (Kyle & Chick, 2007; Stokowski, 2002). Moreover, 'place' has been understood as socially constructed within the interactions between people and their environments (Kyle & Chick, 2007). Thus, the person takes an agentic role in the construction, interpretation and experience of 'place' (Hodgetts et al., 2010; Vorkinn & Riese, 2001).

The notion of people as the creators of their environments, constructing 'place' through language and social interaction, is not without critics. For example, Stedman (2003) argued that researchers have "*overconstructed*" (p. 671) and overemphasised the social construction of 'place'. For Stedman (2003), how the physicality of the environment "*sets bounds and gives form to these constructions*" has been underemphasised (p. 671). Such neglect of the physicality of 'place' may account for its relative absence within research on environmental conditions (e.g. vibration and noise) that are amenable to measurement. As Hauge (2007) noted, 'place' may appear "*vague*" in comparison to more concrete concepts such as "*dwelling*", "*landscape*", "*city*" or "*neighbourhood*" (p. 3). However as 'place' captures the social, psychological and cultural aspects of our physical environments, it appears irreplaceable (Hauge, 2007).

What Stedman's (2003) argument highlighted is that the materiality and the "*objective, tangible form*" (Stokowski, 2002, p. 371) of the physical environment requires acknowledgement. For example, a railway running adjacent to a property can be seen as part of the landscape and the environmental conditions it produces can be measured by technological equipment. A 'place' with a railway may be more difficult to describe as peaceful or quiet in light of rail-associated activities such as passing trains and track maintenance for example.

However as Thompson (2009) noted *“to some of us the sound of a passing train is music to the ears”* (p. 1). Borrowing an example from Hummon's work 'Commonplaces' (1990), 'place' can be seen to shape what can be said about environmental conditions. For a person living in a city, noise could be presented as part of the *“hustle and bustle”* of urban life whereas for a person living in a suburb, noise could be presented as something to avoid (Hummon, 1990, p. 149). In this sense, people are agentic in the construction of places, yet places also set boundaries as beyond the city context, the 'hustle and bustle' may appear out of 'place'. 'Place' constructions may therefore be best considered as a result of the 'interplay' between the physical environment and the symbolic meanings of 'place' made by people (Stedman, 2003). Similarly, Smaldone et al., (2005) argued that 'place' is created within a continual interactional process between the individual, their social settings, and the physical environment. Rather than static entities, places are fluid and shifting in a constant state of construction (Torkington, 2012).

To consider 'place' solely as a concrete physical setting reflects *“a logical approach that draws from positivist research philosophies”* (Stokowski, 2002, p. 371) as places are not 'transmitted' directly from the physical environment (Nash et al., 2010). For Stokowski (2002), places are inherently socially produced as what we know and feel about places is mediated by others. 'Place' also reflects wider meanings that go beyond the setting which are commonly held, shared, and known (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000; Stokowski, 2002; van Patten & Williams, 2008). Subsequently, multiple versions of the same 'place' can be possible as 'place' is *“flexible in the hands of different people or cultures, malleable over time, and inevitably contested”* (Gieryn, 2000, p. 465).

This raises the question as to why people assign diverse meanings to 'place'. Nash et al. (2010) argued that places can be important resources to *“measure and mark”* and make sense our lives (p. 397). Myers (2006) stated that places say something about who we are and can be used to present ourselves as similar or different to others within social interactions. The importance of 'place' for 'identity' has been emphasised by a range of researchers from various

traditions (see Easthope, 2009; Hauge, 2007; Twigger-Ross et al., 2003 for reviews). Just as 'place' has been situated within language and social interaction, so too has 'identity' (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). Language becomes the site at which 'place' and 'identity' interact as "*one of the ways people use place in interaction is as a resource for constructing identity, one's 'meaning in the world'*" (Myers, 2006, p. 39).

'Identity' can therefore be conceptualised as a 'motive'⁴ (Mills, 1940) for the place meanings that people construct in social interactions. Returning to the earlier example from Hummon (1990), describing noise as 'hustle and bustle' could be interpreted as representing a speaker's interest in 'place' for their 'identity work' (Beech, 2008). In the following section, I explore the relationship between 'place' and 'identity' further and consider how where we live reflects who we are (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000).

1.4 Identities of Place

'Identity' has been described as a complex and slippery concept as it has been used to encapsulate both what is unique about an individual and how they are the same as others in social groups (Anthias, 2008). With regards to who we are, 'identity' and 'self' appear to be the preferred terms in use within contemporary social science (Adams, 2007). The two concepts are also used interchangeably (e.g. Dixon & Durrheim, 2000), together as self-identity (e.g. Giddens, 1991) and relatedly where 'identity' is described as "*a project of the self*" (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 18). However, 'self' and 'identity' have been differentiated where the latter has been considered as a tool to present ourselves to others (Owens, 2006).

'Identity' as something which we actively work on as a 'project' has a long history with origins in the Enlightenment period (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). In contemporary times, 'identity' as multiple and fragmented appears to be widely

⁴ 'Motive' here originates from 'vocabularies of motive' (Mills, 1940), which refers to how language can be used by people to justify their actions to others (May, 2008).

accepted and *“regardless of the theoretical orientation, the self is considered nowadays as multiple, varied, changeable, sometimes as chameleon that changes along with the context”* (Salgado & Hermans, 2009, p. 3). This multiplicity of ‘identity’ is attributed to technological advancements and globalised life (Hermans, 2004), alongside increased migration and mobility (Torkington, 2012). However, when ‘identity’ is presented as something which consists of multiple identities and overlapping selves, it can invoke essentialist notions of a ‘core self’ (Salgado & Hermans, 2009). Like ‘place’, ‘identity’ can be understood as a continual process of (re)construction and (re)negotiation (Hermans, 2004). For Anthias (2008), ‘identity’ is best conceptualised as positions or locations which are taken up by people: it is *“context, meaning and time related and...therefore involve shifts and contradictions”* (p. 8).

As people travel the globe, move to different places, and go online, Elliott and Du Gay (2009) noted that the notion of ‘identity’ has changed dramatically. It has been argued that ‘identity’ has become separated *“from the meaningful, if relatively unquestioned, context it had in previous times been immersed in”* (Adams, 2007, p. 13). Adams (2007) made the case that there is now greater uncertainty for ‘identity’ as traditional ties to ‘place’ and lives as localised within a particular geographical context are seemingly less important. For Giddens (1991), ‘identity’ has become a reflexive individualised project where people decide or choose who and where to be (Giddens, 1991). However, while we may be *“free to self-create”*, Bauman (2009) also argued that we are not necessarily free *“to float and drift”* (p. 3).

Adams (2007) summarised that a dialectic relationship between individuals and social structures has been noted many times (Goffman, 1959; James, 1890; Mead, 1934). An overly agentic view of ‘identity’ conveys a sense of *“endless freedom”* and fails to acknowledge that we *“do not start from scratch when we set out to create meaningful constructions”* (Paulgaard, 2008, p. 50). ‘Identity’ as a reflexive individualised project (Giddens, 1991) also neglects the influence of established ideas, the *“common sense which shape people’s values and worldviews and their expectations”* (Taylor, 2009, p. 21). Such established

ideas and common sense understandings are provided by and exist within the surrounding culture (Gough & McFadden, 2001). Thus, 'identity' can be theorised as a "*mutual integration*" of self and culture; it is 'reflexive' (agency) and 'regulated' (structure) (Adams, 2007, p. 13).

'Place' can be understood as a structure for 'identity' in terms of its physicality (Stedman, 2003) and in terms of the commonly shared and widely held ideas about places (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000; Stokowski, 2002; van Patten & Williams, 2008). In relation to urbanisation, Lalli (1992) argued that it is only in recent decades that we can talk positively about living in cities and towns. However, he also pointed out that the "*overstylized rural idyll*" which embodies romanticised notions of 'home' and 'community' remains highly influential, particularly when our identities are "*urban-related*" (Lalli, 1992, p. 288). In Green's (1997) work with 'dual career households', the 'rural idyll' was prominent with villages and semi-rural areas seemingly holding "*a special lure*" (p. 648), particularly for those with no experience of living in rural areas. In discursive work, discourses of a 'rural idyll' were found to be powerful constructions used to invoke notions of national 'identity' and 'Britishness', which were used to preserve and defend fox-hunting as a social practice (Wallwork & Dixon, 2004).

Many researchers have situated the 'motive' for particular 'place' constructions within the need to distinguish ourselves from the 'other', maintaining a positive sense of self (e.g. Bonaiuto et al., 1996; Breakwell, 1986; Proshansky, 1978; Proshansky et al., 1983). Within the field of environmental psychology, Proshansky's concept of 'place identity' has dominated the literature (Twigger-Ross et al., 2003). Proshansky et al. (1983) theorised 'place identity' to be a "*sub-structure of the self-identity of the person consisting of, broadly conceived, cognitions about the physical world in which the individual lives*" (Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 59). Building on this work to understand 'place identity' as a process, Breakwell and colleagues (e.g. Bonaiuto et al., 1996; Breakwell, 1986; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996; Twigger-Ross et al., 2003) theorised that 'place' enables people to distinguish themselves from others, referred to as 'place-

distinctiveness' within the literature. This perspective of 'place identity' echoes the position of Social Identity Theory⁵ (SIT) (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and the socio-cognitive understanding of the person characteristic of 'mainstream' psychology (Gough & McFadden, 2001).

Extended to 'place' as an important aspect of our 'identity', researchers have found that people tend to minimise negative attributions of places in order to maintain positive identifications with 'place' (e.g. Bonaiuto et al., 1996; Livingston et al., 2008; Silburn et al., 1999). People can redefine environmental values in "*positive (or less negative terms)*" particularly in circumstances where the "*status quo*" appears difficult to change (Bonaiuto et al., 1996, p. 160). From this perspective, the need for a positive 'identity' provides 'motive' (Mills, 1940) for the ways in which people portray environmental conditions that are widely understood as disruptive and unwanted.

However, the relationship between 'place' and 'identity' is more complex than minimising negative place attributes when talk is considered in relation to 'morality' (Hugh-Jones & Madill, 2009; May, 2008). Particularly within the context of the growing concern for 'the environment', places and the environmental features within them can be morally charged (Feinberg & Willer, 2013). For May (2008), people negotiate moral dilemmas and present themselves as moral in talk about their actions. May (2008) argues that "*if an individual's adherence to social norms is less than perfect they may attempt to repair their potentially 'spoiled' identity by employing narratives that align their behaviour with cultural expectations, thus allowing them to present a morally acceptable self (Goffman, 1963; Mills, 1940)*" (p. 472).

The negotiation of public norms for a 'moral self' (Goffman, 1963; May, 2008) is useful when 'place' and 'identity' are conceptualised as socially constructed in interaction. Rather than 'identity' as something that exists within or inside the person (e.g. maintaining self-esteem, positive self-cognitions), 'identity' can be

⁵ Social Identity Theory (SIT) is based on the work of Tajfel (1978) and is "*concerned with how people relate to and relate within social groups*" and how identity is dependent upon the social groups we belong to and those that we do not (Stainton-Rogers, 2003, p. 244).

relocated to the flux of human dialogue to distinguish the 'self' and 'other' (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000; Shotter & Billig, 1998). For example, Hugh-Jones and Madill (2009) found that morality emerged in residents' talk about their commitment to live in a difficult locale, near a working quarry, as they constructed a distinct 'place' where only certain people could and would live (i.e. a distinctive 'identity'). Subsequently, the quarry demonstrated how living in a place that challenges 'place norms' can be negotiated for moral identities that are positioned against the 'other'.

Hugh-Jones and Madill (2009) concluded that the quarry presented a dilemma for residents' identities of place in terms of justifying continued residency and maintain positive place identities. Subsequently, when environmental conditions of 'place' go against the norm to stigmatise or 'spoil' identity, "*strategies of normification*" can be deployed within talk (Bush et al., 2001, p. 54). Attempts to 'normify' potentially 'spoiled' identities (Goffman, 1963) can be understood through a dialogical understanding of the person (Bakhtin, 1986; Billig, 1998; Hermans, 2003). This is because the individual is conceptualised as co-existing with 'other': "*there is no individual without cultural, personal without social, self without other*" (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004, p. 292). For Bakhtin (1986), talk is 'double-voiced' where every utterance is formed in anticipation of other voices or critics (Frank, 2005). In talk about 'place', people can be considered as anticipative of the voices of others in their constructions of acceptable and moral identities of 'place'. I have underpinned this research with a dialogical understanding of the person, where 'place' and 'identity' gain meaning through dialogue: the site for our 'identity work' (Beech, 2008).

1.5 Environmental Conditions in Dialogue

Throughout this chapter, I have emphasised 'identity', 'place' and environmental conditions as socially constructed within talk and social interaction. Gergen (1985) noted that social constructionism marked the turn to language and

discourse⁶, where the focus is to understand how people “*describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live*” (p. 266). Through the analysis of talk, discursive researchers have shown ‘place’ and ‘identity’ as something people produce together and in relation to ‘other’ (Dixon & Pol, 2011; Hugh-Jones & Madill, 2009; Taylor, 2009; Wallwork & Dixon, 2004). Thus, environmental conditions that are widely regarded as ‘disruptive’ (e.g. noise, vibration, air pollution) can be negotiated and constructed within the flexibilities of talk. Rather than aiming to create a ‘finalised’ (Frank, 2005) account of the lived experiences of environmental conditions, I aim to address the complexities of how people make sense of environmental conditions when questions of ‘place’ are questions for ‘identity’ (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000).

Understanding the person as dialogical emphasises the person’s “*engagement in their own struggles of becoming; its focus is stories of struggle, not static themes or lists of characteristics that fix participants in identities that fit typologies*” (Frank, 2005, p. 969). The meanings of environmental conditions in the places we live are therefore not fixed but fluid as people construct and negotiate ‘place’ and ‘identity’. Environmental conditions are also constructed through the shared cultural discourses that our language provides us with (Burr, 2003; Gough & McFadden, 2001). As Kroesen et al. (2011) noted, aircraft noise policies can be seen to provide the necessary discourses for exposed residents to express annoyance. However, residents also resisted and challenged noise as an annoyance, demonstrating their agentic role in the construction of environmental conditions and their commitment to living alongside an airport (Kroesen et al., 2011). When questions of place identifications and managing spoiled identities are raised within research, it is important to attend to the ways in which environmental conditions are constructed and negotiated.

⁶ Discourse has been defined in many ways. Within this research, it is considered as “*talk and text*” (Whittle & Mueller, 2011, p. 417) and as the “*patterned*” nature of language use (Clarke & Braun, 2009, p. 244). The concept of discourse is further developed in Chapter Four: Developing a Methodological Approach.

In order to explore how residents negotiate 'place' and 'identity' in the context of 'disruptive' environmental conditions, language is considered as action orientated in that we use it for different purposes – to blame, to persuade, to justify, and to explain for example (Willig, 2001). I therefore turn to dialogue as an epistemology (i.e. a theory of knowledge) for how we can know about environmental conditions and as an ontology in that people can be considered *“needy, as they depend on others for values or embodied ideas to give a clear sense of who they are”* (Sullivan, 2012, p. 5). Language is action orientated where people can choose to construct environmental conditions differently, but what can be said about 'place', 'identity', and environmental conditions is constrained within language systems (Cresswell & Hawn, 2011).

To explore how people make sense of environmental conditions required a study context. Living alongside railways was chosen as a study context for a number of reasons. In the following section, how living alongside railways provided a suitable research context for this research is discussed.

1.6 Railways as a Research Context

With increased mobility and interconnectedness, transport infrastructure is an integral part of modern life, interwoven into society (McKenzie, 2002). Across the United Kingdom (UK), railways are part of the transport infrastructure with *“urban, regional and local networks”* (Department for Transport, 2007a). Since the 19th Century, railways have long been a physical feature of many places where people live in the UK (Wolmar, 2007). Railways appear to have varying representations. For example, railways can invoke a nostalgia for a bygone era and rail companies aligned train travel with experiencing the 'rural idyll' in the past (Medcalf, 2011). Today, railways can be the focus of heritage sites as part of the growing trend of heritage tourism (Henderson, 2011). In contrast, railways have been considered as 'disruptive' through environmental noise policies and in exposure-response research within an annoyance framework (Miedema, 2007; PPG24, 1994).

Railways can also be described as an example of 'ordinary landscapes' (Antrop, 2005; Preece, 1991). The Beeching era cuts in the 1960s led to large scale closures and the shrinkage of the UK railway network (Wolmar, 2007). Since then, the UK railway network has largely remained unchanged, particularly when compared to other countries such as China (Wang et al., 2009) and Japan (Hirooka, 2000). Subsequently, more often than not, railways pre-exist housing developments built alongside them. Railways and their associated environmental conditions (e.g. vibration, noise, dust) are arguably a more constant, stable feature of residential environments, changing at a slower pace in comparison to other environmental changes such as new building developments, enforced relocations, or when sudden changes occur as in the case of natural disasters. Thus, railways provided a suitable study context to examine the 'ordinary' (Antrop, 2005; Preece, 1991) and 'everyday' (Hall et al., 2009) physical characteristics of residential environments through the concepts of 'place' and 'identity'.

However, railways as established, unchanging physical features in residential environments appears set to change in the UK. In light of sustainability agendas, Shaw et al. (2003) assessed the upcoming changes to transport infrastructure as a 'railway renaissance' and the Department for Transport noted that Britain's railways are arriving at a turning point (DfT, 2012). Over the coming years, the UK railway network will undoubtedly change due to the efforts to create a more sustainable transport system. Appendix 1 contains the rail developments that have been allocated funding by the Department for Transport (DfT, 2012). Plans for a second high speed rail line known as High Speed Two (HS2) were approved in January 2012, which has been described as delivering "*the quantum leap in capacity needed on Britain's major north-south lines in the decades ahead*" (DfT, 2012, p. 6). The new high speed network will connect London to the West Midlands with completely new lines being constructed and existing lines being modernised. Other examples include the development and planning for new light rail and carbon efficient tram systems in the UK in places such as Manchester, Blackpool, Sheffield and Edinburgh.

The UK Low Carbon Transition Plan (Department for Energy and Climate Change, 2009) emphasised the potential for high-speed rail as well as the aim to reduce freight traffic on our roads by increasing freight traffic on railways; a process that is already underway (DfT, 2007b). Carlsson (2003) argued that the potential impact of increasing railway freight capacity will compromise the “demands” for “*an environment free from excessive noise and vibration*” (p. 2). Moreover, freight trains have been found to cause more annoyance and sleep disturbance for residents in comparison to other types of rail traffic (e.g. Aasvang et al., 2007). The combination of increased rail traffic, as well as faster and heavier trains could lead to more disturbances from railway vibration in the future (Öhrström et al., (2009). Understanding how residents make sense of environmental conditions in the context of living alongside railways is an important endeavour in light of future rail developments.

The decision to focus on living alongside railways as a research context also arose from my role in the research team for the ‘Human Response to Vibration in Residential Environments’ (NANR209) project at the University of Salford, commissioned by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) (Waddington et al., 2011). Railways were investigated as a primary source of vibration in residential environments and being part of the project meant that I had access to a database of 931 survey respondents who reported experiencing vibration and/or noise from railways. Despite both vibration and noise being considered ‘disruptive’ in annoyance research (Miedema & Oudshoorn, 2001; Waddington et al., 2011) and in policy (e.g. Commission of the European Communities, 1996; PPG24, 1994), the ways people ‘respond’ to these environmental conditions is varied (Guski, 1999; Job, 1988; Miedema, 2007). From an extensive review of the literature in a range of different disciplines such as environmental psychology and acoustics, I identified that there was a gap for in-depth qualitative research to explore how residents make sense of environmental conditions in the context of living alongside railways within their talk around ‘place’ and ‘identity’. Therefore, railways as a study context presented an opportunity to generate new knowledge to develop and further understanding of railways in residential environments. To do so, ten

qualitative interviews were carried out with twelve people living alongside the West Coast Main Line (WCML) in the North West of England to generate data suitable for this research inquiry.

As this research project was carried out alongside the Defra-funded project ‘NANR209 Human Response to Vibration in Residential Environments’ (Defra, 2011), I have included a timeline of the two projects below (see Fig. 1).

Project	Year					
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Defra Project	■■■■					
PhD Research		■■■■■				

Fig. 1. Timeline of Defra (NANR209) project and my PhD research

1.7 Thesis Structure

This chapter aimed to provide the rationale for applying the concepts of ‘place’ and ‘identity’ to contextualise understandings of environmental conditions. I also conceptualised ‘place’ and ‘identity’ as mutually constitutive, with ‘identity’ suggested as a potential ‘motive’ shaping how people talk about ‘place’ in dialogue with others. In order to examine how people negotiate environmental conditions within their constructions of ‘place’ and ‘identity’, living alongside railways were introduced as an appropriate study context for this research.

In this chapter, I also discussed how environmental conditions have been predominantly studied through an exposure-response approach, often within a framework of annoyance or ‘disruption’. I attend to this literature in more depth in **Chapter Two**, which reviews the ‘mainstream’ approaches taken to understanding environmental conditions within residential environments. Research carried out within a social constructionist framework is also reviewed

to situate understandings of environmental conditions within the wider contexts of 'the environment', the growth in urbanisation and within the aims of 'sustainable development'. How environmental conditions become 'disruptive' is situated within language as being socially produced by people.

Chapter Three is where I develop the theoretical framework for this research by returning to some of the discussions introduced in this chapter. I theorise environmental conditions as 'place' in that they have a material, physical form but are socially constructed and made meaningful by people. I also clarify my decision to adopt the concept of 'identity' rather than 'self', by conceptualising 'identity' as constructed in dialogue with others. The research focus on 'identity' rather than 'self' is also related to environmental psychological theories where 'place identity' has been developed as a concept to understand people-place relations. It is within this chapter that I explore the relationship between 'place' and 'identity' further and develop a theoretical approach which understands that people locate themselves in 'place' and that talk around 'place' has implications for 'identity'. The importance of language is also emphasised in this chapter where dialogue is considered as an epistemology and ontology. These discussions are furthered in **Chapter Four** where I develop the methodological framework underpinning this research. I explore what taking a social constructionist approach entails and also justify its appropriateness for gaining knowledge and furthering understandings of environmental conditions. What is meant by 'construct' and 'experience' is also clarified in Chapter Four, as is the discursive psychological approach developed to analyse interview data.

In **Chapter Five**, I recount the research process of how data was generated with participants living alongside railways. It is within this chapter where the rationale for qualitative interviews is provided. Chapter Five is also where the sample is introduced to the reader and where the relationships between the researcher and researched are explored through reflexive practice. How I recorded, transcribed, and analysed the data is discussed in preparation for the following chapters where I present the research findings.

Chapter Six is the first of three chapters which include my analysis of the data generated from qualitative interviews with participants living alongside railways. I situate environmental conditions within the various circumstances which shaped and influenced how participants came to live alongside railways. I examine how participants positioned themselves in relation to 'place' and how this enabled and constrained their accounts of the railway. In **Chapter Seven**, I examine the prevalent 'lived ideologies' around residential places that were drawn upon in participants' accounts of 'place' and 'identity'. I consider how the presence of railways related to these 'lived ideologies' and how this was managed within participants' accounts of living alongside railways. In the final analysis chapter, **Chapter Eight**, I focus on how participants made sense of their continued residence alongside railways. I identify three interpretative repertoires of adaptation that enabled participants to manage 'identity' in relation to 'other'.

In **Chapter Nine**, I conclude with a summary of the main findings and the contributions that this research can make to knowledge on environmental conditions, 'place', and 'identity'. I also examine the methodological, epistemological, ontological, practical and ethical considerations within this research project.

Chapter Two: A Literature Review of Environmental Conditions

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I introduced 'place' and 'identity' as relevant concepts to further an understanding of how people make sense of environmental conditions. This chapter begins by situating the meanings attributed to environmental conditions within the wider contexts of concerns for 'the environment' and the increasing urbanisation of residential environments. The emphasis on sustainable development within environmental policy making is also considered. I explore how the policy requirement to manage, mitigate, and control 'disruptive' environmental conditions has led to a concentrated effort on measuring environmental conditions 'objectively' and measuring residents responses 'subjectively' within a negative framework of annoyance. As such, the importance of 'place' and 'identity' in the construction of environmental conditions has been under-researched in comparison.

By reviewing relevant discursive and critical work, this chapter illuminates how language and the discourses that permeate environmental policies, particularly the concept of 'annoyance', influence cultural understandings of environmental conditions. However, such research also emphasises how environmental meanings are fluid and flexible within talk given the agentic role of the person in their 'place' and 'identity' constructions.

2.2 Environmental Conditions as 'Disruptive'

The concept of 'the environment' as both a public and private concern since the 1970s (Hajer, 1995) was introduced in the previous chapter. 'The environment' has not always been a concern or a concept, nor has it always held the meanings it holds today. Rather than being a "*fixed entity*", Hannigan (1995)

argued that the environment is best understood as “*a fluid concept which is both culturally grounded and socially contested*” (p. 109). Although the management of the environment, particularly as a resource for human beings, has perhaps long been of interest, more recently there has been a conceptualisation around ‘the environment’ and its so called ‘problems’⁷ (Aiello & Bonaiuto, 2003). The emergence of ‘the environment’ has led researchers to turn their attentions towards the cognitive and discursive dimensions of environmental ‘problems’ (e.g. Bonaiuto et al., 1996; Bonaiuto et al., 2002; Bush et al., 2001; Day, 2007; Devine-Wright, 2009; Hugh-Jones & Madill, 2009). Before exploring such literature, it is useful to consider how ‘the environment’ has emerged, how it persists, and also how knowledge about the environment is both “*historically and culturally specific*” (Burr, 2003, p. 7).

Spector and Kitsuse (1977) began from the standpoint that the relationship between conditions and the claims people make about those conditions are far from straightforward. For example, environmental conditions may exist without being recognised as ‘problems’, and conversely, claims may be made about ‘problems’ which do not necessarily exist. Hilgartner and Bosk (1988) argued that ‘problems’ are a product of collective definition, which influences their subsequent rise and fall at different times, different places, and in different contexts. Hannigan (1995) stated that exploring the claims-making process of social groups is more important than assessing whether the claims made about the environment are “*truly valid or not*” (p. 33). From this perspective, environmental ‘problems’ are considered as social problems, rooted in social life and the everyday social interactions between people (Hannigan, 1995). A number of commentators have argued that environmental conditions which are treated as problematic can be further understood if approached from a social constructionist position (e.g. Burningham, 1998; Burningham & Cooper, 1999; Hansen, 1991; Jones, 2002; Yearley, 1992).

⁷ The term ‘problem’ is used here in keeping with the discourse employed within the literature discussed.

For something to be an environmental 'problem', there is often a close relationship with 'objective' measurements and scientific findings (Yearley, 1992). Yet many people do not possess the expertise, skills or resources to identify environmental problems such as climate change and air pollution for example. Scientific knowledge appears to permeate our understandings of 'the environment' in the age of modernity (Sutton, 2007). The relationship between science and society has been reflected upon as constituted in a "*feedback loop*" (Gergen, 1973, p. 310). Knowledge about environmental problems may come from various sources, particularly media such as coverage of scientific findings (Hansen, 1991) and policy discourses (Kroesen et al., 2011; Sharp & Richardson, 2001). Personal experiences of environmental conditions can also be influential (Moffatt & Pless-Mulloli, 2003; Tapsell & Tunstall, 2008). Therefore, how environmental conditions become widely considered as 'disruptive' is a complex and dynamic process.

For Spector and Kitsuse (1977), certain frameworks, often in the shape of policies, are one of the main mechanisms for the creation and maintenance of a 'problem'. The wider policy discourses of 'the environment' and 'sustainable development' could therefore be argued as constructing and framing environmental conditions as 'disruptive'. Both of these concepts have been related to the processes of urbanisation that have characterised many developed and developing societies in the last century (Hannigan, 1995). Environmental conditions as problematic have been located within the contexts of urbanisation and contemporary discourses such as 'sustainable development', which frame policy and may shape understandings of 'place' and 'disruption'.

2.3 'The Environment', Urbanisation and 'Nature'

On cities and urbanisation, Landry (2006) noted that "*we are inexorably leaving the rural world behind; everything in the future will be determined by the urban*"

(p. 19). He therefore suggested that talking about places as ‘urban’ or ‘rural’ makes increasingly less sense. According to estimations from the United Nations populations division, for the first time in history, more than half of the world’s population live in ‘urban’ areas (United Nations, 2008). The Office for National Statistics (2011) estimates the UK resident population to be over 62 million people. The largest population growth in half a century was recorded in 2010. Throughout the world, vast numbers of people are now clustered together living in close “*horizontal and vertical proximity*” to one another at high densities (Clark, 1996, p. 1). As well as living closely together, urban life has been considered as a “*ceaseless...interplay between many different scales, from the body to the globe*” (Graham & Marvin, 2001, p. 8) given that we are better connected across distances through the networked infrastructure (e.g. telecommunications, transport, energy and water) that modern globalised societies are founded upon. Such continuous urbanisation and increasing population change the ways that people live and the environments in which they reside. ‘Cityness’ has arguably become characteristic of the majority of places that people inhabit (Landry, 2006), and policies are created and produced in the aim to address the impacts of such change (Breheny, 2001; Dempsey, Brown, & Bramley, 2012; Vlek, 2000).

Landry (2006) went further to argue that “*cityness is everywhere because even when we are nominally far away from cities, the city’s maelstrom draws us in*”, and in turn, proposed that there is very little left “*of what was once called nature*” (p. 19-20). The concept of ‘nature’ has been placed centrally in understandings of ‘the environment’ and what is constructed and experienced as ‘disruptive’ (Hannigan, 1995; Macnaghten & Urry, 1995). Hannigan (1995) asserted that contemporary understandings negatively position any ‘place’ that is non-resemblant of ‘nature’. In the context of continuous urban expansion in the latter part of the nineteenth century⁸, urban life became characterised as stressful and natural settings therefore acquired positive and nostalgic meanings (Hannigan, 1995). This is perhaps in contrast to traditional understandings of ‘nature’, where natural settings had previously been

⁸ Hannigan’s (1995) analysis was centred on the social construction of nature in North America.

unfavourable, considered as a threat, even frightening environments to be in. Hannigan (1995) argued that cultural understandings of 'nature' have gone from unfavourable "*wilderness*" to favourable "*precious resource*" (p. 110), which is reflective of the historical and cultural changes that have occurred over time. As van den Berg et al. (2007) noted "*the pro-rural and anti-urban ideology gained additional influence during the 1800s when the devastating living conditions in cities in England during the industrial revolution provided the fuel for a mass social reform movement*" (p. 82). Such changes in 'place' meanings situate environmental conditions within fluid, dynamic processes of continual (re)construction and (re)negotiation (Smaldone et al., 2005; Stokowski, 2002).

Two centuries later, 'pro-rural' and 'anti-urban' ideologies appear persistent, despite improvements in conditions and material standards of living in cities (Moore & Simon, 2000). Research on 'place' and 'identity' has demonstrated how social understandings of natural and built environments may frame how environmental conditions are presented and understood as 'disruptive'. For example, in her narrative work on 'place' and 'identity', Taylor (2005) found that the "*dystopian story*" (p. 251), enables people to construct 'nature' "*in the form of the English countryside*" as threatened by urbanisation, which in turn, enables people to construct themselves in different ways. Arguably, there is also a utopian story available for people to make sense of living in urban places, with those who champion city living known as 'urbanists' (Hummon, 1990). As Hummon (1990) pointed out, more recently, people are able to be more positive about living in urban places, identifying themselves as a "*city person*" (p. 143). Furthermore, policies which now promote urban living and the 'compact city' in the pursuit for sustainable development could also be influential to perceptions of city living (Breheny, 1997; Dempsey et al., 2012; Howley, 2009).

Initiatives to introduce 'nature' or 'greenness' into urban environments have also emerged due to research findings that experiences of 'nature' and natural environments are restorative⁹ (Gidl & Ohrstr, 2007; Jorgensen et al., 2007;

⁹ The term 'restorative' has been adopted in recent literature in reference to environments that are 'green', 'wild', or 'natural' that offer escape from the stress of the 'city' (Patrick Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010)

Ulrich et al., 1991). Sutton (2007) referred to Macnaghten and Urry's (1998) book entitled 'Contested Natures' as the most systematic sociological study of the natural environment and sensual environmental experiences. In their work on The Lake District in Cumbria, UK, MacNaghten and Urry (1998) found that social discourses constructed The Lake District as naturally beautiful and unspoilt. They found that people were seeking out sensory experiences of natural environments by visiting natural settings and taking part in activities such as walking and hiking. Thus, constructions of 'place' can also be seen to influence social actions.

Understandings of 'nature' and urbanisation appear to undergo constant renegotiation and ideologies around 'natural' and 'urban' settings influence the way 'place' is constructed by people. In this research, I aimed to account for the wider ideologies around urbanisation and 'nature', and whether these 'place' meanings are drawn upon in making sense of living in places that can be characterised as 'disruptive'. Having emphasised the relevance of urbanisation for the construction of environmental conditions, I now address the relevance of 'sustainable development', a concept which has emerged out of environmental discourses (Bramley & Power, 2009).

2.4 Sustainable Development and 'Disruption'

When psychologists first started to explore urban life and city living in the 1960s and 1970s, it was because of the widespread angst about the "*behavioral and physiological consequences inimical to the health and well-being of man*" and the negative impacts of urban conditions on people being perceived as "*profoundly disturbing*" (Glass & Singer, 1972, p. 5). City and urban environments were (and still are) characterised as 'stressful' and many research studies are either explicitly or implicitly underpinned by a psychological stress theoretical framework (Staples, 1996). Commentators and researchers have reported a range of negative effects associated with urban living such as social

withdrawal (Bridge, 2002), more crime (Atkinson & Helms, 2007), reduced social networks (Putnam, 2000), urban stress (Glass & Singer, 1972), noise (Miedema, 2007), crowding (Halpern, 1995) and reduced air quality (Steinheider & Winneke, 1993). In support of this case, van den Berg et al. (2007) argued that despite what high density living has to offer residents in terms of: sustainability, choice and opportunities, many urbanised towns and cities are *“still far removed from the safe, clean, and liveable environments they theoretically could be”* (p80) and the environmental conditions associated with the urbanisation of cities and towns have raised concerns about our psychological well-being and mental health (Evans, 2003).

The potential threats from the commonplace environmental conditions of urban places such as air pollution and noise were emphasised by the United Nation’s publication of *‘Our Common Future’*, commonly known as The Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987). This report (re)introduced and defined the concept of sustainable development as *“a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development; and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations”* (p. 5).

Since the publication of this report, sustainable development has been utilised as a ‘linchpin’ within political discourse to create a new consensus around preserving and protecting the environment, and as a catalyst for the significant changes and developments within environmental policy (Hajer, 1995). However the concept of sustainable development has also received much criticism as to whether it is achievable and can be put into practice, particularly as many countries do not want to restrict economic growth (Lélé, 1991; McCloskey, 1998; Tate, 1994). Even so, sustainable development remains a central theme, core aim, and ultimate goal in many different arenas including our communities, the economy, housing, energy, climate change, and more broadly ‘the environment’.

The focus on sustainable development, coupled with protecting natural environments, has led to government planning policies which encourage higher

residential densities and compact city living; the aim being to reduce the environmental impacts of modern life such as urban sprawl (Couch & Karecha, 2006), long distance commutes (Nielsen & Hovgesen, 2008) and car dependency (Sheller & Urry, 2003). Such policies invariably mean living in closer proximity to more people, buildings, infrastructure, and the potential prospect of less green space (Maas et al., 2006). In order to cater for the needs of a rising population, there is also a necessity to create new homes and new residential settlements (Holmans, 2001; Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2001), particularly through the redevelopment of urban Brownfield¹⁰ land to avoid urban sprawl, preserve the countryside, and promote more sustainable forms of travel (Burton, 2001).

With the potential challenges such environmental conditions may present in terms of psychological impacts, and to human well-being (Moser, 2009), there has been a push to create sustainable environments and places that people want to live in. Frumkin (2003) noted that there is no shortage of literature giving recommendations on what constitutes 'good places' and how to recognise, design and build places for people. This can also be seen in both national and local policy-making from the UK government's policies on sustainable environments (HM Government, 2005), housing (DCLG 2007), transport (DfT, 2007a) and communities (ODPM, 2003). Furthermore, policy guidance and British Standard recommendations have been developed to control and mitigate a wide range of environmental conditions associated with contemporary living such as vibration (BS 6472-1:2008), noise (e.g. PPG24, 1994), and air quality (Defra, 2007) for local authority officials and other professionals to implement within planning, transport, environmental health, residential housing, and urban design. Hollander and Staatsen (2003) argued that the main environmental issues for 'high-income' countries are now controlled and regulated in the effort to ensure the 'liveability' of urban places.

¹⁰ Brownfield is the term applied to land that has been previously developed which "is capable of redevelopment, whether with or without treatment, whether contaminated or not, and where such redevelopment would be in accordance with planning policies or urban renewal objectives" (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2001, p. 2).

However, they highlighted that some environmental conditions persist and are exceptions to the rule, particularly noise and air pollution.

This is perhaps, in part, due to the compromising ambitions of ensuring residential environments are 'liveable' and sustainable, whilst ensuring that places prosper in terms of economic development and growth. Economic growth and environmental change can be considered as interacting with one another, and this interaction inevitably impacts upon the quality of our environments (Smulders, 2000). As Campbell (1996) commented, at the centre of urban planning decisions are tensions between environmental protection and economic development and thus the aims of 'sustainable development' are often contradictory and in need of definition.

The environmental conditions associated with urbanised places that require regulation, mitigation and control can be considered as signs of economic and social activity – jobs, development, events, new housing and commercial ventures to name a few. Taking noise as an example, the Noise Policy Statement for England (Defra, 2010) states that *“noise is an inevitable consequence of a mature and vibrant society. For some the noise of city life provides a desirable sense of excitement and exhilaration, but for others noise is an unwanted intrusion that adversely impacts on their quality of life, affecting their health and well being”* (p. 6). As such, there is a need for research to offer deeper understandings of how environmental consequences of economic growth and development impact upon people and the places they reside.

2.5 The Dominance of Measuring Environmental Conditions

As environmental conditions are often amenable to measurement, many environmental policies and British Standards are subsequently underpinned by measurements of environmental conditions (Burningham, 1998; Hannigan, 1995; Moser, 2009; Staples, 1997). The 'objective' and measurable dimensions have been argued to contribute to environmental conditions being interpreted as

“real, identifiable and intrinsically harmful” (Hannigan, 1995, p. 38), which in turn, contribute to their ‘disruptiveness’ within residential environments. Noise is an important and relevant environmental condition upon which to base discussions of measurement around as noise from railways, the study context, has been investigated in depth (see Bronzaft, 2002; Fields, 1993; Job, 1988; Miedema, 2007; Stallen, 1999). Furthermore, noise was one of the environmental conditions identified by de Hollander and Staatsen (2003) as a perpetuating ‘problem’ for ‘high-income’ countries such as the UK.

Gifford (2007) has argued that the sustainability agenda has placed an even greater emphasis on the *“seemingly ever-rising volume of noise and the destruction or drowning of traditional sounds by the ever-upwardly mobile economic engine (which inevitably seems to require more noise)”* (p. 201). Noise as unwanted, unpleasant or disturbing sound (Watson & Downey, 2008), and as a potential source of stress present in today’s urbanised environments (Wallenius, 2004), has long been a focus and concern for researchers and policy makers (Cohen & Spacapan, 1984). In relation to residential environments, the term ‘noise’ rather than ‘sound’ has been more commonly used in relation to sound emitted from a wide range of human activities from road traffic to construction work (Kang, 2007).

One prevalent approach within research has been to establish exposure-response relationships for particular environmental conditions in isolation to one another (Moser, 2009). ‘Exposure’¹¹ refers to the measurement of the environmental condition in question (e.g. noise level, vibration magnitude), which is then correlated with ‘response’; often measured in terms of the exposed residents’ self-reported annoyance levels. Annoyance has been defined as a *“psychological phenomenon”* (Stallen, 1999, p. 69) and has been used as a measure of ‘response’ in many studies on environmental conditions such as noise (e.g. Miedema & Vos, 1998), vibration (e.g. Waddington et al., 2011), and air pollution/odour (e.g. Steinheider & Winneke, 1993). Within annoyance research, residents are generally asked about how bothered,

¹¹ ‘Exposure’ is also known as ‘dose’.

annoyed, or disturbed they are by the environmental condition in question (see Fields et al., 2001; Nordtest Method, 2001; which offer standardised instructions for asking respondents about environmental vibration and noise). The level of annoyance reported is then correlated with 'objective' measurements of the environmental condition in question (e.g. noise levels, vibration magnitude, air pollution levels) to establish exposure-response relationships.

Miedema (2007) highlighted that the extensive research on noise has provided exposure-response relationships where the ultimate aim to predict the level of annoyance for any given noise level. Although such set of relationships between 'objective' and 'subjective' levels can be important in terms of social policy, planning and development (Jones et al., 1981; Miedema & Oudshoorn, 2001) and the value of such findings should not be underestimated (Stockfelt, 1991), Staples (1997) argued that noise has relied too heavily on objective physical noise levels, to the neglect of social and psychological factors which mediate and moderate reported annoyance levels and other noise effects. Often noise measurements cannot account for the variability in 'human response', mainly annoyance (Job, 1988; Miedema, 2007). Maris et al. (2007) observed that *"despite this recognition of noise as a social problem, the research focus has not been on the social side of the issue, but rather on the acoustic side, specifically the measurement of annoyance, and the predictive relationship between noise metrics and annoyance"* (p. 1). Because noise can be measured, socio-acoustic research has not fully embraced opportunities to understand the complexities of how people make sense of noise within their residential environments.

Despite correlations being generally weak between noise levels and annoyance levels, such research continues (Moser, 2009). For example, research on vibration in residential environments has adopted the exposure-response methodology in line with socio-acoustic research on noise (e.g. Waddington et al., 2011). Weak correlations for noise and other environmental conditions (e.g. vibration, crowding, risk, heat, air pollution) have also been highlighted and discussed by other researchers who have subsequently turned to other non-

acoustic, personal, socio-demographic, and situational variables to account for such response variance (Day, 2007; Fields, 1993; Job, 1988; Miedema, 2007; Schoot Uiterkamp & Vlek, 2007).

Not only does the relationship between noise exposure and response vary from location to location, it has also been found to vary from source to source. For example, Staples (1997) stated that exposure-response relationships between objective noise levels and levels of annoyance are often based on long-standing environmental conditions (e.g. properties near a permanent well-established noise source such as an airport, road or railway) and do not transfer well in attempts to anticipate a community's response to new noise sources. An example of the variability between noise levels and annoyance levels for novel sources has been provided by Pedersen and colleagues (Pedersen et al., 2007; Pedersen & Persson Waye, 2007) in their research on new wind turbine developments built in close proximity to residential housing. Wind turbines emit relatively low levels of noise in comparison to other sources such as air, road and rail traffic, yet annoyance ratings are generally higher than those for other well-established sources (Pedersen & Persson Waye, 2007). This suggests that 'objective' levels alone are insufficient in understanding how people make sense of noise in the places that they live. Furthermore, research has found that a reduction in sound level does not necessarily result in better acoustical comfort in residential environments (e.g. De Ruiter, 2000, 2004; Schulte-Fortkamp, 2002). Such findings have led commentators such as Moser (2009) to argue that the importance of the social and environmental context within which residents experiences are situated has been neglected.

Moser and Robin (2006) pointed out that since the 1970s most authors dealing with urban environments have focused on their "*stressfulness*" (p. 36). In the example of noise, the exposure-response approach appears to be underpinned by the assumption that noise and other such environmental conditions are negative, particularly when response is measured in terms of 'annoyance'. For example, Fields and Walker (1982) critiqued the British Railway Survey (1975) for not offering a positive rating option for people to give with regards to railway

noise, as many people reported that they liked living near the railway and enjoyed being able to hear its sounds.

In terms of European noise policy, Adams et al. (2006) argued that this has been “*very top-down*” due to its reliance on noise measurements and its treatment of noise as something unwanted and in need of control. In turn, the localised and cultural aspects of ‘sound’ and its importance to ‘sense of place’ have been neglected (Adams et al., 2006, p. 2396). For Rodaway (1994), sensory information (i.e. environmental conditions) enables people to “*identify particular features of the environment and experience a geography of spaces and places of distinct character*” (p.48). ‘Sound’ can be considered as an existential necessity within our immediate environments and an integral part of life (Stockfelt, 1991). Classen et al. (1994) made the same case for the importance of smell/odour in our environments.

Policies based around noise measurements therefore seem at odds with subjective experience as “*not all sounds are unwanted and many add to the sense of vitality of living in an urban area*” (Adams et al., 2006; p. 2391). Places can be perceived in many ways, as can the environmental conditions that form part of our ‘sensescapes’ (Landry, 2006). Thus, the plurality of constructions and meanings associated with environmental conditions cannot be captured within exposure-response research. How noise and other environmental conditions are constructed and experienced is therefore dependent upon the person.

2.6 Beyond Annoyance

Research on annoyance appears to have been concerned with how annoyed people are to the detriment of understanding what annoyance is and why people give the annoyance ratings that they do (Guski et al., 1999; Stallen, 1999). Jones et al. (1981) argued measures of annoyance as “*rather uninformative from a psychological perspective*” (p. 44). While the ‘objective’ levels of noise can explain part of the variation in annoyance responses, they

cannot account for all of the variation in responses to noise in residential environments (Fields, 1993). According to Guski (1999), only a third of the variance of annoyance responses can be accounted by acoustical features. Another third can be accounted for by personal and social variables (e.g. attitudes towards noise source, noise sensitivity), which suggests other factors influence annoyance that have not been considered as yet. Similarly, annoyance responses for vibration are also highly variable and as Klæboe et al. (2003) noted, while some respondents reported being highly annoyed, others were moderately or even not at all annoyed by similar levels of vibration.

In critiquing the concept in relation to noise, Guski et al. (1999) argued that *“annoyance is not just reflecting acoustic characteristics. Noise annoyance is a psychological concept which describes a relation between an acoustic situation and a person who is forced by noise to do things he/she does not want to do, who cognitively and emotionally evaluates this situation and feels partly helpless”* (p. 525). This definition of noise annoyance describes highly complex and multi-faceted psychological processes contributing to how people react to noise which go beyond the ‘objective’ properties of the noise itself. In this sense, ‘annoyance’ captures the notion that noise (and other environmental conditions) is negative and noise as a psychological and subjective phenomenon has been arguably neglected within research (Stallen, 1999). Moreover, ‘annoyance’ is a concept that has remained relatively unchallenged in comparison to the amount of research carried out to sustain it (Adams et al., 2006; Staples, 1996). When particular concepts dominate research, they *“are seldom value free, and most could be replaced with other concepts carrying far different valuational baggage”* (Gergen, 1973, p. 312).

Moving away from ‘objective’ measurements of environmental conditions, Burningham (1998) adopted a social constructionist approach to investigate noise from a new road development in the UK. Burningham (1998) began by considering events that preceded the new road development where residents proposed that the road should take a different route bypassing their town in order to avoid dividing communities and traffic pollution. However, the

Department for Transport overruled and made minor modifications to their preferred route and the new road was built running through the town. Once it opened, residents began to make complaints about noise from the road. In semi-structured interviews with stakeholders prior to the road being built and semi-structured interviews with residents once the road had opened, Burningham (1998) found that from the range of anticipated and potential disruptions from the road, noise was considered the most 'disruptive'.

Given the prominence of measuring noise levels in residential settings, officials set out to determine whether noise was "*really a problem*" (Burningham, 1998, p. 542). However, residents disputed the noise assessment methods implemented, arguing that they did not accurately reflect the 'reality' and their lived experiences of the noise from the new road. The assessment method was disputed for two reasons; firstly because it was based on level (loudness) and not on pitch; and secondly, because the method was based on calculations rather than actual measurements. Local people based their assessments of the noise on their experiences of living near the road, whilst the Department for Transport based their assessments on their "*complex science*" which was supported with prior research findings that a calculation/prediction method gives residents "*a better deal*" (Burningham, 1998, p. 543). There was no consensus between residents and officials about the ways in which to assess noise. For the residents, the 'objective' measurements were not an accurate reflection of their lived experiences. On a local level the noise became known as 'the A27 roar', while the wider context of concern for 'the environment' and its conditions enabled residents to construct noise as 'disruptive', which reflected the national status of noise as an environmental issue. Thus, a social constructionist approach addresses the complexities of how environmental conditions emerge and are maintained as problematic through social processes (Hannigan, 1995).

Research that examines how environmental conditions are constructed and experienced by people has therefore turned towards "*the discursive strategies used to concretely realise different representations*" in the understanding that these representations are "*socially constructed within an argumentative context*"

(Aiello & Bonaiuto, 2003, p. 255). The influence of policy discourses on constructions of noise were highlighted in research with residents living near airport infrastructure (Bröer, 2008; Kroesen & Bröer, 2009; Kroesen et al., 2011). In the Netherlands and Switzerland, Bröer (2008) found that policy discourses ‘resonance’ or echo in residents’ talk around aircraft noise; rarely was participants talk unrelated to dominant policy discourses that position aircraft noise as an annoyance. Bröer (2008) therefore argued that noise policy “*clearly structures how people construct noise annoyance*”, influencing “*what people can and cannot say*” in their talk around aircraft noise (p. 112). Whilst the wider social context which enables ‘sound’ to be experienced as ‘noise annoyance’ was recognised, Bröer (2008) arguably presented an overly structured view of people who have little (or even no) agency in how they construct environmental conditions.

However, Kroesen and Bröer (2009) developed their work further using Q-methodology¹², identifying five frames within residents’ talk about aircraft noise, three of which were related to policy discourse: “*Long live aviation!*,” “*aviation: an ecological threat,*” “*aviation and the environment: a solvable problem,*”. Two frames were found unrelated to policy discourse, which were “*aircraft noise: not a problem*” and “*aviation: a local problem*”, thus highlighting how people can construct environmental conditions differently, contesting and challenging the dominant ‘taken for granted’ constructions of aircraft noise as an annoyance.

In an earlier study, Bröer (2007) argued that discourse analysis “*provides an entry point*” (p.3) to evaluate the influence of noise policy on residents’ evaluations of sound exposure. However, discursive analysis can do more than provide an entry point, particularly given the findings that public discourses unrelated to noise policies were drawn upon in accounts of aircraft noise, (Kroesen & Bröer, 2009; Kroesen et al., 2011). In work on the discursive constructions of ‘place’, Dixon and Pol (2011) emphasised the role of conflict and the action-orientated nature of discourse in local disputes about open public space in Barcelona. They analysed newspaper reports and interview

¹² In Q-methodology, people rank order statements originating from everyday communication which are then correlated and analysed.

transcripts about a development known as Figuera's Well, a title used for land identified by Government for semi-private regeneration. Other people refer to the land differently, as the 'Hole of Shame', a title used to construct the regeneration as illegitimate and to highlight the government's long term neglect of local spaces. This act of naming the land differently orientated the person's political stance. Dixon and Poll's (2011) analysis was rhetorical (Billig et al., 1988) and build on the idea that some 'place' constructions are designed to normalise and unproblematise environmental conditions, and others are designed to undermine and discredit particular versions of people-place relationships. People were understood as agentic, drawing upon different discourses to construct accounts that enabled them to present and manage their political 'stake' or 'interest' in 'place' (Dixon & Poll, 2011).

Environmental problems can therefore be located within a wider argumentative context, which structures how people can construct environmental conditions but allows the presentation of different arguments for different purposes (Aeillo & Bonaiuto, 2003). As such, language becomes central to understanding how environmental conditions are constructed, where *"different vocabularies are appropriate in different contexts, for different actors and at different times"* (Burningham, 1998, p. 548).

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to review and critique the 'mainstream' approaches to understanding environmental conditions i.e. exposure-response research situated within an annoyance framework. This review was important to situate the current research within the wider contexts of 'the environment' and how environmental conditions can become 'disruptive' within an argumentative context of 'annoyance'. Drawing upon research that embraces how people socially construct physical environments, environmental conditions such as noise were considered as socially produced. This discursive understanding of

environmental conditions has guided the theoretical approach developed for this research, which is explicated in the following chapter.

Chapter Three: Developing a Theoretical Approach

3.1 Introduction

In order to move beyond 'annoyance' and the measurement of environmental conditions, I have previously introduced 'place' and 'identity' as relevant and appropriate concepts for gaining knowledge of environmental conditions that can be considered as 'disruptive'. In Chapter One, 'place' was conceptualised as more than the geographical location of somewhere and a physical setting (Stokowski, 2002; Tuan, 1974; van Patten & Williams, 2008). The concept of 'place' can incorporate the physicality of a setting and also how people imbue settings with meaning (Kyle & Chick, 2007; Stokowski, 2002). Thus, the person takes an agentic role in the construction and experience of 'place' and in turn, associated environmental conditions (Hodgetts et al., 2010; Vorkinn & Riese, 2001). This chapter develops the theoretical framework of the relationship between 'place' and 'identity', and how I have researched how people negotiate environmental conditions in making sense of living alongside railways. 'Place' and 'identity' are situated in dialogue with others.

3.2 Environmental Conditions as Place

As people can construct environmental conditions in various ways (e.g. Burningham, 1998; Dixon & Poll, 2011), this research has adopted the view that physical environments are more than concrete settings, backdrops, or stages for social life (Gieryn, 2000; Stokowski, 2002). The concept of 'place' has been used to acknowledge that people imbue the physical environment and environmental conditions with meaning through personal, social and cultural processes (Low & Altman, 1992). Gieryn (2000) stated that "*places are doubly constructed*" in that "*most are built or in some way physically carved out*" and also "*interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood, and imagined (Soja 1996)*" (p. 465). Stokowski (2002) also drew upon Soja's (1989) work to argue

that 'place' has largely been researched in two ways: firstly in relation to physical settings and tangible sites such as a beach or a park; and secondly, in relation to how physical environments are actively created by people in social interactions.

In this research, I incorporate both uses, following Gieryn's (2000) argument that the *"defining features of place – location, material form, and meaningfulness - should remain bundled"* (p. 466). 'Place' enables this research to attend to the physicality of environmental conditions, and how the material form shapes people constructions and experiences of the physical environment (Stedman, 2003). However, 'place' also enables an agentic view of the person who constructs and negotiates the physicality of 'place' within dialogue (Stokowski, 2002). 'Place' conceptualises physical environments as important resources for 'who we are' and that *"being from here or there can provide ways of presenting oneself as like or different from the person one is talking to and other people"* (Myers, 2006, p. 39). Thus, the relationship between people and 'place' can be considered as mutually constitutive, where 'place' is important for constructing 'identity' (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000). It is therefore argued that 'place' is a useful and relevant concept to understand why people construct environmental conditions in particular ways.

3.3 Self and Identity

Before explaining the theoretical approach linking 'place' to 'identity' in more depth, it is important to clarify the language used within this thesis and the decision made to work with 'identity' rather than the related term 'self'. 'Identity' and 'self' were introduced in Chapter One to illustrate their use as the most prevalent terms for understanding the person (Adams, 2007). Both are complex and challenging concepts to define as they have been used to explain how people are different and also the same as others (Athias, 2008). 'Self' and 'identity' have been used simultaneously and interchangeably but have also been differentiated within social science research (Owens, 2006).

I have chosen to predominantly use 'identity' rather than 'self' as it arguably captures a less essentialist¹³ view of the person. 'Identity' is considered as something which requires "*ongoing negotiations within a complex web of relationships and practices*" (Gough & McFadden, 2001, p. 89). Burr (2003) argued that 'identity' is an implicitly social concept, concerned more with a person's purpose or aim, and thus, often found within social constructionist research concerned with how people make sense of themselves and their social worlds. At times, 'self' has been used in my writing in instances such as where I have discussed 'self' in relation to 'other', referred to as 'self and other' within the literature (see Sullivan, 2012). The main premise is that 'who we are' is constructed within dialogue (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000), which is where I locate 'identity' and 'place' in this chapter.

'Identity' is also a useful concept as it has been drawn upon within the environmental psychological literature, where the concept of 'place identity' has been in use since the 1970s in theories of people-place relations (e.g. Korpela, 1989; Proshansky, 1978; Proshansky et al., 1983; Sarbin, 1983). 'Identity' has also been adopted within discursive psychological work on the importance of 'place' for 'who we are' (e.g. Dixon & Durrheim, 2000; Hugh-Jones & Madill, 2009).

3.4 The Relationship between 'Place' and Identity'

'Identity' as something embedded within social and physical contexts has a long history that is often traceable to the works of James (1890) and Mead (1934) (Twigger-Ross et al., 2003). Benwell and Stokoe (2006) noted that there has been a "*spatial turn*" (p. 211) within literature on 'identity' and my theoretical framework can be situated within the growing interest in physical environments

¹³ Burr (1995) defined essentialism as "*a way of understanding the world that sees things (including human beings) as having their own particular essence or nature, something which can be said to belong to them and which explains how they behave*" (p. 20). Essentialism is also addressed further in Chapter Four.

as important aspects of social life (Foresight Future Identities, 2013). The roots of these 'spatial' movements can be traced to poststructuralist (Foucault, 1982), and postmodern (Giddens, 1991) theories of what it now means *"to be"* (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000, p. 227). From such perspectives, 'identity' is fluid and agentic (Giddens, 1991), multivoiced, dialogical, and spatialised (Hermans, 2004), as opposed to the fixed notion of 'identity' traditionally favoured within psychology (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). In relation to 'place', Myers (2006) summarised that *"researchers are moving from the assumption that place defines identity, to studies of the ways participants may make place relevant to their identities in situated interactions"* (p. 9).

Notions of who we are, whether theorised as 'self' or 'identity', have arguably become *"saturated"* within *"the voices of humankind"* given that we are now more exposed to different cultures and ways of life (Gergen, 1991, p. 6). In an increasingly globalised and digital world, traditional structures such as 'place' have been questioned in terms of their significance for 'identity' (Taylor, 2005). However, as Corcoran (2002) noted, *"in many respects, the preoccupation with place is a response to late modernity, a period that has presaged the collapsing of barriers of time and space"* (p. 203). 'Place' may therefore remain important for 'identity' in spite of, or because of, such changes to the modern world (Gieryn, 2000).

Giddens's (1991) theorised 'self-identity'¹⁴ as a reflexive individualised project where people now decide or choose who they are and where to be; people *"have no choice but to choose"* how to construct themselves in an individualistic society made up of varied lifestyles (p. 81). Mason (2004) argued overly agentic and individualised views of 'identity' are *"a lived reality for only a small and highly privileged minority of white middle class men"* (p. 163). In her research, Mason (2004) found that when talking about their residential histories, people's accounts were more relational than individual. For those who had moved around locally, residential decisions were constructed as collective, and 'identity' and 'place' were linked by and to others such as living close to family

¹⁴ 'Self-identity' is used here in keeping with the literature (e.g. Giddens, 1991).

members. Mason (2004) therefore argued for a 'relational individualism', where people constructed themselves as having agency over where they live, but that 'place' often involved the consideration of other people's needs (e.g. partners, children).

'Identity' as a reflexive individualised project (Giddens, 1991) can also be seen to negate the influence of established ideas and common sense notions which shape people's understandings of the relationship between 'place' and 'identity' (Taylor, 2009). Paulgaard (2008) argued that we "*do not start from scratch when we set out to create meaningful constructions*" of 'place' (p. 50). 'Place' can be understood as 'mediated' (Goodings et al., 2007) where "*people create [place] together through talk: a social construction that allows them to make sense of their connectivity to place*" (Dixon & Durkheim, 2000, p. 32). Perhaps implicit within this understanding of 'identity' is a need to belong somewhere in that people are creating 'place' in dialogue to make sense of 'their connectivity' (Dixon & Durkheim, 2000) and find their "*meaning in the world*" (Myers, 2006, p. 39). This is not to say that 'place' defines 'identity' in an essentialist way (Myers, 2006) but that 'place' may reinforce a sense of 'belonging' (Kirkwood et al., 2013).

Like 'place', the increased interest in 'belonging' can be situated within modern processes such as migration, mobility and globalisation (Torkington, 2012). In research with asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland, Kirkwood et al. (2013) found that the mutually constitutive roles of 'place' and 'identity' legitimised people's presence and 'belonging' to particular locations. For example, constructing the host nation as 'full' positioned the presence of asylum seekers and refugees as illegitimate. In other migration research, Ahmed (2011) researched the experiences of UK migrants living in the Costa Blanca in Spain, where the need to belong was emphasised when people found themselves 'out of context' as "*being situated in 'diaspora space'¹⁵ (Brah 1996) on the margins*

¹⁵ Ahmed (2011) conceptualised her sample, women from the UK retired in Spain, as a 'diaspora' in that they could be described as being from one place and of another, and thus within 'diaspora space' (Brah, 1996).

in Spain highlights the significance of location in shaping any group and individual identity” (p. 16).

Within the environmental psychological literature, ‘belonging’ has also been researched, perhaps most dominantly as ‘place attachment’¹⁶ (Low & Altman, 1992). When people experience significant changes to ‘place’, such as when displacement or relocation occurs (e.g. Brown & Perkins, 1992; Fried, 1963; Speller & Twigger-Ross, 2009; Speller, 2000), notions of ‘belonging’ and ‘attachment’ become salient (Devine-Wright, 2009). ‘Place attachment’ has also been drawn upon to understand how people make sense of living in places that can be described negatively (e.g. Corcoran, 2002; Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010; Livingston et al., 2008; Livingston et al., 2010). Research has tended to find that residents redefine negative aspects of ‘place’ in more positive terms, particularly when the ‘status quo’ appears difficult to change (Bonaiuto et al., 1996; Hugh-Jones & Madill, 2009). Bonaiuto et al. (1996) found that highly attached residents minimised their estimations of local beach pollution levels. In a qualitative study, Bush et al. (2001) found that residents living near heavy industry and air pollution disassociated themselves with the more severe environmental conditions but emphasised that the air pollution impacted upon those living further away too. In research on living near a working quarry, Hugh-Jones and Madill (2009) found that residents minimised negative aspects of ‘place’ (e.g. blasting activities) but also constructed a ‘quid pro quo’ relationship between themselves and the quarry.

Such research emphasises that ‘place’ is dynamic in that environmental conditions can be constructed and negotiated in different ways for ‘identity’. Dixon and Durrheim (2000) noted that ‘identity’ can be considered in a *“double sense: first, as a sense of belonging to places; and second as a rhetorical warrant through which particular social practices and relations are legitimated”* (p. 33). As people become more ‘familiar’ with ‘place’, material aspects of their environments may come to express or symbolise ‘identity’ (Dixon & Durrheim, 2004). Dixon and Durrheim (2000) therefore advocated a discursive

¹⁶ Place attachment was defined by Altman and Low (1992) as the emotional bonds people have with places.

psychological approach as when people locate themselves in 'place', how they construct 'place' serves social and rhetorical functions for 'identity'.

3.5 A Dialogical Understanding of Place and Identity

Many theorists have considered language as central to 'self' and 'identity' (e.g. Bakhtin, 1986; Goffman, 1963; Hermans, 2001, 2003; Mead, 1934). A dialogical understanding of 'place' and 'identity' takes the position that "*language lives*" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 183) and therefore environmental conditions can be understood within "*everyday discursive phenomena*" (Shotter & Billig, 1998, p. 14). This contrasts with theories that consider 'place identity' as a set of place-related cognitions (e.g. Proshansky et al., 1983) or cognitive processes (Breakwell, 1986; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996) that reside within the person. Through language, "*everyday experiences of self-in-place form and mutate*" (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000, p. 32), and thus 'place' and 'identity' are relocated from the monologue of the individual to the dialogue of multiple voices.

One of the main premises of a dialogical approach is that in discursive activity, "*there is always orientation to an other*" (Madill & Sullivan, 2010, p. 2196). Corcoran (2009) argued that the Bakhtinian notion of the 'relational other' has much to offer research that attends to language as constructive and contradictory. Bakhtin (1986) argued that "*an individual speaker's utterance is not just coming from an isolated, decontextualized voice; rather, individual voices are influenced by the culture of institutions, groups, and communities in which they participate. The collective voices that are prominent in the individual's personal history (professional jargon, authorities of various circles, sociopolitical ideologies, dialects, national languages) influence what the speaker's individual voice is saying*" (cited in Hermans, 2004, p. 300).

Thus talk can be considered as 'double-voiced' where every utterance is formed in anticipation of other voices or critics (Frank, 2005). In relation to environmental conditions that can be considered 'disruptive', the 'other' is a particularly useful concept. For example, where people construct environmental

conditions in a less negative way, they would be considered as anticipating the voices of others. Environmental conditions that are often considered unwanted or 'disruptive' have been interpreted as 'spoiling' identities of 'place' (Bush et al., 2001; Cottle, 1994; Gregory et al., 1996). The notion of a 'spoiled identity' comes from Goffman's (1963) work which explored how people managed 'stigma'. He defined stigma as "*an attribute that is deeply discrediting*" when assigned to a person, which can be used to confirm the usualness of another person (Goffman, 1963, p. 13). Goffman (1963) argued that it is the "*language of relationships*" around someone which determines whether the attribute works to credit or discredit them (p. 13).

Within the 'language of relationships', people can be understood as 'author' of their own identities and as anticipating how someone else could 'author' them (Sullivan, 2012). Frank (2005) argued that "*the author is one who hears the voices of others in the particular character and who leaves the character internally free to make what she or he will of those voices, contesting some and following others*" (p. 966). Dialogue is theorised as centripetal and centrifugal where the former pushes toward agreement and monologue and the latter seeks multiplicity, disagreement and dialogue (Billig & Shotter, 1998).

Talk about environmental conditions can therefore be considered 'double voiced' or "*inherently two-sided*" (Billig & Shotter, 1988, p. 16) as the voices of others 'wedge' their way into an author's voice (Sullivan, 2012). In relation to noise annoyance, Bröer and Kroesen (e.g. Bröer, 2008; Kroesen & Bröer, 2009; Kroesen et al., 2011) situated residents discourse in an argumentative context and within the discursive frames they identified, noise as annoying, noise as not a problem (Kroesen et al., 2011). A Bakhtinian understanding of the person emphasises how it is possible to construct environmental conditions in various ways. Rather than a monological view of 'identity', the dialogical view is where many "I-positions" can be taken up by one person (Hermans, 2001). Hermans (2001; 2004) built on the work of Bakhtin to theorise a 'dialogical self' for understanding the person in the globalised and digital world. This is not the

view that a person has multiple identities but that they can shift or position themselves differently within dialogue.

The 'self-other axis' has been considered as a structural assumption underpinning the dialogical view of the person as the voices of others shape the dialogue of the author (Sullivan, 2012). Therefore, life can be said to have a 'discursive subjectivity' where experiences of 'identity' and 'place' are "*enmeshed and tangled up in social structures and discourses*" (Sullivan, 2012, p. 22). Having theorised the relationship between 'place' and 'identity' within this chapter and situated their reciprocity within dialogue, the following chapter aims to clarify the epistemological and ontological positions underpinning this research. It is also where I introduce the particular discursive psychological approach developed to analyse how environmental conditions are negotiated within the context of living alongside railways.

3.6 Conclusion

By theorising environmental conditions as 'place', this research can contextualise understandings of living alongside railways and highlight how environmental conditions can be constructed variously by different people. 'Place' and 'identity' were argued as mutually constitutive and the links between the two were how people construct themselves as belonging to place but also how talk about 'place' and 'identity' serves social and rhetorical functions. When talk is understood as 'double-voiced', this research understands that environmental conditions can be voiced as 'disruptive' by others, whether 'real' or 'imagined'.

Chapter Four: Developing a Methodological Approach

4.1 Introduction

Methodology has been described as the *'bridge'* between epistemology and method (Whaley & Krane, 2011). Epistemology can be understood as a branch of philosophy, a theory of knowledge that is concerned with knowing: what can we know and how can we know it (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000; Willig, 2001). 'Method' often refers to the techniques employed within research such as whether to carry out interviews in person or over the telephone for example (Bernard, 2000). This chapter develops the social constructionist position underpinning this research by addressing issues of epistemology, and relatedly, ontology. Ontology, a methodological consideration related to epistemology, is concerned with "*what is there to know*" (Willig, 2001, p. 13) and what it means "*to be*" (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000, p. 227). Although the influence of social constructionism on 'methods' will also be discussed, the techniques of 'methods' are addressed in detail in the following chapter (Chapter Five).

4.2 Choosing Social Constructionism

From the early stages of this research project, the aim was to move from a "*position of knowing*" about environmental conditions (e.g. measuring how annoying they 'are') to a "*position of understanding*" how environmental conditions can be constructed by people (Condie & Brown, 2009, p. 63). Questions such as why are some people 'annoyed' while other people are not, how do people talk about their experiences of living with environmental conditions, how do people negotiate living in 'disruptive' places, and how do environmental conditions impact upon 'identity', came to the forefront. Such questions originated, in part, from my experience of working as a researcher on a project called 'Human Response to Vibration in Residential Environments' funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

(Waddington et al., 2011). The project aimed to establish exposure-response relationships between measurements of vibration (exposure) and measurements of annoyance (response) (also see Section 2.3). For the Defra project, I was part of the social sciences team developing the quantitative¹⁷ research tool – a social survey questionnaire - to investigate and measure ‘human response’ in the form of annoyance ratings. The experiences of developing the social survey questionnaire (Condie et al., 2011), utilising it in the collection of data, and later, interpreting its findings (Condie & Steele, 2011), heavily influenced my move towards a qualitative methodology (see Section 5.2 for further discussion).

Maginn et al. (2008) argued that when research questions about an urban social ‘problem’ are of a how or why nature, qualitative methods have an “undeniable advantage” (p. 14). Qualitative methodologies can offer frameworks that enable researchers to “render sensible the detail and texture of lived experience” (Cromby, 2012, p. 88) whilst recognising the researcher as central in the construction of knowledge (Finlay, 2006). Most important is the prominent focus on text rather than numbers, “engaging with other people’s language” and “the stories they tell” (Shaw, 2010, p. 233). Therefore my research journey started at a methodological level (Bernard, 2000) in order to go beyond the dominant exposure-response approaches and the associated ‘taken for granted’ concepts (i.e. annoyance/stress), to understand how people make sense of environmental conditions present within the places they live.

As language takes centre stage, social constructionist epistemologies often underpin qualitative work (Burr, 2003; Gough & McFadden, 2001; Shaw, 2010; Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2009). It is important to note here that social constructionism is a term used almost exclusively within psychology and that the terminology around social constructionism varies e.g. social

¹⁷ Quantitative methods often refer to techniques that collect data that is or can be made numerical so that it is suitable for statistical analysis (J. Smith, 2008). Qualitative methods are those that involve collecting rich, meaningful, and often verbal data (e.g. interview transcripts, diary methods) for interpretation (Smith, 2008).

constructionism, constructivism, and constructionism (Burr, 2003). These terms have been used interchangeably by researchers as there is often agreement amongst them that an contextualised and less essentialist approach to understanding people is required (Schwandt, 1998; Willig, 2001). In other disciplines, other terms are used for approaches that share the same aims of understanding lived experiences such as interpretivism for example. Although there are clearly identifiable types of social constructionism, many researchers adopting this approach can be grouped together by what Burr (2003) calls a “*family resemblance*” and by how they take a “*critical stance towards our taken-for-granted ways of understanding our worlds, including ourselves*” (p. 2).

Gough and McFadden (2001) argued that the links between social constructionism and qualitative methodologies often “*become clear*” when knowledge is understood as socially constructed through language (p. 17). Within this research, the links became clearer further along in the development of my theoretical approach which orientates around a dialogical understanding of ‘place’ and ‘identity’. In theorising ‘place’ and ‘identity’, language, in particular dialogue, was considered as epistemology; how we know what we know and how we make sense our worlds (Sullivan, 2012). Talk is not understood “*as a gateway into lived experience*” but as how multiple realities of environmental conditions are possible (Sullivan, 2012, p. 8). Rather than measuring ‘human response’ with a quantitative tool, where annoyance ratings on a questionnaire scale are taken as an expression of inner states, mental structures or attitudes (Guski et al., 1999), environmental conditions are relocated to the flux of human dialogue in all their complexity. Thus qualitative methodologies that can generate data (i.e. dialogue) suitable for discursive psychological analysis were required.

4.3 Social Constructionism as Epistemology

That “*epistemology is inescapable*” (Carter & Little, 2007, p. 1319) has been demonstrated in the previous chapters where ‘place’ and ‘identity’ were conceptualised as socially constructed and environmental conditions as

negotiated in social interactions with others (Burningham, 1998; Dixon & Durrheim, 2000; Macnaghten et al., 1992). Social constructionism emerged from the same philosophical trends of postmodern thinking that influenced dialogical and discursive understandings of 'place' and 'identity' (e.g. Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Billig, 1998; Dixon & Durrheim, 2000; Gergen, 2000; Salgado & Hermans, 2009). Social constructionism is critical of the notion that knowledge mirrors nature (Salgado & Hermans, 2009). People are acknowledged as 'sense makers' who understand and interpret the world as they see and experience it (Darlaston-Jones, 2007). Social constructionism situates knowledge within linguistic and social practices, as it is "*through language that society and the individual come into being*" (Darlaston-Jones, 2007, p. 24).

Epistemologically, social constructionism advocates that there is more than one way of knowing: there are 'knowledges' rather than one knowledge or an ultimate 'truth' about the world (Willig, 2001). Burr (2003) noted that social constructionism rejects the notion that the world can be understood and discovered by universal theories or one particular system of knowledge such as a religion for example. Social constructionism is therefore in opposition to the epistemological assumptions of positivism within the social sciences (Bernard, 2000), which advocates the existence of a unitary real world which can be 'known' through objective and systematic inquiry (Ashworth, 2008). Within a positivist epistemology, events of interest to psychologists (e.g. memory, cognition, emotion) take place in that world (Ashworth, 2008).

For the social constructionist, science and positivism are one and another way of knowing about the world which, rather than 'objective', is subjective where knowledge is conditional to scientists' beliefs and values (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2009). Like all 'knowledge', science is historically, culturally, and socially situated in context (Burr, 2003). Social constructionist research aims to identify the ways in which people construct knowledge by taking into account the specific historical, cultural and ideological contexts through which they make sense of their worlds and themselves (Jost & Kruglanski, 2002). Knowledge is therefore shaped by the social context, and language shapes "*what we know*

and what we see, as well as what we can say” about our worlds (Marecek & Hare-Mustin, 2009, p. 76).

Social constructionism therefore challenges the framework psychology has traditionally looked to for its basis (Gergen, 1985), that which I have previously referred to as ‘mainstream’ psychology (see Chapter Three). The paper ‘*Social Psychology as History*’ (Gergen, 1973) signified what has been referred to as the ‘crisis in social psychology’ (Burr, 2003). In his paper, Gergen (1973) argued that psychological concepts such as ‘personality’, ‘identity’, and ‘cognition’ for example, are the current, not the ultimate, ways of understanding ourselves. He relocated the discipline as being culturally and historically specific, upholding social psychological research to be “*primarily the systematic study of contemporary history*” (Gergen, 1973, p. 319). Social constructionism was seen as “*undermining claims about scientific objectivity*” and positivist quests for “*truth*” (Gough & McFadden, 2001, p. 9). Burr (2003) emphasised the implications of the social constructionist movement, arguing that “*the search for truth, the truth about people, about human nature, about society, has been at the foundation of social science from the start. Social constructionism therefore heralds a radically different model of what it could mean to do social science*” (p. 7).

Although social constructionist research has featured within psychology since the 1970s and alternative scholarly approaches have become more accepted (Altman & Low, 1992), many researchers point out that positivism still appears to be the ‘taken for granted’, dominant epistemology, accompanied with quantitative methods of investigation (Ashworth, 2008; Gough & McFadden, 2001; Tao, 2009; Whaley & Krane, 2011). Consequentially, taking a social constructionist approach often requires more explicit justification (the existence of this chapter acts as a supporting example) and also defence giving its critical stance on the ‘mainstream’ theories of knowledge (Burningham & Cooper, 1999).

The research topic itself - environmental conditions - also influences the explicit justification of the epistemological position underpinning this research. Firstly, taking a social constructionist approach differs from the vast majority of research carried out on environmental conditions such as vibration and noise. The concept of 'annoyance' becomes a focus of critique as social constructionist research which aims to challenge 'taken for granted' concepts. Being annoyed (or not annoyed) becomes something people do and not some people are, which contrasts with the assumptions underpinning exposure-response research carried out within an annoyance framework.

Secondly, social constructionism emphasises language as action-orientated and the world and ourselves as socially constructed in dialogue, which places agency with the speaker as a strategic language user (Madill & Doherty, 1994). People construct differing accounts of environmental conditions as they manage 'stake' and 'interest' in social interactions (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Lee & Roth, 2004). However, that is not to assume that people are free to create any version of 'reality' they choose (Burr, 2003). In constructing environmental conditions, people draw upon shared discourses which are provided by their particular historical, cultural and social contexts (Gergen, 2000b), the context of 'the environment' for example (Hannigan, 1995). Language also shapes and constrains the realities possible as "*each utterance is bound to wider language systems*" (Cresswell & Hawn, 2011, p. 5). Although multiple realities are possible, these realities are constrained and positioned by the 'place' and 'identity' constructions available and possible in dialogic practices.

4.4 Relativism as Ontology

While social constructionism has been acknowledged for its ability to deconstruct and critique 'taken for granted' concepts and ways of knowing, it has been questioned for not acknowledging some "*agreed or neutral version of reality beyond discourse*" within psychology (Gough & McFadden, 2001, p. 63). In relation to understanding how environmental conditions are constructed in

dialogue, it is important to be able to make claims about what those environmental conditions are 'really' like for those that live with them, in order for this research to be relevant to policymaking and practice (Hammersley, 2000).

Social constructionist approaches that focus on language can be described as relativist in ontology where reality is constructed and made meaningful by people (Stainton-Rogers, 2003). For the relativist constructionist, language is taken as ontologically primary (Ashworth, 2008) and "*metaphorically conceived as a tool, an instrument that creates the possibility of certain courses of action*" (Salgado & Hermans, 2009, p. 16). All realities and 'truths' are situated in the historical, cultural, and social context in that we can only 'know' through our representations of the world (Gergen, 1994).

Some social constructionist researchers have addressed the ontological debates around reality by aligning themselves with critical realism (e.g. (Cromby, 1999; Harré, 2009; Nightingale & Cromby, 2002; Parker, 1998; Riley, Sims-Schouten, & Willig, 2007). Critical realists assert that there is an external reality which exists independently of the person but it is subject to our interpretations of it (Burr, 2003; Cromby, 1999; Proctor, 1998). Danermark et al. (2002) summarised critical realism as the "*switch from epistemology to ontology, and within ontology a switch from events to mechanisms*" (p, 5). The focus shifts to what it is about people and societies that makes them possible objects for uncovering knowledge (Danermark et al., 2002). By switching from events to mechanisms, critical realism is concerned with what produces events, as opposed to the events themselves (Danermark et al., 2002) and as such, language becomes the ontological focus again.

Potter (2010) argued that to consider discourse as primary is not to consider people as discourse alone. Nor is it that relativist constructionism considers discourse as more real; it acknowledges "*that the rest of the world is like text [discourse]. It all has to be represented and interpreted*" (Edwards et al., 1995,

p. 32). This can be seen in the following example of modern medicine and witchcraft from Gergen (1991):

“Words are not mirrorlike reflections of reality but expressions of group convention. Various social groups possess preferred vocabularies, or ways of putting things, and these vocabularies reflect or defend their values, politics and ways of life. For participants in such groups, these forms of talking (or writing) take on a local reality. They seem totally convincing. Yet their very “reality” is their danger, for each renders the believer heroic and the nonbeliever a fool. This is not to say that modern medicine is no better than witchcraft; by contemporary Western conventions it surely is. However, the words employed by physicians are not thereby rendered truer (in the sense of more accurate depictions) than their exotic counterparts. To possess an effective procedure, according to certain definitions, does not render “true” or “objective” the words employed in carrying out the procedure” (p. 119).

Therefore the issue or ‘danger’ for relativist constructionism is not about what is real, but *“the status of the various claims made about such a world”* (Nightingale & Cromby, 2002, p. 704). In the current research, the issue of status relates to the dominant annoyance framework that underpins exposure-response research on environmental conditions (see Chapter Two) and how these forms of ‘talking’ have arguably taken on a ‘local reality’: that environmental conditions are essentially negative, unwanted, and ‘annoying’. Exploring environmental conditions through another way of ‘putting things’ (i.e. social constructionism), embraces the notion of multiple realities and versions of events.

I approach ontology pragmatically and take up a position that acknowledges *“a real world outside discourse”* (Burr, 2003, p. 81). However, I have prioritised language as a way in which to understand how environmental conditions are *“assembled, presented, and contested”* (Hannigan, 1995, p. 187). Rather than being concerned with what constitutes ‘truth’ or what is really ‘real’, I consider language as a reality for practical purposes (Burr, 2003) in order to make a

contribution to our understandings of how environmental conditions are constructed and experienced in the context of living alongside railways.

The relativist position put forward could be problematised by my use of the word 'experience' within this thesis. Related to 'experience' are the arguments of Nightingale and Cromby (2002) around how material aspects of the world shape discursive practices. To give an example, experiences of environmental conditions involve our sensory apparatus in that we can 'feel' vibration, 'hear' noise, and 'see' trains passing by. Such a material reality therefore impacts upon how we talk about, and experience physical settings (Steadman, 2003).

4.5 Researching Experience

From a critical realist position, Nightingale and Cromby (2002) argued that relativist versions of social constructionism do not account for *"the ways in which discursive practices and human experiences are already grounded in, and structured by, aspects of external reality such as subjectivity, embodiment, materiality, aesthetics and power"* (p. 704). One way to address 'experience' is by acknowledging the materiality of physical environments, which has been theorised earlier through the concept of 'place'. Stedman (2003) argued that research on 'place' has overemphasised its social construction and that the meanings we attribute to 'place' originate from physical characteristics. For Stedman (2003), *"experiences are linked to the environment in which they occur; physical landscapes, by virtue of certain characteristics, enable or constrain a range of experiences that shape meanings"* (p. 674).

Recognising the materiality of 'place' is particularly important given the research focus on environmental conditions. In terms of our sensory apparatus, Mansfield (2005) commented that our ability to sense vibration is reliant upon a range of signals from the visual, vestibular, somatic and auditory systems of the body. A number of organs are involved in the perception of vibration including the inner ear (balance organs), large numbers of small receptors situated in the body's muscles, tendons and joints, and receptors in the skin which provide

tactile information and detect higher frequencies of vibration (Guignard, 1971). To 'feel' has largely been encapsulated within the 'haptic'¹⁸ senses, which provide us with "*a vast amount of information concerning the world*" (Tuan, 1974, p. 7).

However, (sensory) experience involves social construction within linguistic and social practices (Landry, 2006). For example, although the haptic senses have been emphasised as important (Tuan, 1974), many authors point out that within Western cultures, emphasis is placed on what we can see – our visual senses – particularly in relation to 'landscape', 'place' and physical environments (Adams et al., 2006; Adams et al., 2007; Landry, 2006; Pocock, 1983; Rodaway, 1994). The emphasis on the visual is reflected in the English language which has many words to describe what we can 'see', fewer for what we 'hear', and even fewer for what we can 'feel' in comparison (Landry, 2006). It is therefore important to recognise the limitations of language for describing 'experience' and also how language shapes those 'experiences' (Burr, 2003).

From a historical perspective, Howes (2006) argued the senses have been organised hierarchically within society, indicative of social order and status. The 'higher' senses of sight and hearing have been associated with dominant social groups in terms of gender, race, and class, and the 'lesser' senses of touch, smell, and taste have been associated with subordinate groups such as women, workers, and non-Westerners (Howes, 2006). This highlights how 'who we are' may impact upon how sensory experiences can be constructed.

Although the methodological focus remains on dialogue, another way that the material 'reality' and 'experience' can be attended to, is to consider people as positioned by discourse. Positioning has been likened to the taking up roles (Goffman, 1959) in social interaction but "*much more variable, multiple and shifting*" (Jones, 2006, p. 7). In relation to subjectivity, Jones (2006) argued that subjectivity is "*made and remade*" (p. 8) through discourse and positions, which structures and enables how we construct and experience our worlds.

¹⁸ Derived from the Greek 'haptikos' meaning "*able to lay hold of*" (Peck, 2010, p. _).

4.6 A Discursive Psychological Approach

Discursive psychology can be seen as an umbrella concept linking a broad range of research from different disciplines together (Hepburn & Wiggins, 2005). Discursive psychology has been described as a “*very broad church*” in that researchers have demonstrated a “*dazzling inventiveness in their combination of approaches, methods, epistemological, and ontological positions*” (Abell & Walton, 2010, p. 686). Within these discursive psychologies, the Bakhtinian dialogical understanding of the person is arguably being realised (Billig & Shotter, 1998).

Potter and Wetherell’s (1987) *‘Discourse and Social Psychology’* is often acknowledged as one of the pivotal publications which paved the way for a discursive psychology (McAvoy, 2007). The label ‘discursive psychology’ was introduced later by Edwards and Potter (1992), to differentiate a body of work from Discourse Analysis, which emphasised “*‘psychology’ as topic and focus in a way that ‘discourse analysis’ did not*” (Edwards, 2012, p. 3). In 2012, a special issue of the British Journal of Social Psychology was dedicated to discursive psychology, marking its development as a distinct approach over the past quarter of a century (see Augoustinos & Tileaga, 2012). For Wiggins and Potter (2008), this version of discursive psychology builds upon the core observations that language is constructed and constructive, action-oriented, and situated. The focus is on the categories, constructions and orientations through which a sense of agency is attributed to the person in constructing their worlds (Wiggins & Potter, 2008). This discursive psychology has been argued to assert a mostly agentic person who has the “*freedom...to draw upon language as a cultural resource for his or her own ends*” (Burr, 2003, p. 63). However, as Willig (2001) noted, discourses can “*facilitate and limit, enable and constrain what can be said, by whom, where and when*” (Willig, 2001, p. 107).

Wetherell (1998) suggested “*a more eclectic discursive approach*” to discursive psychology to better acknowledge the interaction between agency and structure (p. 405). I have adopted the concept of bricolage, or researcher-as-bricoleur, to piece together an appropriate discursive psychology for this research. The

French word *bricoleur* has been applied by qualitative researchers to define those who are increasingly using an eclectic range of methodological approaches together (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, McLeod, 2001, Kincheloe, 2001). As Watts (2010) noted “*we are no longer bound by the rigid scientific rigour and instead we seem to adopt a ‘pick n mix’ approach that is adaptable to the circumstance and needs of the research question*” (Watt, 2010, p. 51). As such, it has been argued that discursive psychology should strive for eclecticism and refrain from endorsing one particular kind of discursive psychology (Riley et al., 2007).

I take the approach that language is embedded in our histories (Wetherell, 1998) and reflective of the voices of others (Bakhtin, 1981). When people talk about a topic or issue, they draw upon the available and well established discourses surrounding that topic (Edley, 2003). These widely established discourses have become known as ‘interpretative repertoires’ (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell, 1998). Interpretative repertoires can be described as the reoccurring patterns within talk or text that emerge in the analysis of data (Taylor, 2003). Korobov and Bamberg (2004) argued that where interpretative repertoires are understood as pre-established ways of talking about the world, there is a risk of ‘discursive determinism’. Thus interpretative repertoires should be understood as accomplished rather than simply given or provided by the wider social and cultural context. Interpretative repertoires are considered “*not so much preformed...but performed*” (Van Patten & Williams, 2008, p. 452), which links to the theoretical understanding of ‘identity’ as a performance (Goffman, 1959).

What people accomplish within their use of ‘interpretative repertoires’ can be further understood if accompanied by the concept of positioning “*where individuals strategically pick a discursive position among those available, which when practiced over time become part of a repertoire to be employed in varying contexts*” (Van Patten & Williams, 2008, p. 452). Hall (1988) argued that who we are is always related to the available positions and that there are limits on the various positions we can take up within talk whilst still providing a credible

account. Althusser (1971) argued that language constructs people as 'subjects' by drawing people into particular positions or identities. Dialogue can be considered as having ideological effects upon how we experience our worlds in that we have a 'discursive subjectivity' (Sullivan, 2012). Therefore the concept of positioning is often central to discursive psychological approaches (Edley, 2001), and plays an important role within my methodological framework. Within the analysis of the data, I examine who is implied in the data (Edley 2001) and ask "*what is this discourse doing?*" to position the speaker in relation to 'place' and 'identity' (Willig, 2001, p.93).

To attend to the contradictory or dilemmatic nature of talk, Billig (1991, 1992) drew upon Bakhtinian dialogism to research ideological thinking in dialogue. He argued that people's perspectives on topics such as 'national identity' were often contradictory, with opposing arguments made by the same speaker. This was theorised to be due to the dilemmatic nature of common sense notions, or the ideologies we live by, "*society's way of life*" (Billig, et al., 1988, p. 27). Billig et al. (1988) differentiated these ideologies from the classic Marxist notions of ideologies as being consistent sets of ideas that uphold dominant social structures (e.g. religion, class), and identified 'lived ideologies': the beliefs, values, ideals, and practices of a group, society, or culture which can often be incoherent, disjointed and contradictory (Edley, 2001). Lived ideologies or common sense notions can be effective in social interaction as they are often shared, used, and widely understood (Burr, 2003).

In this sense, lived ideologies are similar to the concept of 'interpretative repertoires' in discursive psychology (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). In research on Britishness and the discursive construction of 'place' and 'national identity', Wallwork and Dixon (2004) make use of Billig's (1991) notion of ideology as shared conventions of common sense that support and maintain particular forms of social structures. Wallwork and Dixon (2004) found that in newspaper articles published for the Countryside Alliance¹⁹, the shared understandings

¹⁹ The Countryside Alliance is a coalition that aims to promote rural ways of life in the UK (Wallwork & Dixon, 2004).

(ideologies) of the 'rural idyll' of the English countryside were discursively and rhetorically constructed as central to British identity and worked to maintain and preserve rural ways of living. Previously discussed research by Dixon and Poll (2011) on rhetorical nature of talk about Figuera's Well, finding that some 'place' constructions worked to normalise and unproblematised, whereas others functioned to undermine and discredit particular versions of people-place relationships. Edley (2001) argued that the dilemmatic nature of lived ideologies can make them "*flexible resources for everyday sense making*" (p. 203). By analysing talk from a discursive psychological approach that encompasses dilemmatic thinking, I can attend to the lived ideologies around living alongside railways. For example, constructing something as 'disruptive' or constructing something as 'usual' (Goffman, 1956; Bush et al., 2001) could be interpreted as an ideological dilemma. Subsequently, I draw upon the notions of 'lived ideologies' and 'ideological dilemmas' (Billig et al., 1988) within this discursive inquiry to examine identities of 'place' as dialogical and contradictory. This differs from my use of 'interpretative repertoires' which have been primarily applied to specific instances of talk (e.g. common phrases, metaphors) which are relatively coherent across different accounts of living alongside railways. Although it is important to note that the concepts of interpretative repertoires and lived ideologies are overlapping and related concepts as they enable speakers to accomplish 'identity work' in dialogue.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have embraced my responsibility as the researcher to make clear the epistemological and ontological positions underpinning this research (Madill et al., 2000). In doing so, I have explained how a social constructionist position was appropriate given the focus on language and dialogue and the aim of understanding how residents negotiate environmental conditions within their talk about 'place' and 'identity'. This chapter aimed to clarify how multiple realities are possible and how language mediates our 'experience'. Another key feature of social constructionist research is that the researcher's influence is

often acknowledged in that *“it is not possible to apply a method to arrive at a reality independent of human action”* (Cresswell & Hawn, 2011, p. 1). In the following chapter, I address issues of reflexivity alongside outlining the ‘techniques’ adopted to generate data for this research.

Chapter Five: Methods

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is primarily concerned with the 'techniques' (Bernard, 2000) employed to generate knowledge and the choices made in the planning of this inquiry. The social constructionist position and discursive psychological approach outlined in the previous chapter are drawn upon in the following account of how data was generated in this research. Postmodern research *"moves us into arenas where subjectivity is both assumed and appreciated"* (Russell & Kelly, 2002, p. 1) and as such, I start this chapter by establishing the researcher as an integral part of research and aim to continue this thread throughout this chapter and into the following chapters of analysis.

Previously, I discussed how taking a qualitative approach related to my involvement in the 'Human Response to Vibration in Residential Environments' project funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Subsequently, my involvement in the Defra project and working within its methodological framework has shaped this research. Rather than report the research decisions made as if they were neutral and objective, I attend to my influence on the research to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of this study (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Morrow, 2005). Central importance is therefore placed upon reflexivity, the process whereby researchers examine their role and influence within their research project (Mason, 1996). Within discursive psychological work, reflexivity has and continues to be a major component (Potter, 2010); one that has become commonly used as a criteria with which to evaluate qualitative research (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009; Cooper & Burnett, 2006; Hsiung, 2008).

It is also in this chapter where I clarify the decision to focus on living alongside railways as the research context. Alongside the epistemological and methodological positions taken up in this research, this choice of context

informed the use of qualitative interviewing to generate data. I argue that the use of qualitative interviewing lends itself both to the research aim and to the discursive psychological approach developed. The sampling method used to recruit participants, closely tied to the Defra project, is also outlined and discussed. The participants who took part in this research are introduced, followed by a reflection on how 'who I am' may have impacted upon the interview situation. I conclude by outlining my discursive psychological approach to the analysis of the data, before moving on to the analysis chapters of this thesis.

5.2 The Researcher in the Research

"Today we understand that we write culture, and that writing is not an innocent practice. We know the world only through our representations of it."

(Denzin, 2001, p. 23)

Reflexivity broadly refers to the ways in which the researcher attempts to locate themselves within their research to make clear how they may have influenced the research and its findings (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008). In its *"focus on how does who I am, who I have been, who I think I am, and how I feel affect data collection and analysis"* (Pillow, 2003, p. 176), reflexivity has become a central methodological tool for qualitative researchers (Finlay, 2002a). The 'outing' (Finlay, 2002b) of the researcher is argued to situate the reader in a better position to assess the quality of the research (Gough & McFadden, 2001; Madill et al., 2000). As meanings and understandings are co-constructed, and when *"the researcher and researched are of the same order, that is, both living, experiencing human beings"* (Shaw, 2010, p. 233) being reflexive can contribute to the increased integrity, trustworthiness, and transparency of qualitative research (Finlay, 2002a). It is one of the central ways in which I have aimed to produce a *"credible qualitative study"* (Janesick, 1998, p. 49; Patton, 1990).

Reflexivity has arguably challenged the fundamental and *"conventional ideas of science, which favour professional objectivity and distance over engagement*

and subjectivity” (Finlay & Gough, 2003, p. 1). Given my social constructionist stance that we can only know what we know through our representations of the world (Gergen, 1973), the researcher cannot generate knowledge about the topic of inquiry outside of their understandings of it. As Potter (2010) argues, being reflexive should be a researcher’s “*epistemic condition*” regardless of their approach, and “*to pretend otherwise would only be to disguise the social commitments that underlie all research*” (p. 666). In this sense, the previous chapter can be considered as an exercise in ‘disciplinary reflexivity’ (Wilkinson, 1988), or ‘epistemological reflexivity’ (Willig, 2001) where the assumptions about knowledge and what can be known were questioned rather than assumed.

The reflexivity engaged in this chapter is more ‘personal’ (Wilkinson, 1988), where the pretence of a “*faceless subject and invisible researcher*” (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 661) is rejected. This is in contrast to viewing my influence on the research as ‘bias’ as in the case of ‘scientific’ research (Gough & McFadden, 2001). I identify how my interest in the topic of environmental conditions led to this research project, and how my increasing dissatisfaction with objective ways of understanding environmental conditions, which seem to negate lived experience, influenced the particular theoretical and methodological positions developed. I aim to consider how my background, values, assumptions and experiences might have framed this research (Henwood, 2008) and how ‘who I am’ might have impacted upon the data generated, and later, the interpretations of that data. To give an example, attending to my ‘identities of place’, could perhaps go some way in reducing the possibility of reproducing prevailing place ideologies (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000).

Gough and McFadden (2001) point out that incorporating reflexivity into writing is difficult and the ways in which researchers have engaged with reflexivity differ greatly. Like other concepts in this thesis, reflexivity is a “*contested term*” (Finlay & Gough, 2003, p. 1). In this research, the purpose of reflexive practice relates to what Gergen and Gergen (2000) noted as “*a conscious effort to “tell the truth” about the making of the account*” (p. 1028). Within this, I endeavour

to ensure that the voices of participants who took part in this research are heard given the loudest voice in this research is likely to be mine in my role as narrator of the research story (Vickers, 2002) and as writer of culture (Denzin, 2001).

Pillow (2003) notes that one of the key ways researchers engage in reflexivity is to examine social positions and values but argues that more uncomfortable aspects of research are often negated. More recently within the area of community psychology, Reed et al. (2012) also called for the 'messiness' of research to be acknowledged and argued that researchers need to engage in Pillow's (2003) 'uncomfortable reflexivity', described as "*a reflexivity that is untidy, confessional, and tenuous*" (p. 12). They argued that by sharing the uncomfortable realities of conducting research, a more open approach to research and self-appraisal can emerge. I address some of this 'discomfort' in the research decisions made and the struggles with being reflexive are discussed later in this chapter. My aim is to achieve a balance as too much reflection can detract from the aims and purpose of inquiry in that a researcher can become "*embroiled in reflexive excess*" (Finlay & Gough, 2003, p. 2). It may not ever be possible to fully acknowledge and identify my full influence on the research process (Finlay, 2002a). As Roulston (2010) noted, "*representations of findings are always partial, arbitrary, and situated, rather than unitary, final, and holistic*" (p. 220).

5.3 Choosing Railways as the Research Context

Continuing in the theme of researcher as central, this section identifies the research decisions made in choosing living alongside railways as the study context. In Chapter One, railways were identified as the 'disruption' to be studied. Justification for this choice was provided by situating railways within the wider context of environmental change and the potential for a 'railway renaissance' given the current policy focus on sustainable development and reducing carbon emissions (Shaw et al., 2003). Additionally, those living

alongside railways would likely experience environmental conditions such as vibration and noise. However, the decision to research living alongside railways was more complex in that it also involved a personal dimension, one which requires 'outing' (Finlay, 2002b).

The focus on railways also originates from my involvement with the 'Human Response to Vibration in Residential Environments' project funded by the Department of Food, Environment, and Rural Affairs (Defra) (Waddington et al., 2011) (also see Section 4.2). Railways were one of the main sources of vibration investigated by the project. A total of 931 residents living alongside the North West Coast Line (NWCL) were interviewed via a social survey questionnaire. The questionnaire gathered participants' responses to vibration and noise from railways to establish an exposure-response relationship between measures of vibration and measures of annoyance (see Condie, et al., 2011 for an overview of the development of the social survey questionnaire). The experience of working on the Defra project was a primary motivation to carry out a qualitative investigation in order to move beyond the 'annoyance' framework.

In addition to railways, the Defra project also collected data on other vibration sources in places of residency such as construction activities and internal sources. Railways were chosen as the research context over the other sources for a number of reasons. Firstly, railways were a more permanent source of potential disruption in comparison to construction activities. The construction activities that the Defra project investigated were for a new light-rail tram development. For this source, 350 respondents living in close proximity to these construction activities participated in the Defra project. Early on in my research, the potential for interviewing participants living alongside railways and near construction activities was deliberated as both sources can be situated within the wider context of a 'railway renaissance' (Shaw et al., 2003). The decision to focus on one source rather than two was made after I had generated data with participants living alongside railways. This choice is perhaps an example of Pillow's (2003) 'uncomfortable reflexivity' in that sampling is often considered as

something which is determined before data generation (Riley & King, 2012). However, this non-linear trajectory is considered commonplace within qualitative research as *“data collection, analysis and theory development can all fold into each other”* (Riley & King 2012, p. 69). Being open about the non-linear and overlapping nature of the research process enables the self-appraisal noted earlier (Reed et al., 2012).

From collecting data for the Defra project railways sample, the importance of ‘identity work’ in participants’ talk became more evident, as did notions of adapting to the ‘disruptiveness’ of environmental conditions. In speaking with residents living near construction activities during data collection for the Defra project, I became aware that their experiences and circumstances were very different to those who lived alongside railways. Firstly, the ‘disruption’ was temporary as opposed to permanent (Condie & Steele, 2011), which impacted upon the ways respondents’ talked about the environmental conditions associated with the construction activities. In addition, once the new light-rail system was in situ, new environmental conditions would be introduced which people were anticipating rather than currently experiencing as in the case of railways e.g. *‘don’t know what it will be like when the trams start’*, and *‘[I’m] not sure, it will depend on how noisy the tramline is’* (Condie & Steele, 2011, p. 66).

Although a study focused on two sources of ‘disruption’ could have produced ‘fruitful’ (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) results, such an approach could have directed the research towards examining differences between ‘new’ and ‘old’ physical features and environmental conditions in residential environments. I wanted to avoid a compare and contrast exercise looking for differences; arguably a default setting for a researcher whose background is within psychology (Burman, 1997). The choice to focus solely on living alongside railways meant that the research could focus on the more ‘ordinary’ and ‘everyday’ (Hall et al., 2009) experiences in understanding place and ‘disruption’.

The Defra project also collected data on ‘human response’ to internal sources of vibration. The sample consisted of 150 people who lived in apartment blocks,

mainly student accommodation and sheltered housing. Fewer numbers of people reported that they felt vibration (18.7%) from internal sources in comparison to vibration from railways (71.4%) (Condie & Steele, 2011). In the technical report of the social science findings, this difference was attributed to the sampling methodology being unsuccessful in identifying where vibration from internal sources was experienced by residents (Condie & Steele, 2011). As such, excluding this source of vibration from this research was a more straightforward decision in comparison to excluding living near construction activities.

Another factor in choosing to focus on railways was that construction activities and internal sources both had smaller sample sizes in comparison. My involvement with the Defra project provided access to a database of respondents which presented an opportunity and purposive sample of people to recruit to this study. Of the 931 people living alongside railways that were interviewed, 88.9% agreed to be contacted in the future for the purposes of further study and for measurements of vibration to be taken within their properties. Interviewing participants that had previously taken part in a study that adopted the methodological framework I have critiqued (see Chapter Two) is not without complications and considerations. The issues around sampling and interviewing participants from the Defra project are discussed later in this chapter. Firstly, how my experience of the Defra projects' quantitative tool (social survey questionnaire) influenced the method adopted in this research is discussed. The following section contrasts the use of social survey questionnaires (also known as structured interviews) with qualitative interviewing (also known as semi-structured interviews), the method of choice in this investigation.

5.4 Qualitative Interviews

The qualitative interview holds a central place in contemporary qualitative psychology (Potter & Hepburn, 2005). Qualitative interviews have been described as “*conversations with a purpose*” (Burgess, 1984, p. 102) in that they tend to be informal and loosely structured but have particular themes to be covered (Mason, 2002). The term ‘qualitative interviewing’ is often used in reference to interviews that are semi-structured or unstructured/open ended (Mason, 1996). Semi-structured interviews can often be identified by the presence of an interview schedule designed to guide the interviewer and direct the topics of discussion (Smith & Osborn, 2008). This is in contrast with a structured interview where interviewers stick exactly to an interview schedule (or survey/questionnaire), asking only pre-established questions and often with pre-established options for response (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

In structured interviewing, Fontana and Frey (2000) argued that “*there is generally little room for variation in responses*” (p. 649) except in the circumstances where researchers include open²⁰ questions. Smith and Osborn (2008) pointed out that a structured interview holds the same rationale as that of the psychological experiment. This was something that I noted when using the survey tool to collect data for the Defra project. Survey respondents were discussing and negotiating their answers to questions yet much of this discussion could not be captured by the survey given its focus on measuring response with pre-established options. I became increasingly aware of the difficulties some participants had in condensing their experience in a rating of annoyance on a Likert or numerical scale. Furthermore, the survey was missing how people come to live alongside railways, the choice and agency involved in such decisions and how what people say about where they live can have implications for their identities of place. These experiences shaped the aims of the current project and the move towards a social constructionist discursive psychological approach.

²⁰ Open questions invite the participant to give a more lengthy contextualised answer in comparison to a closed question which generate yes/no answers (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

The epistemological and ontological positions developed for this research meant that structured interviewing was unsuitable for a variety of reasons. Firstly, drawing upon discussions of the previous chapter, issues of epistemology, methodology and method intertwine (Bernard, 2000). Adopting Carter and Little's (2007) position that methods are "*research action*" (p. 1317), the methodological approach developed should influence and justify the method used and the knowledge produced. As social constructionism and discursive psychology take language as the site at which our realities are constructed discursively in social practice (Potter & Hepburn, 2008), a method that generates dialogue as data was therefore required. In a structured interview the tendency is to measure and restrict response, which would not have facilitated a contextual understanding of how people make sense of living alongside railways.

Secondly, another reason to reject the structured interview in favour of a semi-structured interview related to my desire to avoid generating data underpinned by a predetermined annoyance framework such as the exposure-response research outlined in Chapter Two. This is the 'standardized' (Condie & Brown, 2009) approach that the Defra project adopted (see Condie et al., 2011). Sullivan (2002) articulated that "*a common story of the professional development of most qualitative researchers...goes something like this: dissatisfaction with quantitative or experimental methods has led many of us to adopt alternative, qualitative methods and, perhaps, to wonder how our own perspective and experiences enter into, transform or change the issue or area being investigated (as well as ourselves)*" (p. 3). In the progression through this research, I can identify with the common story that Sullivan (2002) outlined.

Working on the Defra project has influenced the direction of this research towards qualitative interviewing. Moreover, this thesis would perhaps not have been possible, nor would it exist as it does now, without my involvement and experiences of the Defra project. In the process of developing the social survey

questionnaire and considering how to measure 'human response', I came to realise that the annoyance approach offers one way, but not the only way, of knowing about and understanding environmental conditions in residential environments. Although structured interviewing (i.e. social survey questionnaires) can provide valuable insight, to generate new knowledge and further understanding it is important to explore how people negotiate environmental conditions in talk around 'place' and 'identity'. Semi-structured interviews can facilitate a further understanding and highlight the complexities of an issue or topic (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

A central purpose of social constructionist work is to challenge common sense assumptions and the 'status quo' (Burr, 2003). I have previously argued that research embedded within the annoyance framework makes particular assumptions that the environmental conditions from physical features such as railways are 'essentially' annoying, unwanted and 'disruptive'. Annoyance research takes an ontology "*which stands outside the sphere of cultural influence and historical change*" (Fuss, 1989, p. 4). Thus, questioning the status of the knowledge generated from this approach by carrying out social constructionist research enables a consideration of environmental conditions as relative to time and place. Because this research is underpinned by a less essentialist stance; that environmental conditions can be portrayed in different ways by different people, qualitative interviewing can generate data that enables the researcher to challenge the 'status quo' and go beyond pre-defined categories. However, it is important to note that to talk of essentialism is to posit that it has an essence (Fuss, 1989). Thus, I recognise that the ways in which I write about and present this research is constrained by linguistic essentialism (Fuss, 1989) and that how I asked about the places participants lived shaped the data.

To conclude, this research utilised the semi-structured interview, where an interview schedule (see Appendix 2) containing questions with which to be guided, rather than dictated, was devised (Smith & Osborn 2008). Qualitative

interviews may hold a central place in qualitative psychology, yet a number of discursive psychologists have pointed out limitations of the use of interviewing (e.g. Potter, 2012; Potter & Hepburn, 2005). Potter and Hepburn (2005) argued that interviews should not be the 'default' tool for qualitative researchers and call for discursive research to examine naturally occurring data and text. However, for practical reasons, interviews are often necessary to generate data that enable the research aims to be met. Interviews can be understood as 'natural' instances of interaction based upon the premise that all talk is situated (Burr, 2003) and 'un-natural' as the researcher coordinates the interaction (Potter & Hepburn, 2005).

5.5. 'Unnatural' data?

Discursive psychologists generally prefer to analyse naturally occurring talk and text in order to examine discourse in everyday life (Potter, 2012; Willig, 2001). Naturally occurring talk can be described as that which is produced independently of the researcher (Potter, 1997) such as recorded conversations from telephone helplines (Stokoe & Hepburn, 2005), articles from newspapers (Wallwork & Dixon, 2004), policy documents (Bröer, 2008) and user-generated content from social networking sites (Goodings et al., 2007). Obtaining this kind of naturally occurring talk for the current research aims and study context (i.e. living alongside railways) was difficult for various practical reasons. Considering the aim to understand how people negotiate environmental conditions in the context of living alongside railways, 'naturally occurring' dialogue around such lived experiences was hard to find. When exploring the type of data to analyse in this research, there were a few discussions in online forums about buying properties near infrastructure that create particular environmental conditions such as noise, but this data could not enable an in-depth understanding of how participants' relationships with the places they live impact upon their talk around environmental conditions.

The lack of naturally occurring data influenced the choice to carry out qualitative interviews to generate the required data for analysis (also see Section 5.3-

Qualitative Interviews). Circumstances such as those described above often lead researchers towards the conventional method of qualitative interviews; carried out for the specific purpose of research (Taylor, 2001). I approach the interview situation with the understanding that *“the individual interview has become a common place feature of everyday life”* (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003, p. 22). Today’s society has been described as an ‘interview society’ (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997; Fontana & Frey, 2000) in that we are familiar with the format of being asked questions by people (including researchers) who seek information.

Additionally, Taylor (2009) argued that all contexts within everyday life require the person to construct new accounts for new situations and social interactions. I draw upon the discursive psychological standpoint that all talk is situated and *“no talk or other practice is ‘natural’ in the sense of being unmediated by the context of the occasion in which it is generated”* (Griffin, 2007, p. 428). Similarly, when people talk in a research interview, I take the position that what they say represents *“a situated version of previous tellings”* (Taylor & Littleton, 2006, p. 25). In order to be understood, both researchers and participants draw upon shared social and cultural resources from everyday conversations (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). This stance relates to what Madill (2011) refers to as the *“middle ground”* (p. 334) in reference to the contemporary debates around the use of interviews as qualitative and discursive research.

Although interviews can be positioned as ‘unnatural’ (Potter & Hepburn, 2005), when approached and analysed reflexively (i.e. taking into account my role as interviewer and the local context within which the data was generated), qualitative interviews can provide data, which is appropriate and suitable to address the current research aims. Importantly, it is recognised that interviews are not neutral tools with which to collect data (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Qualitative interviews involve *“active interactions”* where the data generated is *“negotiated”* and *“contextually based”* (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 646) between two or more people – the researcher and the researched. However, ‘social science agendas’ (Potter & Hepburn, 2005; Potter, 2012) are inevitably present

which shape the interview given the general themes that require discussion. The following section outlines the development of the interview schedule, the pilot study for this research, the importance of the questions asked and how they might have shaped the generation of data.

5.6. Pilot Study: Developing an Interview Schedule

In order to guide the interview process, an interview schedule was created based on good practice for qualitative interviewing (e.g. Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Mason, 2002) and the findings of a pilot study where four participants living alongside railways were interviewed. Although carrying out a pilot study furthered my understanding of how participants negotiated the environmental conditions associated with railways within their talk, it resulted in only minor changes (e.g. slight rephrasing of key questions, suitable prompts) to the interview schedule devised for this research. Thus the data collected during piloting was included in the final dataset (see 5.10: Introducing the Participants). The final version of the interview schedule can be found in Appendix 2.

The initial processes of developing an interview schedule meant that I began reflexively engaging with the topic of inquiry and my representations of it before interviewing participants. In developing the themes for discussion, deciding how to ask about environmental conditions beyond the negative framework of annoyance was challenging. This was largely due to being previously deeply immersed in the Defra project working within a quantitative framework. Moreover my work on this thesis and working on the Defra project overlapped, there was a sense of two different approaches fighting against one another.

The interview schedule developed was strongly influenced by techniques from qualitative approaches that aim to encourage participants to talk openly and talk more than the interviewer. The idea was to encourage participants to provide a storied account (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Subsequently many of the questions I asked began with *“can you tell me about how”* to invite a storied account. The interview schedule had a temporal structure in that there was a

beginning e.g. *“Can you tell me about how you came to live here?”*, a middle, and an imagined end e.g. *“Can you tell me about where you will live in the future?”*. This served to contextualise participants’ experiences of living where they do and avoid overly focusing on railways. Furthermore, adopting techniques such as the “can you” question aimed to avoid treating participants stories as *“irrelevancies or diversions”* (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 141).

One of the criticisms levelled at qualitative interviews is that they ‘flood’ the interaction with *“social science agendas”* (Potter, 2012, p. 579; Potter & Hepburn, 2005, p. 13). In the piloting stage of this research, aspects of my interviewing technique could perhaps reflect Potter (2012) and Potter and Hepburn’s (2005) argument. As I became more experienced in interviewing participants for this research, conversations moved much more towards enabling participants to talk about what mattered to them with regards to place and disruption and not what was on the interview schedule. The interview schedule was used as a guide rather than something to be adhered to at all times. As data generation progressed, the questions I asked were shaped more by what the interviewee wanted to talk about and what was important to them. The benefits of this were that participants gave more of their versions of ‘place’ and ‘identity’ than mine. Although I encouraged participants to talk more generally about ‘place’, I did ask them specific questions about the environmental conditions that they experience due to living alongside railways in order to address the research aims. This was often in the ‘middle’ of the interview. In the effort to contextualise these discussions, I also enquired about other environmental conditions and physical characteristics of ‘place’ too.

5.7. Ethical Considerations

In the aim to *“generate knowledge that can be trusted and valued by the researcher and others”* (Potter, 2006, p. 207), ethical considerations drew upon principles and good practice from the British Psychological Society’s ‘Code of Ethics and Conduct’ (BPS, 2009) and the Social Research Association’s

‘Statement of Ethical Practice’ (BSA, 2002). Ethical approval was also obtained from the University of Salford’s Research Governance and Ethics Committee.

When inviting participants to take part in the research, I contacted people via the telephone. Once the research had been introduced and they had stated an interest in taking part, I arranged a suitable time, preferably at their home, for an interview to take place. As I would be going into people’s homes, issues around researcher safety and lone working emerged. Subsequently a risk assessment was also carried out and included in the ethics proposal approved by the University’s panel.

Upon arriving at participants’ homes, I provided an information sheet about the study (see Appendix 3) and gave them time to read the information thoroughly and ask questions. The information sheet contained details about the purpose of the research, what taking part involved, and their right to withdraw from research participation at any time (BPS, 2009). In relation to confidentiality, participants were also informed that all information collected from them would be kept secure and their names and addresses would be removed to maximise the anonymity of their involvement. Participants’ personal information such as their name, address and contact number were stored on the Defra project’s secure shared university drive. In the following section which introduces the participants who took part in this research, all names and locations have been changed to maximise anonymity. In this research, I have identified that the participants lived in properties near the West Coast Main Line, but I have not identified their specific locations.

In attempts to ensure informed consent, participants were required to sign a consent form (see Appendix 4). The consent form related back to the information sheet, asking participants to confirm they had been given the opportunity to ask questions about the research. The consent form reiterated the right to withdraw from the research at any time. Permission was also sought to tape record interviews and use participants’ actual words during the interviews in presentations and publications from this study via the consent

form. Within interviews, there were two copies of the information sheet and consent form so that participants could keep a copy should they wish to read over the information again or contact me in the future.

In the case of an interview being carried out over the phone, where possible, the information sheet and consent forms were posted to participants' addresses. Where this was not possible, I read the information sheet and consent forms to participants before the interview commenced.

5.8. The Sample

The participants who took part in this research were recruited from the Defra project's railway database of 931 respondents. Prior to being interviewed for this research, participants had previously completed a social survey questionnaire that measured 'human response' in terms of annoyance. Some of the participants also had measurements of vibration taken within their properties. Only participants who had agreed to be contacted for the purposes of future research were contacted and invited to take part in this research. A previous qualitative study by Pedersen et al. (2007) also used this method of participant recruitment in grounded theory research of living in the vicinity of wind turbines.

Although there is no way of knowing the full extent of how these experiences impacted upon the interviews, it is possible that participating in the Defra project could have led participants to view my research as problematizing where they live due to the presence of railways. I aimed to move beyond this in the information sheet provided to participants outlining the focus of this research (see Ethical Considerations and Appendix 3). I also aimed to address this within the development of the interview schedule, which moved the focus away from railways and vibration and noise initially, to ask questions concerned more with residential histories.

I carried out ten qualitative interviews with twelve participants living alongside railways. The participants lived in various locales within the North West region

of England. In two interviews, the participants' partners also took part in the interview. In another, the participants' partner contributed to discussions while passing through the room we were in. Subsequently the analysis also includes their talk. All of the participants lived next to or near the West Coast Main Line (WCML). The line runs from London (Euston) to the major UK cities of Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, and Glasgow, making it one of Europe's busiest mixed railway routes carrying both passenger and freight traffic (Butcher, 2010). Eight of the participants lived next to or near overground sections, and two participants lived above an underground section of the WCML.

All of the participants were white British, between the ages of 23 and 69 years of age. Four of the residents live in socially rented accommodation, and six participants were home owners either owning their property outright or with a mortgage. None of the participants interviewed had formally complained about the railway to the relevant authorities.

The sampling methodology is mixed in terms of being a combination of opportunity and purposive sampling. Only participants that stated they could feel or hear vibration and noise from railways in the Defra social survey were invited to take part in this research. Initially, the purposive sampling adopted also aimed to recruit participants across the annoyance scale i.e. from giving ratings of 'not at all annoyed' to being 'extremely annoyed' by vibration and noise from railways. On reflection, I consider this approach to recruiting participants as an example of the difficulties I had as a researcher in moving away from the annoyance framework and methodological underpinnings of the Defra project. Initially I approached the annoyance ratings given as measuring something 'real' and important to this research. Also, underlying this approach could be the attempt to generate a representative sample, tapping into more traditional evaluation criteria for research such as generalizability. As I became more comfortable and gained a deeper understanding of social constructionism, and 'identity' and 'place' as dialogical, I realised that this sampling strategy was discordant with my theoretical and methodological positions. Such issues

around sampling are perhaps another example of the 'uncomfortable reflexivity' that Pillow (2003) calls for within research.

The purposive sampling strategy subsequently changed during the data generation process. Rather than sampling in relation to the annoyance ratings given by participants, I turned towards tenure type to identify participants to interview. In the first few interviews I carried out, choice and control over where to live emerged as important in determining how people came to live alongside railways. The initial interviews with Michaela and Allen and Cheryl (see Section 5.10 below) influenced the direction towards tenure type as a sampling strategy. Tenure appeared to relate to how participants constructed their residential histories of coming to live where they do, and as such, I decided that this was a more appropriate sampling method for this research in comparison to the initial purposive sampling strategy of annoyance ratings.

I tried to interview participants across the different tenure types of socially rented, private rented and owner-occupation. However, recruiting participants from private rented accommodation was difficult as participants belonging to this tenure group were fewer in number. This is perhaps due to those living in private rented accommodation being more transient, living in properties for shorter periods of time in comparison to those living in socially rented accommodation or who own their properties. Furthermore, when I called participants who stated their tenure type as private rented, many contact details were no longer valid.

Once further interviews had been carried out, I also began to question tenure type as a suitable strategy for selecting who to interview. This was because many of the ways in which participants constructed their experiences of environmental conditions overlapped. As my understanding of the research developed conceptually, the way participants talked about environmental conditions was less to do with particular demographics such as tenure and more to do with the ways in which identities are negotiated with regards to

'place'. Ultimately, the sampling strategy became to interview people who lived alongside railways, specifically the NWCL.

From the database of 931 residents living near railways, 88.9% of respondents in the Defra study agreed that they could be contacted again for further research purposes (see Condie & Steele, 2011). In total, thirty-six people were approached to take part in this research. Those who declined the invitation to take part gave a number of reasons including lack of time and availability, and not being interested in the research topic. One person stated that there was nothing more they could say about living alongside railways. Those approached to take part in this research were sampled through the methodologies outlined above (e.g. annoyance ratings, tenure type) and also due to their location being within a commutable distance.

All participants were invited to take part in this research at least two months are participating in the Defra project. A timeline of the data collection period is included in Table 1. below.

Table 1. A timeline of the data collection period

Time	Activity
Dec 2009	Interim Assessment ²¹ Permission to proceed to pilot study and data collection
Feb 2010 - Mar 2010	Pilot Study Four interviews with Michaela, Allen and Cheryl, Donna, and Roxanne (see 5.10 for detailed information about participants)
Apr 2010	Pilot Study Report and minor amendments to interview schedule
May 2010 – Nov 2010	Further data collection Six interviews with Jim, Tim and Connor, Margaret, Catherine and Kerry (see 5.10 for detailed information about participants)
Jan 2011	Internal Evaluation ²² Permission to proceed to the write up stage of the PhD.

5.9 Data Saturation

Within qualitative research, Baker and Edwards (2012) highlighted that ‘how many interviews are enough’ is one of the most asked questions by researchers. In asking fourteen social scientists with expertise in qualitative methods, the answers were mostly “*it depends*” on the epistemological, methodological and practical issues when carrying out research (Baker & Edwards, 2012, p. 6). As Back (in Baker & Edwards, 2012) argued, “*interview data provides our basic raw material but how much we need depends on what we want to make with it*” (p. 12). Initially I envisaged interviewing fifteen participants based on previous research which found data saturation occurred around the twelfth interview (Guest et al., 2006). Despite individual life histories and residing in different places, participants drew upon many of the same discourses in their accounts of living alongside railways. Subsequently, when

²¹ At the University of Salford, the Interim Assessment is the first formal assessment within the MPhil/PhD programmes where a candidates’ work is examined by internal and independent examiners who state whether the candidate can progress.

²² At the University of Salford, the Internal Evaluation is the second formal assessment within the MPhil/PhD programmes where a candidates’ work is examined by internal and independent examiners who state whether the candidate can progress.

generating data, I stopped interviewing when what participants were saying became repetitive and when I had enough data with which to address the research aims. This occurred on the tenth interview.

5.10 Introducing the Participants

This section introduces the participants who took part in this study. The demographic information included below (see Table 2) was collected via the Defra social survey questionnaire. I have included the vibration and noise annoyance ratings participants reported in the Defra survey given that the initial sampling approach I adopted focused on annoyance. The type of tenure is also included given the move towards tenure type in purposive sampling. To maintain the right to anonymity and confidentiality, participants have been given pseudonyms.

Table 2: Demographic information relating to participants in this study from the Defra project social survey questionnaire

Participant	Gender	Age	Tenure	Type of railway	Annoyance rating railway vibration	Annoyance rating railway noise
Michaela	Female	23	Socially rented	Under-ground	Extremely annoyed	Slightly annoyed
Allen (and Cheryl)	Male	40	Home owner	Under-ground	Moderately annoyed	Not at all
Donna	Female	42	Home owner	Over-ground	Very annoyed	Not at all
Roxanne	Female	43	Socially rented	Over-ground	Very annoyed	Slightly annoyed
Jim	Male	61	Socially rented	Over-ground	Slightly annoyed	Slightly annoyed
William	Male	54	Socially rented	Over-ground	Slightly annoyed	Slightly annoyed
Tim (and Connor)	Male	56	Home owner	Over-ground	Moderately annoyed	Do not hear noise
Margaret	Female	69	Home owner	Over-ground	Slightly annoyed	Slightly annoyed
Catherine	Female	26	Home owner	Over-ground	Moderately annoyed	Slightly annoyed
Kerry	Female	29	Home owner	Over-ground	Very annoyed	Extremely annoyed

Most participants lived alongside overground sections of the NWCL however two participants (Michaela and Allen) lived near underground sections of the

NWCL. In two of the interviews, participants' partners also took part, Allen's partner Cheryl, and Tim's partner Connor. Most of the participants were not planning to move from where they lived in the near future with the exception of Donna who required a more accessible property due to her husband's recent disability. Additionally, Tim (and Connor) did talk about the possibility of emigrating either full time or part time upon retirement.

Given my approach that all talk is situated, it is important to consider the implications of carrying out interviews via different mediums – face to face or over the phone. I interviewed participants mostly within their own homes. However for three interviews (Donna, Margaret, Jim), I conducted telephone interviews for a variety of reasons such as participant preference, one occasion when my car broke down, and another time when concerns around researcher safety arose. Irvine et al. (2010) note that *“traditionally, methodological text books have advised us that the telephone mode is not well suited to the task of qualitative interviewing. In particular, the lack of face-to-face contact is said to restrict the development of rapport and a ‘natural’ encounter – elements that are often considered to be important for generating good qualitative data”* (p. 2). In their research, Irvine et al. (2010) compared five face-to-face interviews with six telephone interviews finding a number of differences in the style of interaction between the interviewer and the participants. They found that face-to-face interviews were longer than telephone interviews, and that during the interview, participants spoke more, and at greater length, in the face-to-face interactions than in the telephone interviews. However the interviewer's questions were more likely to be unfinished (i.e. not grammatically complete) and the interviewer was more likely to help participants complete their sentences in face-to-face interviews as opposed to telephone interviews. Subsequently the differences between carrying out interviews face to face or over the telephone are recognised, but as Irvine et al. (2010) noted, neither mode have been found increase the likelihood of misinterpretation.

Having introduced the sample, I now reflect upon researcher and participant identities in order to locate myself in this research and the interview context.

5.11 Reflecting on Identities

“A participant may feel ill at ease with an interviewer who appears older, younger, more confident, or richer, or because of numerous differences...many of which may be conveyed in a first impression by the interviewer’s appearance or accent” (Taylor, 2001, p. 17).

As Taylor (2001) noted above, there are many and various, obvious and subtle, similarities and differences between the researcher and participants that can impact upon data generation. Questions such as how does my gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, appearance and accent impact upon the interview require attention (Taylor, 2001). Furthermore considering that where a person lives can be an indicator of social position (Malpass & Murie, 1994) and ‘place’ as central to ‘identity’ (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000), other aspects such as where I am from, where I live, and what I do also require reflection. After introducing the participants, how my personal histories, background and experiences of ‘place’ and ‘disruption’ may have impacted the interview context and the narrating of the research story (Reissman, 2008) are considered. In doing so, the partiality of all knowledge is highlighted (Finlay, 2002b) in that *“seeing always involves seeing from somewhere”* (Henwood, 2008, p. 49).

One of the ways in which qualitative researchers have considered their identities within their research is to examine their status as an insider or outsider in relation to their research participants (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). A qualitative researcher may explore what they have in common with research participants to examine their status as ‘insider’ (Taylor, 2001). Adler and Adler (1987) stated an insider status can provide legitimacy for the researcher, the advantage being *“more rapid and more complete acceptance”* by participants, and in turn, more openness between the researcher and the researched (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 58). Similarly, an ‘outsider’ status has also been considered advantageous as when ‘outside’ the research *“a more honest acknowledgement of the power differences between them [researcher and*

participant]” may emerge (Taylor, 2001, p. 17).

Although useful as a starting point for reflexive practice, arguments against dichotomous positioning can be applied to the insider/outsider concept (Hammersley, 1992). To give an example, as I lived near a railway when the interviews were carried out, this could enable me to gain ‘insider’ status as researcher. However, given the sampling strategy of the Defra project, other potential sources of ‘disruption’ such as busy roads, airports, and industrial premises were controlled for which meant that participants mostly lived in suburban areas. Where I lived could be characterised as urban, mixed use, and on the outskirts of the city centre. There was a busy road in front of the property and industrial premises and commercial activities close by. There was a commonality in living alongside railways but the places were in physical contrast with one another thus providing grounds for ‘outsider’ status.

In relation to ‘place’, I grew up in a suburb of Huddersfield in West Yorkshire, and lived in the same property on a council estate from most of my childhood and early adulthood. Although my parents owned their ex-council house with a mortgage, I experienced living on the council estate both as stigma and as pride. To give an example, I remember inviting a new friend to my house and being embarrassed of where it was and its relative small size in comparison to where she lived. Yet at the same time, I was proud of where I was from and felt a sense of community on the cul-de-sac where I lived. The cul-de-sac contained sixteen houses and the tenure type was mixed between owner-occupation (often through the right-to-buy scheme) and socially rented accommodation. It was common knowledge and sometimes a topic of conversation as to who owned their house and who did not. Tenure was visible in the work (or lack of work) and alterations (e.g. colour of paint, porches) carried out to the exterior of the properties. Although my residential history is more incoherent and detailed than the account here, I outline the above as a way to demonstrate how attending to aspects of my background permeate my interpretations of data.

In relation to social housing, one research 'narrative' I constructed was not 'persuasive' and 'coherent' (Reissman, 2008) enough for the reader i.e. my supervisors. Coherence has been developed as a criterion suitable to evaluate qualitative research, referring to how well the "*final intertextual fits together both internally and with other studies*" (Sullivan, 2012, p. 148). For the participants in social housing, I initially interpreted their talk as defensive, as serving to manage potentially stigmatised identities due to their housing status. Reflexivity highlighted the lens' through which I was making these interpretations and in turn, my attention turned towards reading the data in different ways for different purposes. Such reflexivity worked to enhance the coherence of the research analysis and account for myself in the interpretation. Reflexivity was continuous but some of the most significant insights into how I impacted upon the research were illuminated in supervisory sessions. Supervisory sessions provided the opportunity to engage in researcher subjectivity and 'outing' (Finlay, 2002a) by providing a reflective space to discuss how I impacted upon the research. Elliott et al. (2012) comment that supervision can enable the participants stories and versions of events to "*be seen more objectively, not predominantly through the lens of the researcher's feelings and responses*" (p. 21).

I take the position that research identities are "*always necessarily limited in their coherence and completeness*" given that identities are multiple, fluctuating and dialogic (Butler, 2005, cited in Elliott et al., 2012, p. 2). In line with the theoretical approach developed on 'identity', multiple researcher identities are performed within the context of an interview (Lavis, 2010). Positions of insiderness and outsiderhood can shift and move within the interviews context (Ahmed, 2010). Subsequently, a way to account for 'I' in this research is to examine how participants' talk constructed me within the interview, given that 'I' is positioned by 'other' (Hermans, 2004). Furthermore is to include discussions of my background here and in the coming analysis chapters so the reader is better placed to evaluate the quality of the research transparency. Evaluating the research within its situated context of social constructionism, the reader of

this research receives “*one articulation told from the point of view that seeks to persuade others to see the events in a similar way*” (Riessman, 2008, p. 187).

A final issue that requires attention here regards the decisions I made to disclose information about myself to participants and how this may have shaped research interviews. Dickson-Swift et al. (2007) noted that being reciprocal can strengthen the researcher-participant relationship by lessening the hierarchical nature of research. I was asking people to share their residential histories and experiences of where they live with me. Therefore it seemed appropriate to share my residential histories when asked about them.

5.12 The ‘Trouble’ with Reflexivity

As Finlay (2002b) noted, reflection and reflexive analysis should ideally start from the beginning of the research process at the conception of the project. She argues that the researcher should reflect on the topic of inquiry and their relationship to that topic from the moment the idea for the research arose. However, in practice, being reflexive from the beginning is perhaps difficult given that the methodological choices which determine reflexive practice may come later in the research process. Furthermore, due to my educational background, a BSc (Hons) in Psychology, I was deeply entrenched in the ‘mainstream’ and ‘traditional’ psychological approaches that promote the idea of a researcher as objective and value-free (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992). As such, I can relate to Burman’s (1997) observation about the difficulties psychology students can face when asked to be reflexive:

“For psychology students, the expectation of writing reflexively about the qualitative studies that they have conducted constitutes a transgression of the scientized code of detached, depersonalized, supposedly objective narrative style that characterizes the pseudoscientific model of their training. In my experience such expectations usually generate some incredulity, and occasionally resistance from too well absorbed disciplinary codes; however, they are usually experienced as relief, and even as emancipatory.” (p. 796).

Reflexivity has subsequently not come easily or naturally given my disciplinary background. That is not to say that social constructionist approaches and qualitative research within psychology were not covered within my training, but that the social constructionist worldviews also seemed to run counter to my “*everyday understandings of experience*” (Burr, 2003, p. 28). Beginning my journey with the topic of vibration within an annoyance framework, I understand Burman’s (1997) account of the ‘relief’ experienced from engaging with social constructionism and reflexivity. As Mason (2002) noted, “if *they [researchers] make sure that their research question is the expression of a real and living doubt – by studying their own motives and the scientific literature – their search will be supported by a passionate wish to acquire answers both satisfying to them and to the scientific community*” (p.49).

5.13 Recording and Transcribing the Data

All of the interviews were audio recorded on a Dictophone and transcribed into Microsoft Word for qualitative analysis. I carried out the interviews and also transcribed the data. Transcription from audio to text is necessary for the purposes of analysis and dissemination (Wiggins & Potter, 2008). Audio recording, rather than note taking, was considered more appropriate in capturing what was said in the interviews more accurately. Although it is acknowledged that the transformation of an interview to textual format will not fully capture all that takes place in an interview context (Kvale, 1996). McLellan et al. (2003) identify this process as the “*first data reduction step*” a researcher takes (p. 66). As such the approach to transforming the audio recording to text needs to be “*settled on*” by the researcher (McLellan et al., 2003).

The level of detail to include in a transcript has been described as a “*thorny*” issue Potter & Wetherell (1987, p. 166). According to Willig (2001), discourse analysts often adopt a reduced adaptation of conversation analysis transcription

rather than a full version which is labour intensive. Initially I adopted this approach and transcribed in a style that included some conversational analytical features such as pauses, fillers (e.g. erm, hmm, right, ok), and interruptions in the hope to assist in the analysis of the data.

After analysing the data for a few months, the conversational features were not contributing to the data analysis nor relating to the research aims. Furthermore, these features seemed to interfere with the reading of the text (Potter & Wetherell, 1997). As Veen and Gremmen (2011) note *“the depth of the analysis and the detail of the transcriptions depend very much on the scope and purposes of the research, and can be adapted to be more practical”* (p. 822). Subsequently, the resulting transcription style developed in this research is more reflective of those found in narrative and biographical research (Mason, 2004). A particular aspect that has been implemented from the biographical style of transcription was the use of participant aliases rather than participant numbers (see excerpt 1 and 2 for example) in order to keep and convey a ‘personal’ and ‘human’ element to the transcripts.

Excerpt 1: An example of narrative transcription style (from Mason, 2004)

Carole: She was very isolated and I just think she’d have died of loneliness really and I just found it, you know, unbearable. And it was partly my husband sort of saying, well we’ll end up taking care of her eventually, she ought to come here and get used to living here and make her own network of friends while she can. And so, you know, we persuaded her to come and live with us. She needed convincing, you know, that we wanted her.

Interviewer: When you were planning for her to come did you talk it over with the children?

Carole: Oh yes. They were, they felt very strongly, they were upset at her being lonely. (Carole Grant, aged 46, widowed).

Excerpt 2: Transcription style developed for this research

Jenna: so you've been here six years and have you always been in, do you mind me asking, are you in socially rented

William: this is, it is yeah, but not always no, I had a house in the city, sold that twenty years ago and moved around a bit, I was working in F [current place] so I, in fact I was working for the landlord at the time, it used to be council, I was managing one of the, I managed this estate for a time, I was normally at another one further up the road and there was a small bedsit came empty in one of the multi-storey blocks, and they were hard to let so I got that I mean being an employee I had to go to case conference and everything just so everything was above board and kosher you know and that was it, and when some neighbours died a few years later, I got moved into a bigger flat because by that time it was fairly clear that the flats were going to have to be emptied for major work to be carried out so that was it

Excerpt 2 highlights the key features of the transcription style that was adopted consistently. Some researchers have suggested general guidelines for transcription protocols, some of which were applicable to this approach (e.g. McLellan et al., 2003; Mergenthaler & Stinson, 1992). For example, Mergenthaler and Stinson (1992) recommend keeping the use of punctuation as close as possible to the speech presentation which is consistent with what is usual in written text. Rather than transcribe as full sentences with full stops and capitals, I have used commas to reflect the breaks in spoken conversation, which is still readable in written form. They also recommend keeping the transcript as a verbatim account where the text is not prematurely reduced. I have conformed to this transcription rule by not transforming the speech into full sentences.

In conclusion, there is no widely accepted approach to transcription given the variety of qualitative approaches that make use of conversations as data. Subsequently, I have aimed to transcribe in a way that is practical and accessible in written form to the reader.

5.14 Analysing the Data with Microsoft Word

One of the first decisions made with regards to analysis was whether to use computer software to analyse the data or whether to carry out the analysis by hand. My initial decision was to use the qualitative analysis software NVivo 8 due to ethical purposes (i.e. password protected storage of data) and a personal preference to work electronically. I attended a two-day training course in how to use NVivo 8 in order to be able to successfully analyse my data using the software. However, in the early stages of analysis the software seemed to decontextualise the data. Reducing the data into smaller parts meant that the meaning and wider context of what was said was diluted and removed from the original context. Moreover the exchanges leading up to what was said were also separated in the process of coding (i.e. when creating 'nodes' in NVivo 8). From this experience of analysing qualitative data using NVivo 8, I argue that the architecture of the software is tailored more towards a thematic analysis where the focus is on what is said (i.e. content) rather than a discursive approach concerned with identifying what is the language doing (i.e. discourse).

Rather than the alternative of analysing the data by hand, I decided to use Microsoft Word given that transcription had already been carried out in this programme and so too would the writing up of this thesis. It was a practical solution to use a general purpose software tool that has been argued to simplify the analysis of qualitative data (La Pelle, 2004). Furthermore, for transparency purposes, analysing in Microsoft Word meant that sharing the data analysis with supervisors was easier, so too was working on the analysis across different places (i.e. home and work). Drawing upon guidance from Hahn (2008), I started with his recommendation to transform the raw unformatted text into a formatted and organised coding document. I placed the data into a coding document with three columns using the 'table' function. In the first column, line numbers were attributed to the transcripts for ease of reference. The second

column was where coding would take place. The third column contained the raw data from the interview transcripts.

Rather than sticking rigidly to the systems of analysis proposed by Hahn (2008) and La Pelle (2004), I created an analysis system that worked for me and for the approach to analysis. I used the track changes comment function for memos and discursive strategies evident within the participants' talk. The table of authorities function was used to collate examples from the data that supported the interpretative repertoires identified. Subject positions and ideological dilemmas were identified by the use of colour and the interpretations made were noted in the coding column.

5.15 Analysing Discourse

Having outlined the tools used to analyse the data, this section builds on the analytical approach to the data outlined at the end of Chapter Four. Chapter Four introduced the bricolaged approach to discursive psychology that I have developed, where data was examined for discursive strategies, lived ideologies and ideological dilemmas, and positioning.

There are no universally agreed guidelines for discursive psychological analysis (Willig, 2008), nor would a previously developed guide be suitable for this research given the bricolaged approach. However, a number of methodological guides have been developed by discourse analysts (e.g. Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Willig, 2008), which have been drawn upon in the development of my approach to analysis. Rather than analysing data in a "*formulaic*" way (Wiggins & Potter, 2008) qualitative analysis works as a "*cyclical process, in which your ideas develop more conceptually over time*" (Gibson & Hugh-Jones, 2012, p. p. 145).

Discourse analysts engage with data through a 'performative' lens (Willig, 2008). All transcripts were read first without any coding and analysis taking

place to experience, “*as a reader*” (Willig, 2001, p. 94), what the text is doing, for example, performing, positioning, defending and justifying. I attempted to read for different purposes and continued to read the data in this goal-directed way throughout the entire analytical process. The repeated readings aimed to ensure that participants’ versions of events were represented accurately (Gough & McFadden, 2001) in the quest to ‘tell the truth’ through reflexive analysis (Gergen & Gergen, 2000). Given that I was often reading the text with purpose, I reflected upon and regularly questioned how the purpose for reading impacted upon the developing interpretations. For example, reading for talk that constructs identities of place could impact upon the analytical attention paid to other aspects of identity being constructed.

The data was coded systematically to develop the interpretations of what the talk was achieving, taking into account the methodological stance of language as social action (Burr, 2003) and as story telling device (Taylor, 2005). Specifically, I analysed the data for action, construction, and variability (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). I employed the analytical concepts of construction (how the account is constructed as factual) and function (what is the account designed to accomplish) to examine how participants conveyed their accounts as factual (Edward & Potter, 1992). Initially many codes were identified and included so as not to omit or disregard anything that could later become important; a recommendation from Potter and Wetherell (1987). With the coding document established in Microsoft Word, the process of coding was systematic and remained close to the raw text keeping talk situated within its wider context.

In developing the interpretative repertoires, I grouped instances of talk which evidenced the interpretative repertoire using the table of authorities function in Microsoft Word. I then read the data for talk that was variable (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) contradicting or contesting the repertoires identified. I considered how the interpretative repertoires worked as shared cultural resources to convey meaning and construct events (Burr, 2003) and considered their availability in other everyday conversations beyond the interview in order

to further develop my interpretations. Interpretation also turned to focus on how the interpretative repertoires were deployed by participants to construct and accomplish within their accounts. Identifying interpretative repertoires overlapped with the analyses of lived ideologies. Edley (2001) noted the concept of interpretative repertoires ties to the concept of ideology but is used to attribute greater agency towards the speaker by discursive psychologists. Whereas I interpreted interpretative repertoires as reoccurring patterns or the 'building blocks' of talk (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) that reoccurred across different accounts, lived ideologies often required a further level of interpretation. In other words, labelling the lived ideologies was often achieved by using my language and concepts borrowed from other discursive research rather than originating from the words spoken by participants.

Lived ideologies were also considered as attributing agency more towards societal structures, which constrain what can be said and by whom (Edley, 2001). As they can convey a cultures beliefs and values (Edley, 2001), I examined the data looking for cultural ideologies around place and disruption. I also drew upon Billig et al.'s (1988) notion of ideological dilemmas, and examined the talk for what it is achieving rhetorically (Edley, 2001). In readings of the data, I interrogated the text to examine whether living alongside railways can be interpreted as an ideological dilemma. This kind of reading also related to what Wetherell (1998) calls 'trouble', and in relation to identity, 'troubled' or 'untroubled' identities. Through exploring what is at 'stake' and the potential vested 'interests' of speakers in their accounts of place (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Whittle & Mueller, 2011), the ideological dilemmas were further developed.

From the dialogical approach to analysis from Sullivan (2012), the kind of analysis outlined above requires the researcher to interpret what is said as 'suspicion'. At times, I altered between reading the text as action orientated ('suspicion') to reading the text as 'truth' to find alternative meanings and expand upon the interpretations made (Sullivan. 2012). This was important in

terms of subjectivity and recognising that people are more than discourse and that discourse attributes meanings and subjectivities to lived experiences. I adopted Sullivan's (2012) recommendation to place emphasis on the potential benefit of the analysis for the reader and not be over concerned with the participants' intended meaning or purpose of what was said. In this way, talk may be contradictory and variable but this is part of the participants' negotiation and attempts to make sense of their experience. Additionally, talk was examined for positionality and how interpretative repertoires and lived ideologies enabled and constrained the subject positions participants took up within their account. Reading for who is implied by what was said enabled the interpretations of subject positions to be made (Edley, 2001).

Data analysis continued within the process of writing up of the findings. In writing, analysts can move towards the more conceptual level required for qualitative research findings given its cyclical process (Gibson & Hugh-Jones, 2012) and non-linear trajectory (Riley & King, 2012). In writing, I worked towards the goal of developing 'thick descriptions' of the data (Geertz, 1973). 'Thick description' is a widely used term within qualitative research that relates to higher conceptual level of analysis to which Gibson and Hugh-Jones (2012) referred. Although the definition of 'thick description' varies across different authors, it has often been understood in contrast to 'thin description', the latter being the undesired in qualitative analysis (Ponterotto, 2006). Subsequently, I adopt Wiggins and Potter (2008) recommendation to include lengthy analyses alongside the transcribed data, which can also contribute to the reader being able to make their own interpretations as to the coherence of the analysis.

In conclusion, I have attempted to outline the approach taken to data analysis and how this worked out in practice. Ultimately, *"qualitative analysis is a creative process, depending on the insights and conceptual capabilities of the analyst"* (Patton, 1999, p. 1190). By explicating the approach taken, I hope to situate the reader in a better position to understand how the interpretations made were formed and reformed.

5.16 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to recount how the research was carried out and explicate the research choices and decisions made throughout the process. By engaging in reflexive commentary which might at times meet Pillow's (2003) requirements for 'uncomfortable reflexivity', I aimed to provide an open and transparent account of how I carried out this research. Furthermore, who I am has shaped the inquiry and rather than write this thesis in a way that removes myself from the research, I have embraced the challenges and dilemmas of reflexive practice. Reflexive analysis also provided the opportunity to 'out' the complexities of generating data and the changes made to the sampling strategy that reflected the emerging theoretical and methodological approach developed. The following chapters focus on the findings of the discursive psychological analysis of the interview data generated from ten interviews with residents living alongside the WCML.

Chapter Six: The (In)Significance of Railways

6.1 Introduction

The following three chapters present the analysis of the data generated from ten qualitative interviews with residents living alongside the West Coast Main Line (WCML) railway in the North of England. This chapter explores how participants negotiated environmental conditions in their accounts of coming to live alongside railways. Interviews began with questions focused on how participants came to live where they do and such questioning evoked intricate and complex accounts of ‘place’ and ‘identity’. I explore how participants negotiated their agency within a plethora of structural constraints such as having a particular budget/price range and being allocated property by local authorities. I also consider how these structures enable participants to position themselves as agentic in relation to ‘place’. In doing so, I examine how railways were presented by participants within the wider contexts of finding somewhere to live.

6.2 Choosing Places

In coming to live alongside railways, some participants positioned themselves as choosing to live where they do. In this section, I question the postmodern notions of a “*reflexive agent*” who chooses, decides and shapes their ‘identity’ (Mason, 2004, p. 167). To do so, I include excerpts from my interview with Catherine²³ as she was someone who positioned herself as choosing ‘place’. Catherine lived with her partner Robert in a two-bedroomed terraced property in a suburb of a large city, which was close to an overground section of the West Coast Main Line (WCML). At the time of interview, Catherine was attending a local university where she was training to be a medical doctor and Robert was working as an accountant. Both Catherine and Robert had previously lived elsewhere in the UK for their undergraduate studies and had returned upon

²³ For further biographical information about participants, see Section 5.10.

finishing their degrees, first to live with their parents, and then to buy their first property together. In the excerpt below, I include my talk to contextualise what was said.

Excerpt 1

Jenna: So you moved away for uni and then sort of?

Catherine: Come back yeah quite happily, we, we really like it round here so we just stayed

Above, Catherine positions herself as having chosen to “*come back*” after university, which conveys her agency in relation to ‘place’. Perhaps implicit is the recognition that they could have lived elsewhere as returning was portrayed as something they “*quite happily*” did because they “*like it round here*”. However, Catherine negotiated her agency within the structural constraints of their price range which led to a compromise on ‘place’, living in a more affordable suburb. In the excerpt below, Catherine shifts positions between wanting to, and needing to live where they do, which enables her to locate herself in a less preferred ‘place’.

Excerpt 2

Catherine: Well we, Robert is from F [suburb] originally and I lived in A [suburb] prior to us moving in together

Jenna: Where’s that sorry?

Catherine: A it’s the other side of F out into the country, it’s not very far, it’s only about four miles from here and we wanted to stay in the area, Robert works in X [county nearby] and I’m obviously based in the centre of the city so it was quite central between the two of us, so we needed to stay within commutable distance for both, all our friends are round here because we’ve both grown up here so we pretty much said we need to stick to where we’ve been, the main reason we moved further out from F was price, we just couldn’t afford to move into F, it was too expensive

Both places that Catherine refers to (A and F in the excerpt) can be described as suburbs located close to the more ‘affordable’ suburb she currently lives in.

The three places are discussed as distinct from one another yet grouped together when she says they bought their property because they “*wanted to stay in the area*”. Her current place is the same and a different place simultaneously, where the boundaries of ‘place’ are in flux as Catherine negotiates her agency. She shifts positions from wanting to live in the area to needing to “*stick*” with the area where they were ‘born and bred’ (Taylor, 2009). Catherine presents a relational agency (Mason, 2004) in that her residence was attributed equally to Robert who is also ‘born and bred’ and needs to live somewhere within commuting distance to work. She constructs a sense of fairness in that they both have similar commutes to their work/study places, which reinforces their decision to live where they do. In returning to their ‘hometown’, I interpreted that Catherine was creating her own structures which enabled her to locate herself in ‘place’ and justify her return. After our interview, Catherine told me that she often thought that if they had decided to live in a different place, it could have been too much of a strain on their relationship.

As Catherine was a first time buyer, she seemed more able to state her preference for another place, the more affluent suburb nearby. Implicit within her talk was that getting on the ‘property ladder’ would enable them to eventually move to her preferred ‘place’. The positionality of being a first time buyer enabled the more affordable suburb to be presented as an acceptable and temporary residential decision. However, living alongside a “*council estate*” appeared to present ‘trouble’ (Wetherell, 1998) for Catherine’s ‘identity’ in relation to ‘place’.

Excerpt 3

Jenna: Ok so what first attracted you to this house?

Catherine: We’d been round, we’d sort of realised that we couldn’t afford F so much, we wanted to be on a main commuter link and not have to have a huge amount of travelling to the main routes if that makes sense, so I really like period properties which limited our, which limited our, sort of remit quite considerably really because a lot in the area are all council houses which you can get quite a lot of space for your money but I just, I just, if I’m going to spend money on a house I want to really enjoy living in the house that I’m going to be

in, I'd looked a quite a lot on this estate and not really liked them and there's a little, you can get a bit of trouble on the estate, not major but

Jenna: Is that, do you mean that one just over there?

Catherine: Yeah it's just, it's just, it's not even that far from us and we have no issue with them at all its just there's a lot of youths around there and they have had some anti-social problems but I really liked this one because it was tucked right down the back, there's no through traffic its really nice and quiet, the road is, is quite well established, there's been people who've lived here for fifty, sixty years and, I really like the period property, and there were very few that were on the market that were of the same sort of quality as this, the reason we got this one, because there was another one up the road that was on sale, for sale at the same time, on this exact, on here was because this one needed completely re-modernising, it needed so, loads of work and so was twenty-five thousand pounds cheaper than the other one and it just meant that it brought it into our price bracket, so it was a bit of a punt with this one because we put in a really low offer on it, and got it for about fifteen thousand pounds less than the asking price, and that was a reduced asking price, so it just, but it just sort of fell into place really, we'd looked at some in F [nearby suburb] but like I say they were so far out of our price range that it was just not even feasible

I draw upon Wetherell's (1998) notion of 'trouble' or 'troubled identities' to consider Catherine's residence near a council estate as challenged or "*inconsistent with other identities that are claimed*" (Taylor, 2005, p. 254). Living on a council estate or buying an ex-council property appears to carry 'stigma' (Goffman, 1963) in that there is "*a bit of trouble*", "*a lot of youths*", and "*anti-social behaviour*". However, Catherine negotiates a 'moral self' (May, 2008) in that she has "*no issue with them at all*" and "*you can get quite a lot of space for your money*" in buying an ex-council property. The "*period property*" was presented as important to her 'identity', and enables her to maintain the kind of status associated with the more affluent area that she would prefer to live in. In anticipation of the 'other' (Sullivan, 2012), the aesthetics of Catherine's "*period property*" provided a morally acceptable reason for not buying an ex-council property but residing near a council estate. The type of property arguably repairs the 'trouble' for her identity by positioning Catherine

as “*different to the people of that place*” (Taylor, 2005, p. 259). Catherine also portrayed price as a constraint yet it also works as agency in that her “*period property*” was purchased at a reduced price, which justifies the deviation from living in her preferred place.

In her account of coming to live where she does, the railway was mentioned briefly as a positive aspect in that it enabled Catherine and Robert to socialise in other places, including her preferred ‘place’.

Excerpt 4

Catherine: We’ve got a great, we can get into L [nearby city] if we want to out for some drinks or dinner or things, we can go to F [preferred suburb] or L [nearby city] really easily because the train runs us right there then neither of us have to drive

Later in the interview, when questioning focused on environmental conditions, the railway was presented as a concern within the decision making process of buying a property and also from a resale and investment point of view. Her positioning as constrained appears to enable her to present railways as a concern for ‘place’. Price also enables Catherine to present the railway as a concern by ‘diluting’ or ‘softening’ (Locke, 2008) her agency in relation to ‘place’.

Excerpt 5

Catherine: I was a bit concerned, well I’d found the house and I really liked it and then we, when we looked on the map we thought god that is really close, really really close to the railway, and Robert was very dubious about it at first but we simply could not afford the kind of house we wanted anywhere else, it, this, it was either this one or we completely went back to the drawing board on it, so I sort of put my reservations about that aside, we were concerned that maybe from a future resale point of view that other people would have the same reaction to us, I don’t want to live that close to the railway, and I still have that concern now because its only subsequently to living here that I realised it actually doesn’t bother me a huge amount

Her initial reaction of *“I don’t want to live that close to the railway”* arguably reflects the voices of ‘other’ (Sullivan, 2012) in terms of how people unfamiliar with living alongside railways might anticipate the railway as ‘disruptive’. Only after experiencing living there can she say that the railway is not a disruptive aspect of ‘place’ (*“it actually doesn’t bother me”*).

Although Catherine positioned herself as choosing to live where she does, she negotiated her agency in relation to the constraints on where she lives such as her budget for example. Other participants, particularly those buying their properties with a mortgage (e.g. Kerry, Donna, Tim and Connor), also positioned themselves as ‘choosing’ place and are discussed in the following two sections.

6.3 For Very Personal Reasons

As I progressed through the data generation stage of this research, I began to wait until participants talked about the railways first as in previous interviews, participants had placed greater emphasis on other aspects of ‘place’ and not on the railway. However in some interviews, the railway almost became an issue that was being ignored or required attention. This perhaps reflected the sampling strategy as participants were recruited via the Defra project. Also, the information provided to participants for taking part in this research conveyed railways as the research focus (also see Chapter Five).

Around half an hour into my interview with Kerry, she asked why we were not talking about railways. Kerry lived in a three bedroomed semi-detached property alongside an overground section of the WCML. Prior to the excerpt below, we had just talked about Kerry’s separation from her partner with whom she had initially bought her property. At the time of interview, Kerry lived with her brother and her friend who rented rooms to help with the mortgage payments.

Excerpt 6

Kerry: We've not talked much about railways

Jenna: Well it's not really all about that

Kerry: Isn't it, is it more about the psychological?

Jenna: It's more about, if you like, your story

Kerry: Really?

Jenna: Yeah more about sort of how you've come to live where you are and the, you know, factors that play a role in where you are

Kerry: And where you've come from, that's very different

Jenna: What do you mean?

Kerry: Nothing just like, loads of different reasons, quite very personal reasons but nothing really to do with the environment or railways, I don't know if it would really be relevant to your study

Switching the subject matter to railways appeared to enable her to avoid the discomfort of talking about her separation any further. However, given that I was there with the main purpose of understanding what it is like to live alongside railways, it makes sense that Kerry should question the relevance of what we were discussing. Like all of the participants, she had completed a social survey questionnaire and also had measurements of vibration taken at her property for the Defra project. By questioning how our talk was relevant, she presents railways as insignificant. Kerry positions herself as living where she does due to "*very personal reasons*" and thus "*the environment or railways*" have "*nothing really*" to do with her location in 'place'. Elsewhere in her interview, she had emphasised how her moves to different places in her adult life were to further her career and also to be within a commutable distance from her parents.

Kerry did not portray railways as a reason to buy a property but elsewhere in her interview, railways were a factor to be taken into consideration. I have included another excerpt from Kerry below where I asked whether her previous employment in the railway maintenance industry had any influence on her decision to buy her property alongside the WCML.

Excerpt 7

Jenna: So you had a bit of an idea about that sort of thing? Did that affect when you were buying your house?

Kerry: It didn't really at all but in the same respect my other half at the moment is looking to buy a house and found one in S [nearby suburb] and it's literally right next to a railway bridge and we looked and we just said, no far too close to the property, and I believe that's happened to the venders all the way, lots of people have said beautiful house, yep, could really see us doing something with it but it's too close

Jenna: So it's kind of like, it's ok at the bottom of the garden?

Kerry: Alright at the bottom, and I mean you've got a good thirty metres away from the house and big fir trees going up

Jenna: Right ok so can you see it?

Kerry: I can just see it, I've got another three years for those trees to get back up

Through shifting positions, Kerry constructs railways as both significant and insignificant. The railway is the main reason for her partner not buying the property they viewed alongside a railway, even though it was a *"beautiful"* house that prospective buyers could envisage *"doing something with"*. Her construction of the physical differences between the two 'places' appears to minimise the significance of the railway for her property. In relation to past research, Hugh-Jones and Madill (2009) found that participants residing near a quarry also worked to minimise any negative effects, including those that they self-reported. The dialogical negotiation between railways as significant and insignificant is managed discursively when Kerry says *"but in the same respect"*. She manages this further by emphasising the physicality of 'place' in terms of the greater distance between the railway and her property. Furthermore, her railway will soon be 'out of sight' which emphasises how railways present a visual intrusion on 'place'. Other participants' accounts of 'place' emphasised the importance of the physical environment, where they positioned their residential move as a necessity.

6.4 Moving as Necessity

A number of participants located themselves in 'place' in relation to various physical and material aspects of where they lived, which were portrayed as a necessity in terms of meeting their needs. Connor had moved from a two-bedroomed property (terraced) to a three-bedroomed semi-detached property. I interviewed Tim and Connor in their semi-detached house in a suburb of a small city, which was adjacent to a major city in the North West of England. Connor bought the property situated in a cul-de-sac alongside an over-ground section of the WCML having previously lived in a nearby suburb.

Excerpt 8

Connor: I bought the house back in 2002, I was living in a two up two down terrace in A [nearby suburb] which is not that far away and I'd been there a while and I thought if I don't move I'll be living in the same property all my life, and there was issues with car parking as there must be with a lot of people in terraced property, so I was on the lookout for a bigger house i.e. a standard three bedroom semi that had parking, obviously a single person I had a particular budget, I knew what I wanted but most of the properties I wanted were, I ended up looking in places like B and C [suburbs within the same city] and the outskirts of D [nearby suburb] but they were so expensive, in fact this property was over the range I was looking at and I still came to look and it was, they say it's one of those things when you walk in you know, I'd seen half a dozen other properties that were of no interest whatsoever and this one, particularly with it being a cul-de-sac, before living on a road that was through, I thought, it's got parking space, because it's a cul-de-sac so there's no through traffic, the railways of no concern to me one way or the other, in E [previous place] I was under the flight path so there were planes coming over every ten minutes so I saw no reason that the railway would be a problem so I went for this one

Connor positioned himself as having "*no choice but to choose*" (Giddens 1994, p. 75) in that staying in the same property all his life was undesirable. I link this to what Urry (1999) denoted as the compulsion for, or idea of, mobility: that we

should experience living in different places. Connor's movement discourse fits with the contemporary notion of changing properties as a "*way marker for an adult life course*" (Taylor, 2009, p. 1). As he was on the "*lookout*" for a property, he positions himself as choosing 'place'. However, Connor appears to counter his position of choice by emphasising a more physical or material reason for moving: "*car parking issues*". Car parking works to present Connor's move as a need as well as a desire. By negotiating positions of choosing and needing to move, Connor locates himself in 'place'.

Like Catherine, Connor negotiated his agency within the constraints of having a particular budget and talks about viewing property in other, more "*expensive*" places. However, Connor also described an emotional experience when viewing the property: "*they say it's one of those things when you walk in you know*". "*They say*" nods to the wider discourses of 'place' and constructs this experience of buying property as common and usual. Experiencing an emotional connection has been found in housing consumer research where purchasers seek out a house that 'feels right' (Levy et al., 2008; Munro, 1995). This construction is powerful and supports Connor's choice to buy his property.

A dialogical negotiation of railways as significant and insignificant was arguably evident within Connor's account of coming to live alongside railways. Connor portrayed the railway as "*of no concern*" yet also constructed railways as a noise source through comparisons with the flight path of his previous 'place'. This can be likened to the discursive strategy of 'place comparison' (Alkon & Traugot, 2008), where other places (often nearby), are positioned negatively with the intent to maintain differences between them. The railway is portrayed as less 'disruptive' through 'place comparison' yet it is also not a desirable aspect of 'place'. His experience of living with a flight path justifies his evaluation of railways as of "*no concern*" and negates the potential criticism of the 'other'.

This dialogical tension in relation to the railway was also evident in other participants' accounts. Donna lived in an end terraced (or semi-detached) property, which she owned with her husband in a suburb of an industrial town

near an overground section of the West Coast Main Line (WCML) railway in the North of England. The excerpt below is from the beginning of Donna's interview where finding somewhere to live was something actively embarked upon and which bore out of necessity.

Excerpt 9

Donna: Well the house that we previously lived in was only a two bed roomed house and we had two small children at the time, a boy and a girl so it was a bit cramped we actually, well my parents knew the people who lived in this house prior to us and we were searching for somewhere to move to and they just happened to say you know, come and have a look at the house and we fell in love with it straight away and that's when we put an offer in and the rest is history

Jenna: So can I ask sort of what were the reasons to move, for more space or?

Donna: It was it was space, there's a lot more land, there's a lot more space in the house as well, and even though with the train line it is actually a peaceful area

Donna portrays her previous house as unsuitable "*at the time*" which lead them ("*we*") to actively search for a new place to live. Implicit within Donna's talk is that children of different genders require separate bedrooms and therefore a two-bedroomed house was not appropriate for her family. Here 'place' can be interpreted as emphasising 'dwelling-related identities' (Cuba & Hummon, 2009), where the physicality of the house was more important and influential than wider aspects of 'place' such as being in a particular location for example. Subsequently, Donna had an authentic reason for moving within the context of having a growing family and in turn, a physical requirement for further bedrooms.

She constructs a relational agency in that buying her current house was also influenced by the actions of others, her parents who knew someone that suggested a viewing. This enables Donna to convey buying her house as something that "*just happened*". In the interview and in data analysis, Donna's story felt well-rehearsed, one which had been told before. For example,

Donna's recollection of searching for somewhere to live was succinct where "*the rest is history*", as a discursive strategy, brought her account to an effective end. This meant that a more detailed explanation was not required because everyone (the listener and imagined audiences) already knows the outcome – she still lives in the house in question.

As Donna positioned herself relationally, mentioning the railway seemed easier "*and even though with the train line it is actually a peaceful area*". Talk as 'double-voiced' in that presenting 'place' as "*a peaceful area*" counters the unvoiced criticisms of others: railways as a 'disruptive' aspect of 'place'. Given that I was there to interview participants about their experiences of living alongside railways, it is important to consider her talk as situated within this context – an interview with a researcher interested in what it is like to live alongside railways. That is not to say that Donna's talk arose only due to the interview context, nor that she had not constructed the railway in this way before. Later in her interview, aspects of Donna's talk reappeared which further supported her residential choice and led to my interpretation that her residential history has previously being told in that "*stories do not fall from the sky*" (Reissman, 2008, p. 105).

Excerpt 10

Donna: Well, originally we put our name for a council house but three bedroomed and nothing was coming up and time was ticking on and so we thought we're not gonna get one so that's when we came to see this house, we weren't actually looking to buy anything but we fell in love with it, it was a good price and we're glad now cos our mortgage is a lot cheaper than most people's rent so it was a good decision

Viewing the house resulted in Donna and her partner deviating from their "*original*" plan to rent a bigger property from the council. Drawing upon Wetherell's (1987) notion of 'trouble', I interpreted that the change of plan required further justification as it emphasises the differences between buying and renting property and that Donna had choice. Numerous motives for buying

the house as opposed to renting were subsequently brought into play. Firstly, with time *“ticking on”*, the need for further bedrooms for Donna’s growing family becomes more pressing and the option to rent from the council becomes less likely. Secondly, Donna returns to the emotional experience of falling *“in love”* with the house. Here, Donna’s account provides an example of *“consistency and continuity across occasions of talk”* (Taylor, 2007, p. 8). Thirdly, Donna refers to getting the house at a *“good price”*. The phrase *“we’re glad now”* constructs home ownership as previously (or initially) financially challenging but their investment ‘paid off’ as the mortgage *“is a lot cheaper than most people’s rent”*. Her talk works to convey that they made a *“good decision”* to buy the house and reside where they do. This decision is perhaps supported by owner-occupation being the ‘norm’ in the UK (Gurney, 1999). For Donna, being able to own their home rather than rent countered the presence of the railway as a significant aspect of ‘place’.

6.5 Offered a ‘Place’

When participants were buyers of property, positions of choice and agency in relation to ‘place’ were more available. For participants whose location in ‘place’ was influenced by social housing structures, there were fewer positions of agency available. I include excerpts from my interview with Michaela to examine how agency was negotiated within the constraints of social housing, and how this impacted upon constructions of ‘place’ and ‘identity’. Michaela lived in a suburb of a town with her partner and two children above an underground section of the WCML.

Excerpt 11

Michaela: Back in 2007 I fell pregnant with my daughter and, we had to move out of my parents address, we had to go into private rent cos we couldn’t get a house from the council, I lived there until June last year which is when I had a telephone call from the council saying that this house was up for new tenants, so we came to view it and took it straight away, didn’t know nothing about trains

Michaela positions herself as 'falling' pregnant rather than as choosing to have children or start a family. This circumstance structures her move into private rented accommodation from living within her parental home. Michaela positions herself as constrained ("*we had to move*") in relation to 'place' and there was a lack of choice about where to live. Private renting is portrayed as something unwanted and as a last resort as she was not able to get a house from the council. Therefore when the council offered her a house, taking it "*straight away*" was justified and located Michaela in 'place'. Her account conveys a lack of agency in that they had to wait for a property to come "*up*".

Unbeknown to Michaela, the property she viewed and accepted was located above the underground railway. Being critical of the railways and how the council failed to inform her about its presence, appeared to enable Michaela to gain back some agency within her account of 'place'. Within her interview, she positioned herself as someone who does not consider living near a railway as suitable for her family, which was facilitated by her lack of choice in relation to 'place'. Michaela also gained a relational agency through her role in caring for her partner and children, and also her parents.

Excerpt 12

Michaela:...because me and my partner are on low income, my partner is mentally disabled so I have to care for him, I can't leave him on his own in the house cos he'll like leave the cooker on or something so I have to like trace his steps and look after him, so with us both being on benefits on low income we couldn't afford £475 a month on the private house

In the excerpt above, price works as a structural constraint and positions her council house favourably against living in private rented accommodation. She describes herself as "*low income*" and "*on benefits*" but manages any unvoiced criticism by positioning herself as carer, and her partner as "*mentally disabled*". Thus living in a 'place' that she was allocated meets her needs and constructs living where she does as a necessity. I interpreted that Michaela's talk worked to justify her location as she was not living where she would ideally like to, the nearby suburb where she was 'born and bred' (Taylor, 2009) and where her

parents continued to live.

For participants who were born in or raised in their current 'place', explaining how they came to live alongside railways seemed an easier task. An example of this can be seen in my interview with Roxanne who lived with her partner and children in a socially rented property in a suburb of a small city. An overground section of the WCML ran along the bottom of Roxanne's garden.

Excerpt 13

Jenna: So do you mind me asking how you came to live in this particular house here

Roxanne: The council offered us this

Jenna: Right ok so before that?

Roxanne: In E [nearby suburb]

Jenna: How does that compare to here?

Roxanne: To here, well it was a flat so obviously this is better because it's a house, I've got a garden and all like I say apart from the trains

Roxanne lived very close to where she was 'born and bred' (Taylor, 2009) and was offered the property by the council. 'Place' appeared given or not something that Roxanne had to reflect upon or has to justify to the 'other'. Living somewhere else was not presented as an option. Throughout Roxanne's interview as a whole, it was difficult to identify any distinct instances where she positions herself as having agency over where she lives. The physicality of the property was emphasised, as Roxanne presents houses as "*obviously*" better than flats in that you gain access to a garden. This could be interpreted as another kind of "*hypothetical property ladder*" (Taylor, 2009, p. 2).

Positioning herself as constrained by social housing and as having a 'born and bred' relationship to 'place' enabled Roxanne to mention railways more easily and as an unwanted aspect of 'place'. Those who positioned themselves as more agentic often avoided mentioning railways in their accounts of coming to live alongside railways. Interestingly, Roxanne was unaware of the railway's proximity to her property when she *was offered the house by the council* (see excerpt below). Thus, Roxanne's account of coming to live alongside railways

had similarities with Michaela's, who was unaware of the railway underneath her property.

Excerpt 14

Jenna: When you were looking at the house, did you have a choice of properties?

Roxanne: No no they just offered us this one, well I didn't know at first cos you can't, cos when we came to view the house, you can't see through the back cos we haven't got any back, there's a passage way round the back but we couldn't get to it and we couldn't see the back, and I didn't think about railway when I well, I accepted the house obviously cos I didn't think, you can hear them but you can't see them, then I realised and I actually thought they're outside at the back (laughs) so because the lights are outside here

Roxanne positions herself as constrained in that there was no choice of properties which justifies living alongside railways. When I asked Roxanne about whether she had a choice of properties, I was not expecting that she would be unaware or uninformed of the railway's proximity when she accepted her property. Roxanne appeared more able than some of the other participants to construct railways as a 'disruptive' aspect of 'place'. As she positioned herself as constrained in 'place', the railway arguably presents less 'trouble' for her 'identity'. Subsequently, different positionalities can be seen to shape how railways can be constructed as 'disruptive'.

Another relationship with 'place' for those that lived in social housing was one constrained by health issues and in turn, being unable to work. In this section, I draw from interviews with two participants, William and Jim, and explore how they could be considered as "*chained to a place*" (Reissman, 2008, p. 115). Both Jim and William could be seen as negotiating masculinity in the absence of work and their 'identity' given their fixedness to 'place'. In the excerpt below, Jim positions himself as unhealthy which locates him in 'place'. Jim lived in a

socially rented cottage flat²⁴ in a suburban area between three towns alongside an overground section of the WCML. He moved from a private rented flat in a nearby suburb into socially rented accommodation in a block of flats due to the financial pressures of not being able to work anymore. The block was later pulled down but Jim remained in the area and was relocated to his current home, his cottage flat.

Excerpt 15

Jim: What it was I was doing alright, not so bad, and I had a flat in S [nearby suburb] and was doing alright, I worked for myself, but then I got arthritis and at the time I waited something like two and half years before I got treatment, but it was too late then if you know what I mean, everything had, it just slowly deteriorated so I was talking to somebody where I lived and they said, why don't you try and get one of these council houses, the rent was a lot cheaper at the time so I put in for it, I got one in a block of flats which they pulled down about five years ago and I got moved into a cottage flat and that's basically why I'm in here

My initial interpretation was that Jim's talk repaired the 'trouble' (Wetherell, 1998) presented by living in socially rented accommodation and by being unemployed for his 'identity'. For example, his past situation of being employed and renting privately could be interpreted as disclaimers (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975). However, through reflexive practice and supervisory discussions, I recognised how my own experiences of council housing as 'stigma' shaped that initial interpretation. Through further analysis, Jim can be seen to position himself as unhealthy and thus placed importance on his previously healthy 'identity'.

Whilst Jim's ill health and subsequent inability to work influenced his move to socially rented accommodation, he positioned himself as choosing to live there ("*I put in for it*"). However, Jim appears to 'dilute' or 'soften' (Locke, 2008) his agency as living in social housing was something that another person

²⁴ Cottage flats are more common in Scotland and generally consist of four flats in a block, two on the ground floor and two on the first floor.

suggested to him. It was not an idea or solution that he attributes to himself. Furthermore, living in social housing is presented favourably in that Jim now has cheaper rent. Jim negotiates agency and structure through positions of choice and constraint, which justify his location in 'place' and how that is "*basically why I'm in here*".

Another participant, William, lived in a socially rented cottage ground floor flat like Jim's and had previously lived in a 'high rise' apartment block in the same area. Within his interview, he also positioned himself as unhealthy, which softened his agency in relation to 'place'.

Excerpt 16

Jenna: Firstly, just to start with, I was just going to ask you a little bit about how you came to live here?

William: I used to live in one of the high rise at the other end of the estate, and they were developed a few years ago, and the one I lived in was sold off to be shared ownership flats, so, and I've got breathing problems, I've just been to the chest clinic now, and things, I didn't particularly want to go back into another high rise, because if the lifts are out, and I've got a lot of stairs to climb you know, that's it so I was after something on the ground floor ideally and this came up and that was six years ago

In Jim and William's accounts of how they came to live in their current places, there are parallels in the attribution of agency to housing developments outside of their control and their health problems. What differs for William is that prior to his health problems, he worked as a housing officer on the estate where he now lives. This past role influenced how William positioned himself and with knowledge of housing, he often took on the role of 'educator', which often positioned me in the role of 'learner'. William had a lot to say about how he came to live where he did and offered lengthy explanations that worked to defend his 'place' as somewhere that is "*not bad*" and "*pretty well behaved*" (see Excerpt 8 below).

Excerpt 17

William: Right to live here now, well as I say you know, I moved here because I had fond memories, some people when they retire go to live at the seaside, they go to live in M [seaside place] and places like this cos they've always had really nice holidays there and that's where they find out that the winters are the most miserable they've ever had because the place shuts, everybody goes, there's no party atmosphere anymore you know so, A's not bad, it's pretty well behaved, there's not a lot of vandalism or the naughty stuff or anything, the lad upstairs drinks a lot, gets a bit pestiferous sometimes, a bit crazy and the fella on the side is strange, he annoys people, but he keeps to himself, but yeah as an environment it's certainly better than, I mean I would rather live here than in town again now you know, as I say I wouldn't be going out like I used to go a lot and I never go out, not now I mean when I get back from the shop, when I was working I'm usually so sore, my legs, I've got circulation problems as well, usually in so much pain, once I get in that's it, maybe about half past eight, nine o'clock if I'm really bored I'll have a walk across to Tesco's and see what they've got on the bargain bit you know that they mark down at the end of the day, but its more just to get out for five, ten minutes than anything else but that's as far as I can do. I wouldn't go any further afield. I'd be afraid I couldn't get back again and there's the expense of travelling and things like that

As found in other interviews, William constructs an emotional connection with 'place' through his "*fond memories*" which justifies his location in 'place' and positions William as having made a good choice. He then compares where he lives to the lifestyles of his peers who retire to seaside places where they have holidayed. As he constructs moving to those places negatively in that they do not live up to expectation, he positions himself as having made a better choice despite some of the behaviour of "*crazy*" neighbours and the relative boredom of his suburb.

Health problems also feature prominently and located William in 'place'. He is now a different person to who he was when he was healthier and working. William's account echoes what Reissman (2008) noted in dialogical research on disability and masculine identities as being 'chained to place'. William stated that he would rather be where he lives than "*in town*" now, and in doing so, conveys his current 'place' as preferred. William and Jim's accounts bring to

the forefront how health and work bring positions of agency for people to make sense of where they live. Income is interwoven with health and features heavily in William's account, constraining how he lives (e.g. "*bargain bit*" in the supermarket, "*expense of travelling*") and what is possible in relation to 'place' and his mobility.

What is arguably implicit within William's account is that if he was not on low income, he would not be where he is now ("*I'm on low income now, so yeah as an environment I think A's quite nice*"). His use of the term "*environment*" conveys an 'objective' evaluation of where he lives and justifies his location. He goes on to justify living in his current place by stating that if he had money, he could not be there:

Excerpt 18

William: But you know, but as I say, I'm happy enough here, I've got no, if I came into a lot of money, I won't buy a house or a car or take an expensive foreign holiday you know. I'm not quite sure what I would do. I probably would have to move if, just to you know, stop people pestering me you know I mean I wouldn't see the point in it now, I mean, as long as I've got enough for myself to, but as I say you know, it's quite a nice area, I mean it's the cheaper end of F [suburb], its more affordable end but it's still quite decent

Even if William won money he would choose not to buy a house or a car or go anywhere on holiday; material items often associated with success and achievement. The hypothetical scenario of having money would present a dilemma for William in that he would have to move, something he would not choose to do otherwise. William acknowledges the consumerist aspirations around where and how to live but counters them "*I wouldn't see the point in it now*".

Unlike Michaela and Roxanne, neither Jim nor William mentioned the railway in their accounts of 'place' and coming to live alongside railways. However, William raised the issue of us not talking about the railway around half way through our interview. Like Kerry (see Section 6.3), William also pointed out

that we had not yet discussed railways and also portrayed railways as a visual intrusion.

Excerpt 19

William: ...we haven't mentioned the railway line once yet

Jenna: Do you want to talk about it?

William: Not especially it's a railway line, they cut the hedge, they took the trees down last year and we can see the trains going past but the hedge is growing a little bit now so we've told our gardener just to leave that for now

William talked a lot about his life and how he came to live in his socially rented property but did not mention the railway until this point. This led me to ask if he wanted to talk about that, to which he replied "*not especially, it's a railway line*". Here he presents the railway as insignificant and not of particular interest, thus diminishing its importance for 'place'. However, William goes on to talk about how the trees and the hedges were cut down by Network Rail. Like Kerry, railways were presented as something which is better when not in view ("*we can see the trains going past*"). As a visual intrusion, railways were portrayed a 'disruptive' aspect of 'place'. I interpreted his talk as enabling William to negotiate his agency within 'place' in asking the gardener to leave the hedges so that the railway can again be unseen.

It is important to situate the analysis of data within the research context where participants were aware that I was interested in their experiences of living alongside railways, which arguably contributed to their significance for 'place' and 'identity'. Taking part in the social survey questionnaire and having vibration measurements taken within their properties for the Defra project could have heightened participants' awareness of railways as a 'disruptive' aspect of 'place'. It was in anticipation of these experiences that I began interviews by focusing on how participants came to live where they do rather than focusing on the railway and environmental conditions. Therefore, I recognise how the researcher potentially co-constructs railways as a significant aspect of 'place'. However, within the wider contexts of finding somewhere to live, railways were often presented as insignificant. This finding is perhaps in contrast to the

significance placed on environmental conditions as 'disruptive' within exposure-response research and studies carried out within the annoyance framework. How participants negotiated environmental conditions is considered further in the following chapter where I examine how lived ideologies of residential places were drawn upon in accounts of living alongside railways.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter situated understandings of environmental conditions within the wider contexts of how participants' came to live alongside railways. In finding somewhere to live, railways were often portrayed as relatively insignificant, sometimes going unmentioned. For some, finding somewhere to live was challenging (e.g. Donna) and for others, living somewhere was uncomplicated (e.g. Roxanne). Participants positioned themselves as choosing and also as constrained in relation to 'place', which shaped how railways were presented. Shifts in positioning enabled railways to be presented as both significant and insignificant. The significance of railways, particularly as a 'disruptive' aspect of 'place', could also reflect the research context and experiences of taking part in the Defra project. In the following chapter, I further explore how talk is orientated towards the 'other' by examining how railways are negotiated in relation to the 'lived ideologies' of residential places drawn upon in participants talk around 'place' and 'identity'. When questions focused more specifically on railways, the associated environmental conditions presented 'trouble' for identities of 'place'.

Chapter Seven: Railways as an Ideological Dilemma

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of how 'lived ideologies' (Billig et al., 1988) of residential places were drawn upon in participants' accounts of living alongside railways. I begin by exploring the emphasis placed on rurality and countryside in participants' talk around 'place' and 'identity'. I draw upon the literature to theorise 'the rural idyll' as a 'lived ideology' of residential places, which was present in participants' accounts of living alongside railways. Another important and related 'lived ideology' was that of a 'peaceful and quiet place', which was also drawn upon by participants in their 'place' constructions. I examine how these 'lived ideologies' were fluid and dialogical as participants negotiated their agency in living alongside railways. The 'lived ideologies' worked centripetally to construct places that align with 'the rural idyll' and places that are 'peaceful and quiet'. Railways therefore appeared to present a centrifugal force which created 'trouble' for participants' 'identity work' in relation to 'place'. By examining the 'lived ideologies' of residential places, how railways created dialogical tensions within participants' talk is further explored. I suggest that railways presented an ideological dilemma, which was negotiated through positions of compromise and constraint to repair 'trouble' for identities of 'place'.

7.2 The Rural Idyll

Participants emphasised rurality and countryside in their 'place' constructions, which links with Green's (1997) findings that "*the rural idyll retains a strong hold on the English psyche*", with older ('character') properties in semi-rural village environments exerting a strong appeal" (p. 649). All of the participants I spoke with lived in places that could be categorised as suburban in that they were not

in the middle of a city or out in the countryside. This reflects the sampling strategy of the Defra project which researched areas with high residential densities. I include excerpts from a number of participants' interviews in this section, but I start my analysis with Margaret who placed a particular emphasis on, and identified strongly with, "*the countryside*".

Margaret lived in a terraced property on a council estate which she bought through the UK 'right to buy' scheme introduced in the 1980s. She lived in a suburban area between three towns and her property was located next to an overground section of the West Coast Main Line (WCML).

Excerpt 20

Margaret: I'm in the countryside here more or less but not when we moved to L [city] in G [inner-city area], it was an industrial area when, built up with fog, you couldn't see if front of you but and like I said I had a, we had a brand new house that was straight from being built

Jenna: In S [childhood place]?

Margaret: Yeah well just outside in a village

Margaret drew upon her past experience of living in a nearby city when she was a child to support her description of her current 'place' as countryside "*more or less*". She portrayed the city negatively ("*built up with fog*") due to its environmental conditions and the pollution there. Prior to living in the city, Margaret had lived in the south of England in a village. Her mother relocated the family to her 'hometown' of L [city] when Margaret was still a child. In the excerpt below, Margaret emphasised how growing up in the countryside meant that she would not like living in a city environment now. She appeared to reject an urban-related 'identity' (Lalli, 1992) adopting a countryside/rural 'identity' in relation to 'place'.

Excerpt 21

Jenna: You said you don't think you would have stayed

Margaret: I wouldn't have liked it, because I've been brought up, you know from being one [years old], in the countryside you know, I was, you know, all the

time we'd had orchards and farms near us you know, and friends had farms and we just always helped out on the farm and you were allowed to pick any fruit, especially any wind fall, strawberries, things like that from my friend's farm

Her constructions of the orchards, farms and fruit picking presented the countryside favourably. Her childhood village in the countryside worked as 'motive' (Mills, 1940) for living where she does now in that her recollections of her childhood 'place' linked to the physical aspects of her current residence. As Taylor (2005) noted, "*the meanings attached to places imply identities for the people of a particular place*" (p. 251). Interestingly, Margaret described her garden in similar ways to how she recollected the countryside.

Excerpt 22

Margaret: At the moment its [garden] like an orchard, it's not massive, it's not a massive garden but I don't know more than twenty foot long and about the same width, but I've got an apple tree outside my kitchen, a pear tree outside my lounge, I've got a plum tree which my husband planted, another small pear tree that's just growing and another apple tree and then I've got other trees, shrubs and things you know and everything's just gone mad, you've got to fight your way round

The garden appeared to work as a version of 'the rural idyll', tying her current 'place' to her childhood 'place'. However, her current place as "*countryside*" was challenged by how the land over the other side of the railway line had been developed during her time living there. This was reflected in how 'place' was presented as "*more or less*" (see excerpt 21) countryside or "*quite countrified*" (see excerpt below).

Excerpt 23

Jenna: So let me just go back and ask you a little bit more about, when you mentioned living in the countryside

Margaret: I mean where I am now A [current place] it is quite countrified, you know, but you know, well I did have fields at the back of me but now they've built warehouses, right at the back of me and I mean, behind that like office buildings

Interestingly, the railway was not mentioned as something which challenged Margaret's countryside 'place'. The railway ran along the bottom of Margaret's garden and the warehouses she referred to are situated on the other side of the line. The railway provided a physical boundary in that it separated the residential properties from the commercial properties. Margaret negotiated the more recent addition of warehouses by presenting 'place' as still "*quite countryside*", which enabled her to maintain an 'identity' aligned with more rural settings. Margaret also highlighted the challenges of living in the 'real' countryside, which also worked to portray where she currently lived favourably.

Excerpt 24

Jenna: How did you feel about living in B [city]?

Margaret: I didn't like it at all from moving, cos I right in the countryside, right near the woodland, in a little village and I went to a far better secondary grammar school to the school that I moved to, an old Victorian school that was cold, it didn't have the same facilities, it was different in winter though because in winter I had further to walk, there was no buses and you always got plenty of snow

Margaret emphasised that living in the countryside was different in terms of having further to walk to school, the difficulties of the winter weather ("*snow*"), and the lack of transportation. Similarly, Catherine also described growing up in the countryside and portrayed living there as desirable yet difficult in terms of mobility.

Excerpt 25

Catherine: I lived in the country and so that it, whatever you wanted to do, you either had a three mile walk or you drove somewhere to go and get it and we just don't have that now, so that's really good.

Here, 'the rural idyll' is presented as impractical and its position as an 'ideal' is challenged. However, that Catherine wanted to live in a "*period property*" (see Section 6.2) can arguably be situated within 'the rural idyll' or an adapted version of this 'lived ideology' (Green, 1997). Catherine also placed emphasis

on being able to access the countryside in her current 'place' (see excerpt below).

Excerpt 26

Catherine: ...if you go out, between, pretty much once you hit the main road there's only a few houses and then it's the, a clear footpath then out into the countryside to S [nearby town] so there's loads of places to walk especially with the dog its really nice for that, so you can be a couple of minutes from, from out in the country, in like a woodland so that's really good, so we find that handy, quite handy and then there's loads of other parks that are within a couple minutes drive from here as well if we want and go somewhere different so

The opportunities and conveniences of living in more 'suburban' places that are more connected in terms of infrastructure and have access to local amenities ("*handy*") were presented as easier places to live. Taylor (2009) found similar instances in her interviews where places provided opportunity and convenience for residents. Catherine placed a similar importance upon also having easy access to natural settings: the countryside, woodland and parks. Catherine had also previously lived in a city when she went away to university as an undergraduate student, and currently commuted to the nearby city for work and postgraduate study. Through 'place comparison' (Alkon & Traugot, 2008), "*living out a little bit*" was presented as favourable. Again, the railway was not mentioned as a significant aspect of 'place'.

Excerpt 27

Jenna: So you've had the sort of city side?

Catherine: Yeah a little bit more which means, and obviously I've lived in the centre of L [city] and I just, I don't really have as much of a desire to go live in the city again, it doesn't really appeal to me personally and so well I just quite like living out a little bit, I like things to be convenient but not that busy can leave that there

Jenna: So is the busyness or is it?

Catherine: It's the noise and having people on top of you all the time I don't really like that I get it all day at work, at uni and I don't, once I come home I like to be able to have a little bit more space so

Here, she used her past experience of city life and current experiences of going into the city to convey her current place as more suited to her. Catherine appeared to dissociate herself with being a “*city person*” (Hummon, 1990. p. 43). The “*noise*” and “*people on top of you*” convey the city as ‘disruptive’. Where she currently lived is almost a happy medium between the contrasting city and countryside. She positioned herself as agentic in that she did not have any “*desire*” to live in a city again, which located her ‘identity’ in a ‘place’ that is “*out a bit*” where there is more space. Having “*space*” and not being “*overlooked*” or “*surrounded*” by people and housing was also important for others (see Section 6.4).

Notions of ‘the rural idyll’ were also evident in interviews with other participants. Kerry presented her childhood as “*very lucky*” and “*quite blessed*”, as she grew up in a nice area in a “*middle class family*” in a suburban area. Her family were settled and did not move around and her parents continue to live in the house that she grew up in.

Excerpt 28

Jenna: Right ok so you’re from T [city], what was it like growing up there?

Kerry: Good, I’m from a middle class family, didn’t know hardship. Very lucky, from a nice area of T [city] went to a good school, no railways no, quite suburban sort of parts, my mum and dad have lived in this house since 1985, twenty five years so I’m twenty-nine shortly so you know pretty settled there, so I wasn’t moving along, no railways, very much residential, detached house sort of area so quite blessed, so when it comes to buying your own house, you’ve got these great expectations of what you want you know, you’ve got to be realistic about what you can have

Kerry presented ‘suburbia’ as the residential ideal, where there are “*no railways*” and anything else other than residential, detached properties. Her talk justified her residence alongside railways with a ‘lived ideology’ of being realistic about her expectations as to what places and properties she can have. Later in her interview, Kerry joked about living in the countryside when I asked her about where she saw herself living in the future.

Excerpt 29

Jenna: So in the future then, I don't know, where do you see yourself?

Kerry: Oh god into the countryside

Discourses of rurality were more prominent within the interviews with home owners who appeared more able to position themselves as choosing 'place'. In her research on 'identity' and 'place', Taylor (2005) argued that consumer discourses in relation to 'place' are a contemporary feature of 'identity'. Kerry presented her countryside future as a joke, which strengthened her emphasis of being realistic about residential expectations but arguably highlighted the prevailing cultural preference or aspiration for 'the rural idyll'. For Kerry, 'the rural idyll' appears *"imagined...rather than [based] on the reality of a truly rural existence"* (Torkington, 2012, p. 73).

Another version of 'the rural idyll' could be evidenced within participants' talk around 'nature' and wildlife. Most participants made reference to wildlife and 'nature' within the places that they lived. I include an example from Michaela below as she likened where she lived to *"living in the countryside"* in talk around wildlife.

Excerpt 30

Michaela: You do get a lot of wildlife and awful lot of wildlife around here and it's like because we're so close to the park it's like living in the countryside cos you get the birds chirping first thing in the morning outside your window, so it is really nice for the wildlife as well

It is important to note that in discourses of rurality and countryside, there was no specific mention of railways. As 'the rural idyll' emphasised discourses of rurality and countryside, Cloke (2003) argued that 'the rural idyll' exerts a *"centripetal force"* (p. 2) in talk around 'place'. How 'the rural idyll' worked centripetally is emphasised later in this chapter where I analysis talk around the

environmental conditions associated with alongside railways. MacNaghten and Urry (1998) described the English countryside as *“the unspoilt other”* (p. 26). ‘The rural idyll’ as ‘other’ is developed through a dialogical analysis of talk around environmental conditions. ‘The rural idyll’ as a ‘lived ideology’ of residential places also echoed in participants’ talk around how where they live is ‘peaceful and quiet’. I have identified ‘a peaceful and quiet place’ as another important and related ‘lived ideology’, particularly in its acoustical meanings which directly related to the environmental conditions produced by railways.

7.3 A Peaceful and Quiet Place

“Broadly imagined narratives about kinds of places are widely available in popular culture. We imagine the quietness of a small town evening, even if we have never experienced it, because we have heard it described, read about it in books, and seen it in movies.” (Alkon & Traugot, 2008, p. 109)

One of the prominent ways of characterising ‘place’ was as somewhere ‘peaceful’ and ‘quiet’. ‘Peaceful’ and ‘quiet’ are very much grounded within the participants’ own talk in that they are not labels or terms that I have developed to consolidate and communicate my interpretation of the data. ‘A peaceful and quiet place’ was predominantly, but not exclusively, presented as a positive and much desired attribute of ‘place’, and was drawn upon by participants to justify why they chose to live where they do, and make claims about what it is like to live there. To support my interpretation of a ‘peaceful and quiet place’ as a ‘lived ideology’, I start with excerpts from my interview with Allen and Cheryl²⁵. Allen and Cheryl lived with their two children in a three-bedroomed terraced property on a council estate which they owned with a mortgage. They lived in a suburb of a town and their property was located above an underground section of the West Coast Main Line (WCML). In the excerpt below, Allen and Cheryl state that one of their decisions to buy their property was that they knew it was a *“pretty quiet area”*. Here, *“quiet”* was used almost synonymously with *“nice”*

²⁵ For further biographical information about participants, see Section 5.10.

and took on a multitude of meanings from traffic/congestion to safety.

Excerpt 31

Allen: So we knew what it was like, pretty quiet area, obviously over the years, there's more and more cars on the road, more and more parking spaces needed and that so it does get congested sometimes but I mean it was a nice area, I suppose that's like one of the big factors that we were looking for really it's got to be somewhere safe for the kids yeah there's areas in A [their town] you mention, people go 'don't go there', you know

Jenna: Which areas are those?

Allen: B, E, M [three nearby suburbs] they're a bit, tend to put all the down and outs there if you know what I mean shove them all in one area

Cheryl: Some aren't that bad though

Allen: No, put a big fence round it and just leave them all there, T and F [towns in other counties], that sort of area

Allen and Cheryl's "*pretty quiet area*" emphasised that they lived somewhere safe for children. This is reinforced by positioning themselves as being 'familiar' with the area (e.g. Dixon & Durrheim, 2004). Allen located them ("we") in 'place' with a relationally agency (Mason, 2004), and thus 'place' offered an opportunity to construct their identities as parents. Their identities as 'good' parents were further emphasised by Allen who contrasted their 'place' with the "*don't go there*" areas where their children's safety could be threatened. However Cheryl appeared to compensate for Allen's strong view of other areas and the people who live there, "*some aren't that bad though*". Cheryl's talk could be anticipative of the 'other', and perhaps of my views on those places. Allen then disagreed with Cheryl and likened those nearby places with well-known areas locally and regionally that hold negative image, as those "*don't go there*" unsafe places. Places that are "*pretty quiet area(s)*" are presented as the norm, and this construction was flexible in that it encapsulated the material form of place in terms of traffic congestion and not having enough parking space, but also in reference to the social aspects of 'place' and how people contribute to its 'quietness'.

For Jim, living in his current place of residence was “*a bit more peaceful*” in comparison to his past place of residence in a nearby suburb. Here, “peaceful” worked similarly to Allen’s “quiet” in reference to the people in the two places he contrasts.

Excerpt 32

Jim: Well over the years, it was alright at first, but over the years you got all the crowds coming in, you know like at weekends at nights, then I moved up here which, you get a lot of clout idiots round here and all that but you tend to stay in your own half, when you’re in D [previous place] in a right little village, you get it every day if you understand what I mean, if you went out at night you bump into a crowd of idiots, you know so basically it was a better place to live but up here’s a bit more peaceful for me

Arguably, Jim acknowledged the local perceptions of his previous place as better in terms of the social opportunities it offers. In characterising his current place as “*more peaceful*”, Jim appeared to dissociate himself from the people who lived in his previous location. Through ‘place comparison’ (Alkon & Traugot, 2008), any unvoiced criticism that where he lives is worse than where he used to live can be countered. Living somewhere “*peaceful*” can also be related to ‘the rural idyll’ (Green, 1997; Van Dam et al., 2002). As van Dam et al. (2002) noted: “*peace and quiet, space and greenness can be seen as intrinsic qualities of rural areas and as distinctive characteristics which distinguish rural from urban residential environments*” (p. 461). By presenting peaceful and quiet places, participants may have been rejecting notions of ‘urban’ in their ‘identity work’ around ‘place’.

Similarly, Michaela portrayed her current place as quieter than the place where she grew up. Within her account, she shifted between positions of wanting to live where she was ‘born and bred’ and wanting to stay in her current location. Michaela’s use of “*peaceful*” and “*quiet*” demonstrate how the two discourses can be used together and how they convey similar meanings.

Excerpt 33

Jenna: Right ok what is it like to live here?

Michaela: The area's fantastic, you do get the odd child who likes to be the tear away but it's very quiet there's no nuisance at all, in fact people are very friendly around here and it's a lot easier to get on with your life

Jenna: So it's sort of when your, cos it's quite a quiet area?

Michaela: It is very quiet, yeah it is, very quiet cos like around this area there's only actually myself and one other person on this road with children, the rest of them had children but they're all grown up and moved out

Jenna: So does that, is that a good thing?

Michaela: Well yeah cos you don't get as much nuisance, I feel awful for saying that when I've got two in there well, no you do get the odd kids playing knock a door run but you know, that's what kids do but no, it's really peaceful cos where I came from you have kids everywhere you look

Like Jim's construction of "*clout idiots*", Michaela's construction of the "*odd kids*" draws parallels between the two places she is comparing. It also accounted for Michaela having children "*you know that's what kids do*", which enabled her to position herself as tolerant of children's behaviour. Living in 'a quiet and peaceful place' was portrayed favourably and in turn, Michaela constructs a favourable 'identity' in relation to 'place'.

Such examples of 'a peaceful and quiet place' appeared to demonstrate the complexity and flexibility of its meanings. One interpretation is that 'a peaceful and quiet place' conveys more about the people who live there rather than the physicality of 'place' and environmental conditions. 'A peaceful and quiet place' is somewhere free of "*nuisance*" (Michaela). A similar construction of 'place' can be seen in Jim and Allen and Cheryl's accounts. One possible interpretation is that participants are drawing upon notions of the importance of 'peaceful' and 'quiet' people/neighbours when constructing 'place'. In this context, when talk is related to others and their behaviour, participants can present 'moral selves' in relation to 'place'. As Allen presented other places as where "*all the down and outs*" live, he dissociates himself with those people. In previous research, Patterson et al. (2011) demonstrated how a sense of

community and associated moral codes are locally constituted. The participants in that study displayed a sense of being “*intrinsically peaceable*” (Patterson et al., 2011, p. 349). In this study, participants often talked about the behaviour of others where they lived and in nearby places. Such talk therefore offered opportunities for their ‘identity work’ in relation to ‘place’, associating themselves with being ‘peaceful’ and ‘quiet’ residents.

‘A peaceful’ and quiet place’ also had an acoustic dimension. In this sense, places as ‘peaceful’ and ‘quiet’ arguably created ‘trouble’ (Wetherell, 1998) for participants when it came to discussing railways. Some participants used ‘a peaceful and quiet place’ to make the case that the railway did not disrupt the peacefulness and quietness of where they lived. In the excerpts from Donna and Roxanne below, both participants presented their places of residence favourably through the use of ‘peaceful’ and ‘quiet’, whilst also highlighting the railway running alongside their properties.

Excerpt 34

Donna: It was it was space, there’s a lot more land, there’s a lot more space in the house as well and even though with the train line, it is actually a peaceful area

Excerpt 35

Jenna: What’s the area like?

Roxanne: The areas good, the areas good, it’s quiet, apart from the trains, but like I say over the years you just get used to them

In excerpt 34, I had asked Donna to clarify her reasons for moving to her current property. Donna started by giving her reasons; features of the property that aligned with ‘the rural idyll’ (“*more land*”, “*more space*”) and thus contributed to a positive account of where she lives. Where she lived gives her “*a lot more*” than her previous property, which she described earlier in her interview as “*just a two bedroomed*” (also see Section 6.4).

Roxanne also conveyed a positive account of where she lives by her use of “*the*

areas good" and *"it's quiet"* in response to my question about her area and what it is like to live there. In both instances, such talk can be interpreted as disclaimers (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975) or 'words with a sideways glance' (Sullivan, 2012). For both participants, the negative attribution was the railway: *"even though with the train line"* (Donna) and *"apart from the trains"* (Roxanne). Interestingly, Roxanne positioned herself as constrained in relation to place yet her use of *"getting used to"* the railway defends her 'place' as *"quiet"* and *"good"*. Both excerpts are from earlier parts of the interviews before I asked questions specifically about railways (also see Sections 6.4 and 6.5). However, Donna and Roxanne brought the railway into the conversation themselves. Even though my question did not explicitly ask about the railway, the participants introduced it; a discursive choice which perhaps demonstrates talk as action oriented (Willig, 2001).

In one way, 'a peaceful and quiet place' appeared to present the railway as 'undisruptive' in that it did not challenge the 'peacefulness' and 'quietness' of place. Yet the use of *"peaceful"* and *"quiet"* in relation to railways also worked to counter anticipated voices of 'other' where 'a peaceful and quiet place' as a 'lived ideology' conveys an absence of railways. Living alongside railways can be argued as going against our 'lived ideologies' and the common sense notions of what constitutes 'a peaceful and quiet place'. 'A peaceful and quiet place' is flexible in meaning and railways appeared negotiable within this 'lived ideology'. Edley (2001) pointed out that the dilemmatic nature and *"indeterminacy"* of lived ideologies can make them *"flexible resources for everyday sense making"* (p. 203). This was evident within interviews as in that living near a railway *"actually"* is a *"peaceful"* place (Donna), and *"over the years you just get used to them [railways]"* (Roxanne). Such discursive work enabled participants to justify their continued residence within a 'place' that can be perceived by others as 'disruptive'. The following section aims to unravel how railways can be presented as a 'disruptive' aspect of 'place' in relation to the 'lived ideologies' of 'the rural idyll' and 'a peaceful and quiet place'.

7.4 Railways as Disruptive

How lived ideologies of ‘the rural idyll’ and ‘a peaceful and quiet place’ presented a dialogical tension for participants can be seen in talk around the railway’s ‘disruptiveness’. Lived ideologies emphasised the environmental conditions associated with railways as a significant aspect of ‘place’ in terms of ‘disruption’. However, as ‘place’ meanings were fluid and dialogical, railways were negotiated within the ‘lived ideologies’ of ‘the rural idyll’ and ‘a peaceful and quiet place’ within participants’ talk.

To give a more detailed account of this negotiation, when I asked more direct questions specifically related to environmental conditions associated with railways (e.g. vibration, noise, visual intrusion), some participants presented the railway as only noticeable at times of day when everything else was “*quiet*”. Below are some examples from interviews with Kerry, Catherine, and Allen and Cheryl.

Excerpt 36

Kerry: I only notice it when I’m in bed because everything’s quiet, early morning or Saturday mornings cos I’m obviously still in bed and its only if I’m awake

Excerpt 37

Catherine: Yeah you can, normally, you can’t when you’re downstairs because we’ve got solid floors, you can upstairs if you’re lying on the bed or occasionally if there’s a big one and you just standing on the floor you can feel vibrations there but only if you’re not doing anything, it’s not like, I only notice it when I’m sat on the bed really but apart from that we don’t really get much, certainly because of the solid floor we don’t feel anything downstairs, these are concrete down here and they are only floorboards upstairs so

Excerpt 38

Allen: ...probably more late at night when everything’s a lot quieter, less cars on the road, less on the express way, less planes and less kids out and noises

stuff like that when it's sort of quiet areas that you can sort of notice there's a train going past and telly's not on as loud, you're not doing other things

The disruptiveness of the railway is minimised in that it is “*only*” “*occasionally*” experienced when participants are not doing other activities or when they are lying in bed late at night or at weekends. This minimised the railway's significance within their place of residence which counters dominant discourses of railways as a ‘disruptive’ aspect of ‘place’. Allen listed all the other noises, which worked to provide further support for only noticing the trains when “*everything's a lot quieter*”. The environmental conditions are presented as insignificant and as part of a wider ‘soundscape’ of place, situated within the wider context of everyday activities.

However, two activities associated with living alongside railways – freight/goods trains and railway maintenance work – were presented very differently and singled out as particularly ‘disruptive’. “*Quiet*” featured more prominently in talk about railways than “*peaceful*”, perhaps due to its meaning being more directly linked to the acoustic dimension of places. The two railways activities are now discussed in turn. I understand environmental conditions as dialogical in that the railway activities were both ‘disruptive’ and ‘undisruptive’ as participants shifted their positioning in relation to ‘place’.

The excerpts below are from later points in the interview once participants had largely established where they lived as ‘good’, ‘nice’, ‘quiet’, ‘peaceful’, ‘spacious’ and so on. In the excerpt below, I ask Jim about the railway for the first time and he focused specifically on freight traffic.

Excerpt 39

Jenna: Yeah so what's the railway like

Jim: Now since they've done whatever they've done to the lines I don't know what it was, I don't know if they've changed them or it's I'd say about eighty per cent quieter, you still get the odd one or two trains, usually goods trains that make a row, and the windows are rattling but now you know, before, Sunday night, early Monday morning, you know like Sunday night, early Monday

morning, used to get four or five of them and either way the flat was rattling, shaking

Jenna: Are these goods trains sorry

Jim: Yeah the goods trains yeah

Jenna: Right did there used to be more of them

Jim: Yeah I don't know if there was more, or since they've had the lines its gone quieter because in the middle of the night you don't hear them as much, you might just get the odd one or two that you hear but they don't wake you up or anything

Jenna: So can you hear it

Jim: Yeah usually they are pretty long, I mean, once I counted the carriages of one and I think it was thirty, you know, you can imagine metal containers on them, the ground rumbles and everything but since they've done whatever they've done to the line its nowhere near as loud as it used to be

The significant event that Jim drew upon to articulate his experiences of living alongside the railway was the improvement works carried out on the lines. The improvement works were presented as changing the railway's 'disruptiveness' for the better. However Jim emphasised the 'disruptiveness' of the goods trains in that they "*make a row*" through the night, "*the flat was rattling, shaking*", and "*the ground rumbles and everything*". His talk here also referred to both the past and the present, which enabled a more 'disruptive' account to be created. The freight trains were emphasised further in his recollection of once counting the number of carriages, which portrayed the passing of a freight train as a significant and enduring event. His talk problematised the railways presence in his residential environment as he portrayed a very 'disruptive' account of his sensory experience. However, Jim minimised the railways' 'disruptiveness' as since improvement work has been carried out on the lines, the railway was "*about eighty per cent quieter*", so "*you don't hear them as much*" and it's "*nowhere near as loud as it used to be*". Quantifying discourse by giving a percentage strengthened Jim's claim that the railway is quieter now than in previous times. Although the railway is presented as less problematic than it was prior to the improvements, it is still recognised as 'disruptive' in that Jim can

still hear the “*odd one or two trains*” which “*make a row*”.

Like Jim, Margaret, who had lived in her house near a railway since the 1970s, she also identified goods trains, and specifically the mail train, as being ‘disruptive’ in the past, but now passenger trains now “*whizz*” by, which portrayed railways as less ‘disruptive’.

Excerpt 40

Jenna: So have you noticed sort of, changes over the years to the railway

Margaret: Well yeah it’s far better even though the train, it just whizzes past now, even with, I don’t even notice at night time, a lot of the time I fall asleep down here anyway I don’t even notice, they stopped the mail trains as well you see, that used to tear past, you always knew when that was going past

Throughout her interview, Margaret talked often about the past, having lived in her property a long time. She constructed the railway as “*far better*”, which appeared to imply that the railway was perhaps more ‘disruptive’ in the past. When physical aspects of the railway appear to have changed over time, such structural change enabled participants to account for their continued residence alongside the railway. Both Margaret and Jim positioned themselves as informed and knowledgeable about the railway in that their experiences are embedded within their length of residence in ‘place’.

Jim and Margaret’s talk around the passing trains involved temporality. The railway was portrayed as more ‘disruptive’ in the past than it is presently. Yet the past and the present were merged in talk about environmental conditions in that “*the ground rumbles*” (Jim) and trains “*whiz*” past (Margaret). In terms of positioning, earlier in her interview, Margaret positioned herself within the structural constraints of social housing in coming to live alongside railways. Jim also positioned himself as constrained due to his health and no longer being able to work. Being constrained perhaps enabled a more ‘disruptive’ account of railways to be presented in comparison to those who positioned themselves as choosing ‘place’. However, how participants positioned themselves shifted where they attributed greater agency towards themselves in adapting to

railways over time (see Chapter Eight). Justifying continued residency by constructing railways as better now than in the past appeared to be influenced by a speaker's position of agency.

For those who chose 'place' within the structural constraints of buying a property (e.g. price range), presenting railways as 'disruptive' appeared to create 'trouble' for 'identity'. Connor talked about his decision to buy his property next to the railway, and identified the freight trains as being a specific concern for him at the time of purchase.

Excerpt 41

Connor: ...the only one, the only concern was the what do you call it, like freight and they're really early hours and they do make a hell of a row, the screeching and the clanging, what is it, they go through very slowly and then they'll stop and then they'll pick up again but been here eight years and I couldn't tell you when they come on a regular basis now, you just get used to it yeah

Freight as his "*only concern*" appeared to contradict his previous account of the railway as "*of no concern*" in buying his property (see Section 6.4). This perhaps provides an example of the inconsistency, fragmentation and contradiction within talk (Edley, 2001). However, Connor appeared to minimise the impact of freight by describing how over time "*you just get used to it*", which negotiated his agency in terms of choosing to live where he does. By presenting the railway as something which "*you just get used to*", Connor acknowledged the disruptiveness of the railway's presence in his residential environment. The freight as the "*only*" concern in deciding to buy his property presented the railway as a significant feature of 'place', but as something negotiable within the constraints of buying a property.

Alongside freight trains, railway maintenance work was presented as particularly 'disruptive' in that it was often carried out on an infrequent basis and occurred during the night.

Excerpt 42

Donna: We love it, we love it, it's very peaceful, lovely neighbours, even the trains you know, we've got used to them, we don't, the only thing that bothers us is when they are working on the railway and they don't even have the decency to let us know but other than that no, it's a nice, it's a lovely area, very peaceful

Throughout her interview, Donna talked about "*lov[ing]*" where she lives, which portrayed an emotional relationship with 'place'. "*We love it*" is powerful and difficult to challenge or counter with alternative explanations of living somewhere. Alongside her prominent use of 'a quiet and peaceful place', "*love*" works to disclaim the negative attribute in relation to 'other': "*the trains*". Railway maintenance work, when "*they don't even have the decency to let us know*" is highlighted as disrupting her "*peaceful*" place. Her extreme case formulation of the "*only thing that bothers us*" singles out maintenance work as 'disruptive'. The railway activity moves from an object (the railway) to people ("*they*"), and thus the agency for disruption is attributed towards other people, which appeared to make it easier to complain about.

In comparison, other participants' accounts of railway maintenance work were more negative. I have included excerpts from Roxanne's interview below where she was critical of the maintenance work carried out during the night.

Excerpt 43

Roxanne: The only other thing that winds me up is when you've got the workmen out there, early hours of the morning

Jenna: The sort of maintenance

Roxanne: Yeah they're out there like three o'clock in the morning banging and that winds you up, especially cos I was working nights then right ok, so when I come home, it wasn't too bad cos obviously in the day I was asleep anyway but when I wasn't on my nights or when I was due for a night shift, and I'd try get some sleep they'd be banging and shouting.

Roxanne wanted to talk about the railway maintenance work, which is presented as the "*only other thing*" which "*winds her up*". For Roxanne, the

“shouting and banging” disrupted her sleep, which was emphasised through her positioning as a shift worker. Again she talked simultaneously about the past and the present in that she no longer does shift work but still, the ‘disruption’ during the early hours of the morning *“winds her up”*. Unlike other participants talk around the railway maintenance (see Excerpt 42), Roxanne did not appear to minimise the railway’s ‘disruptiveness’ and positioned herself as ‘annoyed’, a term which she used herself to describe her feelings about the railway elsewhere in her interview. Being annoyed about the railway appeared to be supported by how Roxanne positioned herself as constrained in relation to ‘place’. Presenting the railway as ‘disruptive’ seemed to enable Roxanne to convey agency in relation to a ‘place’ that she was offered by the council.

Roxanne also presented a negative account of ‘place’ in talk around other aspects of the railway. Roxanne’s property was adjacent to a railway junction where rail traffic stopped at the lights to wait for a clear passing.

Excerpt 44

Jenna: The lights?

Roxanne: For the trains so they actually stop right outside mine, not good when you’re sunbathing in summer no

Jenna: What do you feel like sort of using your garden?

Roxanne: The views?

Jenna: Well yeah I don’t know how you use it?

Roxanne: I’ve put them conifers down the bottom, I put them all across the bottom so you know to hide them, privacy, it does wind you up, the privacy

Being able to see the railway, and vice versa (people on the train being able to see Roxanne in her garden) was portrayed as intrusive in that it was *“not good when you’re sunbathing in the summer”*. Even though Roxanne was constrained in relation to ‘place’, where she lives still has implications for her ‘identity’ in that she continues to reside there. Planting trees (*“I’ve put them conifers down the bottom”*) conveyed her agency in that she had taken action to manage the disruptiveness of the railway. For Roxanne, the railway invaded her privacy therefore the trees or greenery functioned as a ‘barrier’ between her

garden and the railway. Railways were portrayed as significant by other participants in terms of being a visual intrusion (see Section 6.4). Participants who lived in places where the railway was 'out of sight' presented this scenario as favourable. Unlike where Roxanne lived, the railway alongside Donna's property was in a cutting and thus out of sight (see Excerpts 45 and 46 below).

Excerpt 45

Donna: Yeah it wouldn't bother me to move to another railway line, we've, we've got quite a long back garden so were quite, we're not built on top of it, we've got quite a big back garden which probably helps and we've got a few, we've got fruit trees all the down the bottom of the garden so we can't see anything so that's probably a plus

Jenna: Yeah so the, you've sort of got greenery

Donna: Yeah so you can't see the railway at all

Excerpt 46

Jenna: So is the railway line lower?

Donna: It is lower yeah, there's all the fruit trees at the bottom and the railway, we've got the fence at the end of the garden, we've got the fruit trees then the fence behind them, then there's a slight gap, then another railway fence, and then there's a drop so its sunken down a bit the railway line which is better

In the excerpts above, Donna presented the railway as better as it is out of view. The distance between her property and the railway due to her "*big back garden*" also lessened the railway's presence in her place of residence. Her list of the different features of her garden – the fruit trees, the fence, the drop – work to distance and emphasise the separation of the railway from her property. At the same time, 'the rural idyll' is arguably incorporated in that she has space and a large garden with fruit trees and greenery. Donna presented where she lives within this 'lived ideology', which appeared to counter the centrifugal force of the railway.

Other participants talked about situations where trees or greenery were removed by the various authorities (local council or Network Rail), which made

the railway more visible to them. Where trees/greenery had been cut back, participants' talked about how the trees were a positive and wanted aspect of 'place'.

Excerpt 47

Jenna: Yeah sometimes the greenery, some people like it there

Jim: Yeah I'm like that you know, I mean, the bloke next door he nearly cried, they've took the trees down but now he's not bothered about it now cos what me and him were going to do, we were going to plant some bushes again on this side you know, he said, oh know we might as well leave it, as time went on, just let it grow and see what happens well it's like a chain link fence if you understand, so you can see right through the to the railway line

Jim positioned himself as a person who likes trees and greenery but also deflected his talk to "*the bloke next door*" who was very upset ("*he nearly cried*"). In the same way as Roxanne, he also attributed agency to himself and the neighbour in that they were going to plant some bushes in the attempt to make up for their 'loss'. What is interesting is that the absence of the trees appears 'disruptive', as the resulting effects are that Jim "*can see right through to the railway line*". When talk is considered as 'double-voiced' (Frank, 2005), Jim can present see the railway as something 'disruptive' but living alongside railways as unproblematic at the same time. William also talked about the removal of trees and greenery as unwanted in his interview. Below, he also positioned himself as annoyed with regards to the trees being cut down.

Excerpt 48

William: ...and working here for a couple of years before that and visiting for ten years before that so no it [the railway] didn't come as any great surprise, I didn't think it would be that bad, it hasn't been, I was just a bit annoyed the day that I went out and found that the trees were getting pulled out, you don't, I don't like to see trees going you know but I can see the case for it yeah

Above, William positioned himself as knowledgeable and in turn, the railway did not come as "*any great surprise*" to him when he moved into his property. In

this sense, he acknowledged that he expected some 'disruption' from the railway. Rather than the other railway activities that could have chosen as a focus for talk, William chooses to focus on the cutting down of the trees as a 'disruptive' aspect of living near a railway. William presented the railway as taking priority in saying "*I can see the case for it*". Arguably, this establishes the railway as the 'status quo' and as something which takes precedent over the people living alongside it. An alternative explanation is that it is easier to take an annoyed position at the removal of trees given the importance of 'nature' and 'the rural idyll' in place.

Participants presented railways as 'disruptive' in their accounts of 'place' by focusing on specific activities such as railway maintenance, and physical aspects such as when the railway is in a cutting. These accounts can be considered dialogical in that participants acknowledged the 'disruptiveness' of railways whilst at the same time, presenting railways as insignificant in relation to the centripetal pull of 'the rural idyll' and 'a quiet and peaceful place'.

7.5 The 'Trouble' with Railways

The environmental conditions and the physical form of 'place' were acknowledged within interviews as 'disruptive'. This was perhaps in the attempts to present a credible account of 'place'. However, in talk around environmental conditions, railways appeared to present 'trouble' (Wetherell, 1998) for identities of 'place'. The concept of 'ideological dilemmas' (Billig et al., 1988) is useful here in considering talk around 'place' as being inherently two-sided and understanding how environmental conditions could be negotiated within the lived ideologies of 'a peaceful and quiet place' and 'the rural idyll'.

From Billig et al. (1998), the notion of ideologies as dilemmatic can be useful in understanding how physical aspects of 'place' can present 'trouble' for identities. Arguably, living alongside railways presents an 'ideological dilemma' in that it is something participants have to live with but something they should live without. In such cases, conflicting ideologies arguably create tension for

the speaker, but also are expected in that we are aware of the oppositional arguments available for different views (Gough, 1997). Within the data, this recognition of living alongside railways and the associated disruptiveness of their environmental conditions was acknowledged and conveyed as compromise. Furthermore, through place comparison (Alkon & Traugot, 2008), the disruptiveness of place was minimised where other places were presented as more unfavourable.

For those who positioned themselves as choosing to live where they do, living alongside railways was presented as a compromise. This highlighted that the railway was not ideal but it was something that could be lived with. Arguably, railways were also negotiable in relation to the wider 'lived ideologies' of 'the rural idyll' and 'a peaceful and quiet place'. The following excerpts from Catherine and Connor emphasise how railways were presented as a compromise.

Excerpt 49

Catherine: We both said well this is what, this is the kind of house we want, its where we want to live, there's going to be a compromise somewhere, if there's not then we're going to pay more money so we said well it ticks all the rest of the boxes so, so its location next to the railway, will just have to lump it really

Excerpt 50

Connor: And as I said, I'd been in E [previous place] with the flights directly over the house anyway and they, I mean, certainly the airport, they're literally every ten minutes, it's a toss up of you know, compromise, changing, I'm getting a better property, larger with what I want with the drive space and everything to park, and I'm swapping aeroplane disturbance for the railways, and they do go, they're gone in seconds, the only, the only times in the summer if you've got windows open and everything and your trying to watch something on telly, for those few brief seconds, possibly a minute, something can come through and create a heck of a noise and you can't hear, but again that's weighed against the aeroplanes in E you know it's just the same, so I've not lost anything in that respect, I've not necessarily gained anything either

In one sense, railways can be seen to present 'trouble' (Wetherell, 1998) for identities in that they required participants to explain and justify their choice to live alongside railways. However, it is important to recognise that the research context may also have influenced these constructions in that the focus was on railways.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter addressed the 'lived ideologies' which shape how railways can be considered in relation to the dominant discourses around railways as a 'disruptive' aspect of 'place'. I discussed how living alongside railways can be considered as an ideological dilemma particularly for those who had greater agency in choosing where they live. When participants have chosen to live alongside railways, it became more difficult to construct railways as 'disruptive' as living in such places troubled 'identity'. Participants' talk worked to present 'place' favourably in relation to the 'lived ideologies' of 'the rural idyll' and 'a peaceful and quiet place'. Where participants had positioned themselves as constrained in relation to 'place', it appeared easier to present environmental conditions as 'disruptive' and significant aspects of 'place'.

How participants make sense of 'disruption' in the residential environment is developed further in the following chapter where I analyse the data generated from more direct questions about living alongside railways and how they *"just get used to them"*.

Chapter Eight: Adapting to Disruption

8.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, I examined how participants positioned themselves in relation to 'place' and how railways were negotiated within 'lived ideologies' of residential places. In finding somewhere to live, major life events and the necessities of accommodation took precedent over the presence of railways and their environmental conditions. However, participants negotiated their agency within the various constraints as 'place' was important for 'identity'. Railways required negotiation in that the centripetal forces of 'lived ideologies' were challenged by the 'centrifugal' forces of the railway as a 'disruptive' aspect of 'place'.

This final chapter of analysis focuses on how participants made sense of their continued residence alongside railways. I attend to the physicalities of 'place' and how 'exposure' to environmental conditions was portrayed by participants. I suggest that 'response' is varied and 'polyphonic' in that positioning shifted as participants negotiated environmental conditions within their residential places. I discuss three interpretative repertoires identified within the data that presented living alongside railways as an adaptational process. These interpretative repertoires address the physicality of 'place' and enable environmental conditions to be portrayed in different ways as people locate themselves in 'place'. With interpretative repertoires of adaptation, living alongside railways was presented as 'commonplace' in that all places have aspects to which people have to adapt and also become immune to over time.

8.2 Interpretative Repertoires of Adaptation

In analysing how participants made sense of living alongside railways, I identified three interrelated interpretative repertoires: 'learning to cope', 'getting used to it', and 'not noticing it'. I have chosen to use the concept of

'interpretative repertoires' as participants used specific linguistic resources in a relatively coherent way, using very similar phrasing as one another (Edley, 2001). The interpretative repertoires were drawn upon by participants to explain experiences of environmental conditions and worked to justify continued residence alongside railways. All three interpretative repertoires were employed for complex purposes: they overlapped, contradicted one another, and were used together in talk. A dialogical interpretation of the data highlights a 'polyphony' of voices or positions that participants negotiate in making sense of being 'exposed' to environmental conditions, which co-exist and are anticipative of each other. How participants positioned themselves in relation to 'place' also made certain interpretative repertoires more available than others. Furthermore, time was important to the meanings conveyed by these interpretative repertoires. Participants' talk demonstrated that "*without time, there is no story*" (Hermans, 2004, p. 304).

I now discuss each one in turn, starting with the interpretative repertoire of 'learning to cope' with living alongside railways. The analysis includes discussion of how participants' talk can be considered as reproducing the dominant annoyance framework of environmental conditions underpinned by theories of environmental stress (Glass & Singer, 1972; Guski, 1999; Miedema, 2007; Stallen, 1999; Staples, 1996). The analysis emphasises the complexities of how people negotiate environmental conditions in relation to 'place' and 'identity'.

8.3 Learning to Cope

Within my analysis, some participants portrayed living with environmental conditions was portrayed as something to which people learned to cope with over time. I developed the 'learning to cope' interpretative repertoire as it functioned as a shared cultural resource to convey meaning (Burr, 2003) and accomplish social action (Goodman, 2008). This repertoire drew upon notions of environmental conditions as stressful, which require a person to cope. Talk

of 'learning to cope' operated as 'agentic practices' (Tucker et al., 2012) used to organise accounts of adapting to environmental conditions in the context of living alongside railways.

Michaela, in particular, relied heavily upon the 'learning to cope' interpretative repertoire as living alongside railways was "*hard*" for her but also something that she could deal with. Michaela negotiates her agency within the constraints of being allocated her property by the council and the limited choice of being able to move elsewhere. In the excerpt below, Michaela explained how she felt once she discovered, via Google Maps, that her property was located above an underground railway. I have also included a further excerpt from later in Michaela's interview to contextualise how drawing upon her past experiences of railways, and positioning herself as carer and 'protector' of her family, enables her to make sense of living where she does.

Excerpt 51

Michaela: I was annoyed, I don't sleep properly because of the trains, neither does my partner, it does break our sleep, especially when the four o'clock train comes through from A [city] cos that is one of the main cargo trains to B [nearby city] and it's the worst train that you can hear so it's a bit of a nightmare but we've learned to cope with it, so it is hard

Excerpt 52

Michaela: Yeah it's hard with the noise and the vibrations and things but it's a case of you have to learn to live with it, more so with the children because they do get broken sleep so we tried to soundproof out their rooms so they can't really hear it as much but it has woken my, the youngest up a few times in the middle of the night but other than that it's, I was always used to trains because when I used to go down to my uncle's in, he used to live like two seconds but it was like he couldn't even open his kitchen window more than two inches otherwise the trains would take it off so fair enough yeah I haven't been down there for quite a few years cos he's moved, he moved when I was about sixteen, so it's been a good few years since I was down there so it's like, I didn't, I got out of that listening to them and then I came here and heard them

but it's a case of I'm learning to deal with it but my partner and kids are finding it hard

Michaela positions herself as being annoyed about discovering the railway's presence. However, being annoyed was not restricted to the time when she discovered the railway. Her annoyance is emphasised by the cargo (freight) trains which disrupt her sleep during the night. That her sleep is disrupted provides a strong motive for Michaela's annoyance and frames 'disruption' within the domains of environmental stress. The disruption to her everyday life was emphasised by dramatic descriptions (e.g. "*especially*", "*worst*", "*nightmare*") of living alongside railways; a discursive strategy also found in residents' accounts of blasting activities from a nearby quarry (Hugh-Jones & Madill, 2009). However, within the interview, I also felt that Michaela was trying to entertain me with her accounts of the railways.

Michaela presented the railways' disruptiveness as more problematic and difficult (or in her terms "*hard*") in comparison to other participants. However, the 'learning to cope' interpretative repertoire also minimised the disruptiveness of railways and emphasised her ability to cope with living alongside railways. Even though she positioned herself as constrained in coming to live alongside railways and was also initially unaware and uninformed of its presence, that Michaela has interest in 'place' for her 'identity work' was perhaps acknowledged and managed by 'learning to cope'. Furthermore, Michaela shifts the emphasis to her family (i.e. partner and children) who find it "*hard*" to live alongside railways, which could be interpreted as repairing 'trouble' for her 'identity' as it aligns with her identity as carer of her family. Michaela's talk around the railway can be understood further by situating her annoyance and 'learning to cope' within the wider context of her life as "*hard*" and how living in her current place has made life "*easier*" in some ways (see Section 6.5).

Her annoyance was also managed by her familiarity with trains in her recollection of visiting her uncle's property located alongside an overground railway. Michaela's story of past experiences of railways and their 'disruptiveness' offers justification as to why she is coping better than her family.

Her account of her uncle's house is also dramatised "*couldn't even open his kitchen window...otherwise the trains would take it off*", which provides a more extreme case example of living alongside railways for comparative purposes. 'Learning to cope' with railways and already being "*used to*" railways co-exist within Michaela's account and any dialogical tension between them appeared to be reconciled by shifting the focus to her partner and children's struggle with railway vibrations and noises. Her 'multivoicedness' around 'exposure' to environmental conditions demonstrates "*the simultaneous existence of different individual voices*" (Hermans, 2001, p. 262).

Interestingly, Michaela differed from other participants as she had lived in her current house for the relatively short period of time (nine months²⁶). Her shorter length of residency appeared to facilitate her annoyance and made the interpretative repertoire of 'learning to cope' more available to her than it was for longer term residents. Furthermore, being constrained in relation to 'place' and accepting a property allocated by the council also facilitated her annoyed position. Cheryl also portrayed her initial experiences of living alongside railways as difficult. In the excerpt below, Cheryl reflected on when she first moved in and conveys a sense of 'learning to cope' with living alongside railways. Unlike Michaela, Cheryl was aware of the railways presence underneath the property as Allen already lived there.

Excerpt 53

Cheryl: Used to bug me more when we first moved in, those first few years, the noises, it cracks you up but, I've got used to it, is it fourteen years this year

Cheryl portrays her experiences of living alongside railways as have changed over time ("*fourteen years*") from being 'bugged' by railway noise to having "*got used to it*". As living with noise that "*cracks you up*" creates a dialogical tension, the 'you get used to it' repertoire repairs the 'trouble' (Wetherell, 1998) of railway noise for 'identity'. Like Michaela, later in her interview, Cheryl positioned herself as being annoyed when she first moved to her current 'place':

²⁶ The sampling strategy of the DEFRA project for railway respondents was to only interview people who had lived in their property for nine months or longer.

Excerpt 54

Cheryl: I was annoyed by it in the beginning, over the first few years, I wouldn't say I was annoyed now

Cheryl's recollection of being annoyed at first emulates Michaela's annoyance and acknowledges living alongside railways as a 'disruptive' aspect of 'place'. When environmental conditions are new and unfamiliar, being annoyed appears more available as a position for 'identity' to make sense of living alongside railways. Participants' accounts of railways as initially 'disruptive' but something that you can learn to cope with countered the potential negative implications of 'place' for their identities. Given the emphasis on time as important, expressing annoyance when a longer term resident could present 'trouble' for 'identity' (Wetherell, 1998). Cheryl's account could also be interpreted as repairing 'trouble' through place comparison (see Excerpt 55 below). Although Alkon and Traugot (2008) found no evidence of place comparison working to present other places more favourably than a speaker's current 'place', Cheryl did so in explaining her initial experiences of railways:

Excerpt 55

Cheryl: I was somewhere quiet wasn't I where, where I used to live, I lived in C [nearby town], where we were, we weren't by any roads or anything so it was relatively quiet so yeah it was a shock to the system, you got used to it, and there were quiet periods of the day, sometimes it just would crack you up, the noise

Here the 'lived ideologies' of 'the rural idyll' and 'a peaceful and quiet place' (see Chapter Seven) justify Cheryl's unfamiliarity with 'disruption' in her previous 'place'. Her 'exposure' to environmental conditions could be linked to the theoretical attempts to explain noise annoyance which are often underpinned by an environmental stress perspective (Stallen, 1999; Staples, 1996). Here annoyance links to stress, where the '*shock to the system*' taps into the "*stressfulness*" (Moser & Robin, 2006, p. 36) of environmental conditions that are often associated with urbanisation. Railways and their

environmental conditions challenged 'lived ideologies' and thus the interpretative repertoire of 'learning to cope' enabled residents to manage their identities of 'place'.

However, it is important to note that participants experiences of taking part in the Defra project (Waddington et al., 2011) could have impacted upon discourses related to annoyance, stress and coping. Railways were also the focus of this research and my study could be seen as a follow up of the social survey questionnaire and vibration measurements. Although acknowledged, the extent of this influence can only ever be partially known (Finlay, 2002a). Additionally, some participants did not convey their initial experiences of living alongside railways by means of a 'learning to cope' repertoire. Therefore 'learning to cope' was one of numerous ways in which participants' made sense of living alongside railways and their 'exposure' to environmental conditions. Moreover, some participants did not position themselves as annoyed and as such, alternative ways of making sense of continued residence alongside railways are acknowledged in the following sections.

8.4 You Get Used to It

Considering the structural constraints in finding somewhere to live, 'learning to cope' served as the most feasible course of action for continued residence where participants positioned themselves as initially annoyed by the environmental conditions associated with living alongside railways. The alternatives would be 'cracking up' (Cheryl) or moving to another property, which were not posed as viable or desirable options. The lack of choice was encapsulated by Michaela's account of living alongside railways in that "*you have to learn to live with it*" (see Excerpt 52). Although 'learning to cope' enabled participants to convey themselves as having agency in that they are doing something in order to live with environmental conditions, participants did not explicitly elaborate as to how coping worked in practice. Implicit within the

'learning to cope' repertoire is that through repeated exposure, and over time, people adapt to environmental conditions.

My analysis of 'learning to cope' can be supported by the second interpretative repertoire 'you get used to it', the most prevalent discourse drawn upon in participants' accounts of living alongside railways, used by all but two of the participants in this study (Catherine and Margaret). Its prevalence and interrelatedness to other adaptational repertoires can be evidenced by its inclusion in Cheryl and Michaela's talk in the previous section. Again, the importance of time as changing experiences of environmental conditions is sustained by this repertoire.

'You get used to it' was a pivotal interpretative repertoire within participants' accounts of adaptation, which furthered the notion of 'learning to cope'. It featured in participants' talk across the interviews but was often drawn upon to normalise experiences of environmental conditions such as vibration and noise from railways. Below is an excerpt from Roxanne's interview where she talks about her area and her experiences of vibration from railways.

Excerpt 56

Roxanne: ...it's like, with our telly it interferes with our telly, I don't know if it's something to do with the aerial but if they're parked there it will just freeze

Jenna: So is it something that you can feel?

Roxanne: When you get the fast trains going past, when you're in bed you can feel it, it vibrates, the bed shakes, but like I say it's just, you get used to it, you get used to it

Roxanne acknowledges the railway vibration as 'disruptive', which is then negotiated by her use of "*you get used to it*". This interpretative repertoire halted that line of discussion and instigated a change of topic in our conversation. In the interview, rather than asking her to expand on what she meant or how getting used to vibration from railways worked in practice, I understood what she meant and accepted that this is what happens. It was difficult to challenge this interpretative repertoire in that it was as if 'you get used

to it' was all that could be said about living alongside railways. Adopting the pronoun 'you' rather than 'I' incorporates the 'other' and creates a relational agency to convey that everybody (including me) would or could get used to living alongside railways. As Benwell and Stokoe (2006) pointed out, the use of pronouns can work to position others as in agreement and the speaker as authoritative on the topic.

'You get used to it' also fits with Edley's (2001) argument that some constructions or formulations appear more available for use than others in that they are "*easier to say*" (p.190), and thus easier for the audience, and in this case the interviewer, to understand and accept. Gramsci (1971) argued that some ways of understanding the world become culturally dominant or hegemonic in that they hold a position of status or fact and become considered as 'truths' about the world. Subsequently, the effect this interpretative repertoire had within the interaction demonstrated its culturally dominant position as truth or fact (Gramsci, 1971).

The hegemonic status of 'you get used to it' as an interpretative repertoire can be seen in other interviews where it was also employed to explain how people live with environmental conditions associated with railways. Connor talked about when he first moved into his property and conveys the process of getting used to the railway as something which happened over time. 'You get used to it' furthered the notion of 'learning to cope' with 'disruption'.

Excerpt 57

Jenna: Does it [freight traffic] affect your sleep?

Connor: No to be fair no cos you get used to it and you know what the noises are, it's like when you live in your house you know the floor boards creak or something creaks and you, you know what it is so you don't necessarily, it doesn't alarm you or wake you up, you just sort of turn over, I used to have, when I first moved in, the trains used to go thundering past at about eleven o'clock and I remember thinking oh they must be on their last shift they want to get home, they seemed to go twice

as fast as anybody else but again I don't know whether that's still the case, we don't register it anymore

Connor emphasised getting used to freight traffic through his initial impressions of the late night trains “*thundering past*” and how he paid attention to them: “*I remember thinking oh they must be on their last shift*”. Connor’s dramatic descriptions of the train “*thundering past*” going “*twice as fast*” are powerful in emphasising railways as very noticeable, something which he initially “*register[ed]*”. This was unlike Michaela and Cheryl who employed the ‘learning to cope’ repertoire in their constructions of railways as ‘disruptive’. Connor did not position himself as annoyed, and therefore he portrays his initial impressions of railways as noticeable but not necessarily annoying.

In the excerpt above, Connor also created a shared understanding of what it is like to live in “*your*” house. This worked in a similar way to the pronoun use of ‘you’ in ‘you get used to it’ to include the audience in the shared experience of living somewhere (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). As culturally shared knowledge (“*you know what it is*”), houses as all having their own unique “*noises*” presented railways and the passing of freight traffic as commonplace and ‘usual’ (Bush et al., 2001). Interestingly, “*noises*” did not take on a negative meaning here, tapping into the notion of an everyday ‘soundscape’ (Schafer, 1969) consisting of the ordinary sounds (“*the floor boards creak*”) which normalised living alongside railways and incorporated them as part of ‘place’.

Connor’s account of getting used to railways was reinforced by his familiarity with living with ‘disruptive’ environmental conditions as he had previously lived under a flight path (see excerpt below).

Excerpt 58

Connor: In E [previous place] I was under the flight path so there were planes coming over every ten minutes so I saw no reason that the railway would be a problem so I went for this one

Connor drew upon this past experience of living under the flight path to justify his decision to buy a property alongside a railway (also see Section 6.4). Like Connor, Jim also used his experience of living under the flight path to position himself as having an authoritative understanding of noise “*I know what noise is like*”.

Excerpt 59

Jim: I’ve lived under the flight path for the airport, I’ve lived under the flight path so I know what noise is like

Jenna: What was that like?

Jim: When you got the big ones coming in, everything used to rattle, windows, and but the thing is you get used to it

Despite the apparent impact from aircraft within Jim’s domestic environment, Jim draws upon the interpretative repertoire of ‘you get used to it’. There is arguably a cultural hierarchy of noise sources in that living near airports is presented as more ‘disruptive’, which is drawn upon to minimise the environmental conditions associated with living alongside railways. Place comparison enables the current place of residence to be considered favourably (Alkon & Traugot, 2008), and in turn, this contributes to managing the implications of living somewhere ‘disruptive’ for ‘identity’.

‘You get used to it’ was a flexible interpretative repertoire in that it featured heavily in reference to other physical aspects of ‘place’. Below Allen used ‘*you get used to it*’ for living near a busway²⁷ in his childhood home on the same estate where he now lives.

Excerpt 60

Allen: We used to live, where I used to live the busway runs parallel across the back of the houses

Jenna: Ah right ok what was that like, I saw the busway actually as I came down

²⁷ A busway is a road that is exclusively for buses and no other type of road traffic.

Allen: It wasn't too bad actually cos you, actually you get used to it you just don't sort of realise it's there

He also draws upon the *'not noticing it'* interpretative repertoire (discussed in detail in the following section) when he says *"you just don't sort of realise it's there"*. Both interpretative repertoires enable Allen to repair any 'trouble' for 'identity', given the bus way's location on the same estate, and how he positioned himself as choosing to remain in the same place that he grew up in.

Another example can be seen in Kerry's interview where she talked about getting used to the main road on which her current property near the railway is located.

Excerpt 61

Jenna: Right ok so have lived on a main road before?

Kerry: No no I haven't, because of the selling features, points of the house, you just compensate you know it's fine, we've got double glazed windows, they need replacing with better quality ones but you know it blocks it out, its only when the window's open that you can really, it really annoys you, and it starts about half seven in the morning and goes on til about ten at night it's not

Jenna: Is it busy all the day?

Kerry: Well, most of the day yeah but I'm not in my bedroom, but if I'm at home you know what I mean, but it doesn't bother me now cos I'm just, I'm just used to it

She presents the main road as something she *"compensate[d]"* for and something that *"really annoys you"*. She made a choice to live there and therefore a position of annoyance is 'repaired' by the 'you get used to it' interpretative repertoire. Kerry talks about how the main road doesn't bother her *"now"*, which implies the main road used to bother her when she first moved in. Even though she positioned herself as being 'annoy[ed]', and at the same time she positioned herself as constrained in making a *"compensate[d]"* choice to live there, the 'learning to cope' interpretative repertoire was not employed. Given this context, *"I'm used to it"* could be seen as a positioning of agency, particularly through the use of the pronoun 'I'. The favourable aspects of her

property - its *“selling features”* and *“points”* - also supported her continued residence alongside railways and worked towards an ‘untroubled’ (Wetherell, 1998) ‘identity’ in relation to ‘place’. Within the wider context of Kerry’s residential history, she had previously discussed being in a situation of negative equity, which constrained her ability to move properties in the immediate future. Subsequently, she also positioned herself as having little choice but to get used to the main road on which her property was situated.

What the instances of *‘you get used to it’* have in common is that they can be seen to counter the voices of others i.e. those who do not live alongside railways. *‘You get used to it’* was used to end lines of conversation, as a summary discourse, and to account for all manner of physical and environmental features from bus ways to airports. *‘You get used to it’* worked as the key stone in the *“building blocks of conversation”* (Edley, 2001, p. 198) around the environmental conditions associated with living alongside railways, and in relation to other physical aspects of ‘place’.

8.5 Not Noticing it

Alongside *‘you get used to it’*, an interpretative repertoire of *‘not noticing it’* was drawn upon by participants in making sense of living with environmental conditions. This furthered support for the notion of *‘learning to cope’* with *‘disruptive’* environmental conditions. *‘Not noticing it’* also extended support for repairing *‘trouble’* that living alongside railways presented for *‘identity’*. When participants said they no longer noticed the environmental conditions associated with the railway anymore, it appeared more passive and less agentic on the part of the speaker in comparison to *‘you get used to it’*. Not noticing environmental conditions was presented as something that just happens naturally over time. In other words, *‘not noticing it’* conveyed a sense of habituation or immunity whereas *‘you get used to it’* attributed agency towards the speaker who had *‘learned to cope’* and adapted to *‘place’*.

Whereas Michaela described her children as finding it “*hard*” to live alongside railways (see Excerpt 52), Allen and Cheryl portrayed their children as ‘immune’ to railways since they have grown up there.

Excerpt 62

Cheryl: So you do get used to it

Jenna: So you were already used to it then?

Allen: Yeah well I was six when we moved up here so to me it was just not, it wasn’t, like

Cheryl: The kids, the kids, if you ask the kids they wouldn’t probably notice anything

Allen made sense of being used to railways through his longevity in ‘place’ and having lived there from being six years old. Cheryl reinforced Allen’s account when she interrupted and referred to their children who “*wouldn’t probably notice anything*”. Again, the importance of time is presented as enabling living alongside railways to become ordinary and normal. The children have not had to do anything as living alongside railways is the ‘norm’ for them in that they have never lived anywhere else. Allen also incorporated railway noise as part of the everyday ‘soundscape’ (Schafer, 1969).

Excerpt 63

Allen: I’ve known about it [underground railway] since I’ve moved up here so, so it’s one of the things you just tend to hear all the time and then, you don’t tend to sometimes notice it, that it’s there, it’s just like, you hear the birds tweeting, you hear the trains going past, you know cars, it’s just the day to day noise sometimes

In the excerpt above, railway noise appeared to be both noticeable and not noticeable. Allen appeared to negotiate railway noise into the “*day to day noise*” with the natural noises (“*birds tweeting*”) and other transportational noise from cars. Allen’s ‘identity’ as a long term resident appeared to enable him to present railway noise as everyday and part of ‘place’. ‘Not noticing it’ appears to differ from ‘you get used it’ as it does not explicitly incorporate the ‘other’ (i.e. with the pronoun ‘you’). However, ‘not noticing it’ differentiated the speaker from the ‘other’, and conveyed a sense of ‘insideness’ in relation to ‘place’

(Dixon & Durrheim, 2004). As Allen had been a resident since he was six years old, 'identity' in relation to 'place' captures a "*deep-seated familiarity with the environment*" (Dixon & Durrheim, 2004, p. 457) and thus, 'not noticing it' was available to Allen to negotiate the railways presence.

However, the interpretative repertoires of 'you get used to it' and 'not noticing it' often overlapped and were often used simultaneously within the same account. 'You get used to it' and 'not noticing it' conveyed similar meanings and served similar purposes in talk: to justify continued residence and explain how participants can live with environmental conditions that can be 'disruptive'. However, to highlight how the two interpretative repertoires also differed, I include an excerpt from Donna's interview below.

Excerpt 64

Donna: Yeah you just do sort of get used to it, when we have visitors and they notice the trains and we've not noticed any trains go past, it is sometimes when you just get used to

Not noticing the trains going past reinforced the notion of getting used to living alongside railways. The example Donna provided, "*visitors*" who do not live alongside railways, emphasised how her continued residence and her familiarity with 'place' enables her to live there. Her 'identity' of 'place' therefore works to explain her continued residence but also recognise that railways are something that can be 'disruptive' when they are unfamiliar to people.

Michaela did not draw upon the 'not noticing it' repertoire, which could be reflective of her relatively short period of residence. The railway was something Michaela was currently 'learning to cope' with, thus the interpretative repertoire of 'not noticing it' appeared unavailable to her. However, she did talk about the railway vibration as something noticeable to herself and to visitors. In the excerpt below, Michaela differed from Donna in that she dramatizes the noticeability of the railway (e.g. "*jumped out of her skin*").

Excerpt 65

Jenna: Do you ever speak to other people about the railway like visitors, when people come to visit do they notice or?

Michaela: Yes we have our, a couple of our friends come round different nights of the week, our main friends Katie and Lee come round on a Tuesday evening, after they finish work they come, what we normally do is have a games night, sounds silly but it's great fun, and we have our, we'll have a meal and games night and have a few drinks and that, and they do notice it cos they said to me, when they first noticed it, when they started coming round a bit more, it was like 'what the hells that', excuse me

Jenna: It's alright, no don't worry about it

Michaela: That's what they were like and it really put the crap up my mate cos she's not very good at horrors, and I made her watch a horror and she, she jumped out of her skin, and my friend Helen she comes round whenever she can, she works stupid hours, so she comes round whenever she can and she noticed it as well, as well as my other friend Lisa when she comes, it's like everybody notices it

In the excerpt above, Michaela gave a number of examples of visitors who all notice the vibration from the underground railway. Because “*everybody notices it*”, others are presented as responding to railway vibration in a similar way to Michaela. Thus positions taken by Michaela as somebody ‘learning to cope’ and as annoyed, are reinforced. However Michaela also used the noticeability of railway vibration to convey a positive ‘identity’ in terms of socialising and having friends. This was important in terms of her ‘identity work’ as we had previously talked about her spending a lot of time at home due to health issues and caring for her partner and children.

8.6 Annoyed but Adapted

So far in this chapter, my analysis has aimed to demonstrate how participants negotiated environmental conditions in making sense of their continued living residence alongside railways. Participants’ talk had a ‘multivoicedness’

(Hermans, 2001) in that they talked about 'not noticing it' (i.e. the railway) yet also talked about noticing environmental conditions as a 'disruptive' aspect of 'place' (see Section 7.4). The contradiction and inconsistency within accounts of the railway can be understood as dialogical, in that participants can take multiple positions or 'voices' to present railways as both significant and insignificant in relation to 'place'. As people shift positions to present environmental conditions in various ways, 'identity' can be seen as something multiple and fragmented as railways are negotiated within 'place'.

Below, I have included two excerpts from Roxanne's interview where she positioned herself as both annoyed and adapted to emphasise the 'multivoicedness' of talk around environmental conditions.

Excerpt 66

Roxanne: I like it, I like it, you get used to the trains you know at first, they were annoying but you just, it goes over your head, you get used to it

Excerpt 67

Roxanne: It's just annoying, it's annoying, especially when you want to watch telly or you know or you like if your sat in the sun, if your sat in your garden and it's there, idling for like an hour or so that does your head in a bit

The excerpts demonstrate how it is possible to be both annoyed and not annoyed, and how someone can be used to the railway and not used to the railway. For Roxanne, sometimes the railway "*does your head in*" and at other times, "*it goes over your head*". The railway can be considered as something that she should be annoyed by, particularly in relation to the 'unspoiled other', that is 'the rural idyll' and 'a peaceful and quiet place'. There appears to be dialogical tensions between adapting as a centripetal force and as a centrifugal force in that the environmental conditions associated with railways go against the 'lived ideologies' of residential places. If Roxanne had said that the railway "*does your head in*" all the time, this could have presented 'trouble' for 'identity' with regards to justifying her continued residence alongside railways. In a

sense, there is almost no choice but to adapt and thus, in the following chapter, I discuss adapting to 'place' as a 'lived ideology'.

8.7 Identities of Commonplaces

Interpretative repertoires of adaptation also appeared to minimise the railways disruptiveness and present environmental conditions as insignificant to 'place'. In this sense, the interpretative repertoires of adaptation could be considered 'strategies of normification' (Bush et al., 2001). The railway is normal in that "*everyone lives near something*" (see Excerpt 68 below).

Excerpt 68

Allen: I think there's more important things in the area that would or wouldn't affect it than the railway that's underground, I suppose everyone lives near something that makes noise, and I think it's just a by-product of 21st century now

Cheryl: Building houses everywhere aren't they, buy a little piece of land and build a house

Allen presented living with something that "*makes noise*" as 'commonplace' in the "*21st century*". In turn, living somewhere 'disruptive' becomes acceptable and in turn, Allen accomplished a positive identification of 'place' and answers the anticipated voices of the 'other'. In the context of living alongside railways, participants presented places as 'commonplace' rather than as distinctive. This finding arguably goes against some of the previous theoretical work on 'place identity' which emphasises that people use 'place' to portray distinctive identities in the quest for individuality (e.g. Bonaiuto et al., 1996; Breakwell, 1986; Twigger-Ross et al., 2003). In order to make sense of these findings, I draw upon Goffman's (1963) notion of 'stigma', the premise being that participants' presented places as 'commonplace' to manage a 'spoiled identity'.

The concept of 'stigma' has been drawn upon in numerous studies within community contexts and in research investigating perceptions of technological and environmental risk (Colocousis, 2012; Gregory, Flynn, & Slovic, 2001; Hastings, 2004; Hayden, 2000; McKenzie, 2012; Sampson & Raudenbush,

2004; Wester-herber, 2004). In research on air pollution and stigma, Bush et al. (2001) found that those from areas around Teeside constructed their areas as unpolluted and clean. The authors called this 'usualness', which is potentially a useful concept to adopt in understanding how participants negotiate railways within their residential places. However, railways as 'commonplace' or 'usual' was challenged in participants talk when I asked more direct questions about the environmental conditions associated with railways. This is where the interpretative repertoires of adaptation functioned as support for railways as 'commonplace' in that people can adapt to physical aspects of 'place' that can be considered 'disruptive'.

8.8 Conclusion

In making sense of their continued residence alongside railways which, in relation to the 'other', can be considered 'disruptive', participants drew upon interpretative repertoires of adaptation. In contrast to the wealth of research focussing on environmental annoyance, adaptation was more prevalent than annoyance within the participants' accounts of living alongside railways. Furthermore, this chapter demonstrated 'multivoicedness' in that participants could be both annoyed and adapted to the environmental conditions in their place of residency. The interpretative repertoires of adaptation provided participants with a way of justifying their continued residence whilst minimising the 'disruptiveness' of railways. Their talk worked to present living alongside railways as 'commonplace' in that all places require some adaptation.

Chapter Nine: Discussion

9.1 Introduction

From the outset of this thesis, I have emphasised how 'place' and 'identity' are increasingly relevant for understanding the relations between people and physical environments. This research aimed to explore how participants' negotiated environmental conditions within their talk around 'place' and 'identity'. The research context was living alongside railways, specifically the West Coast Main Line (WCML) in the North of England. Interview data from ten qualitative interviews with residents living alongside the WCML were generated and analysed using a discursive psychological approach. My final chapter discusses the main research findings, the methodological and epistemological considerations, and the practical and ethical implications of this research.

The chapter begins with a summary of the main research findings. This is followed by a discussion of 'place' and 'identity' as relevant and appropriate concepts to understand how environmental conditions can be negotiated within talk. I then discuss and reflect upon the interpretative repertoires of adaptation to consider adapting as a lived ideology which enables people to make sense of their continued residence with environmental conditions that can be considered 'disruptive'.

Following the discussions of the key research findings, I consider the methodological contributions made to knowledge around environmental conditions, which has largely measured 'response' in terms of annoyance within an exposure-response approach. I argue that the research findings emphasise how qualitative methodologies, which understand people as active 'sense makers' (Darlaston-Jones, 2007), can highlight the complexities of living with environmental conditions in residential places. Furthermore, I discuss how taking a discursive psychological approach uncovered the dominant 'lived

ideologies' and 'interpretative repertoires' drawn upon by participants in their accounts of living alongside railways. The methodological challenges around developing a discursive psychological approach, which draws upon a number of discursive psychological concepts, are also considered.

In addition, the epistemological contributions that this research can make to knowledge of environmental conditions in residential places are discussed. I argue that a social constructionist epistemology embraced the complexities and multiplicities of 'response' to environmental conditions. I consider how this approach facilitated a more complex interpretation of environmental conditions which move beyond the concept of 'annoyance' to understand environmental conditions as something to which people adapt. Furthermore, it enabled participants' accounts of railways to be understood as accomplishing identities of 'place'. In relation to ontology, I consider what taking a relativist position offered in terms of new knowledge around environmental conditions. I also discuss how an alternative ontology of critical realism could have framed this research.

This chapter also includes a discussion of the practical considerations and ethical implications of this research. The importance of understanding living alongside railways is also emphasised in relation to the upcoming changes and new rail developments for the UK railway network. In comparison to the wealth of research that measures the environmental conditions associated with railways, this research emphasises the importance of understanding how people make sense of living alongside railways. The chapter concludes with my final thoughts for how this research may lead on to future work on environmental conditions.

9.2 The Main Findings

Within the wider contexts of finding somewhere to live, railways were presented as relatively insignificant by participants in this study. Participants' located themselves in 'place' in relation to the various circumstances and life events

which influenced their residence alongside railways. Railways and environmental conditions were “*only part of the story*” (Moser, 2009, p. 1). However, railways were presented as significant in relation to the ‘other’: the wider ‘lived ideologies’ around residential places and also the interview context of taking part in research that focused on railways.

For participants who positioned themselves as choosing ‘place’, railways were argued to present ‘trouble’ (Wetherell, 1998) for ‘identity’. Where participants were more constrained, in the context of social housing for example, presenting railways as ‘disruptive’ appeared to facilitate positions of agency in relation to ‘place’. As participants located themselves in ‘place’, railways had implications for ‘identity’. Lived ideologies of ‘the rural idyll’ and ‘a quiet and peaceful place’ were drawn upon in participants’ accounts where the presence of the railway was notably absent. When talk focused more specifically on railways, the wider ‘lived ideologies’ of residential places appeared to be challenged.

Railways were presented as ‘disruptive’ as one of the central ways that participants made sense of their continued residence was through interpretative repertoires of adaptation. Three interpretative repertoires were identified: ‘learning to cope, ‘you get used to it’, and ‘not noticing it’. Although some participants positioned themselves as annoyed by the environmental conditions associated with railways, their positioning shifted within talk to negotiate the disruptiveness of railways for ‘place’. Talk around environmental conditions was multivoiced in that participants’ could be both annoyed and not annoyed, and used to and not used to living alongside railways. For those who had lived alongside railways for an extended period of time, presenting themselves as adapting and/or adapted worked to present a morally acceptable account of ‘place’ and ‘identity’. The interpretative repertoires of adaptation worked to normalise living alongside railways in that they were presented as ‘commonplace’ and no more unusual than other types of residential places.

9.3 The Value of Place and Identity

The concepts of 'place' and 'identity' enabled this research to attend to the subjective and meaningful relations people have with physical environments (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000; Lewicka, 2011; Manzo & Perkins, 2006). 'Place' and 'identity' have offered a way to contextualise environmental conditions and understand how people live with them from a different viewpoint. In accounts of coming to live alongside railways, participants' located themselves in 'place', and in turn, the physical environment was important to 'who they are' (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000). When discursive practices are examined for what they accomplish for the person, environmental conditions have implications for 'identity'. Thus 'place' enabled this research to account for how talk around the physical environment is never disinterested (Hugh-Jones & Madill, 2009).

This research has contributed to knowledge on the 'lived ideologies' of residential places and how notions of rurality and countryside permeate dialogue around environmental conditions. The value of 'a peaceful and quiet place' was also an important 'lived ideology' within participants' accounts. In relation to these lived ideologies, railways often went unmentioned. Participants negotiated railways within these wider lived ideologies by presenting living with 'disruption' as 'commonplace'. However, talk around the environmental conditions associated with railways also illuminated how 'disruption' can present 'trouble' (Wetherell, 1998) for 'identity work' (Beech, 2008).

Other research has also utilised the concepts of 'place' and 'identity' to understand environmental conditions that can be considered 'disruptive' in relation to the wider 'lived ideologies' of residential places (e.g. Bush et al., 2001; Hugh-Jones & Madill, 2009). Researching railways from a 'place identity' perspective contributes to this growing literature. In relation to 'place', Lewicka (2011) argued that *"finding one's way through this thicket and offering a perspective which will throw a new light on place research presents a real challenge"* and that *"adding another summary does not seem to be very useful...it will not help overcome theoretical problems which place research faces"* (p. 208). This research has endeavoured to extend rather than

summarise 'place' by applying the concept to an under-researched physical feature of residential places. Furthermore, 'place' and 'identity' have been utilised to understand environmental conditions that have been largely researched within an annoyance framework.

By adopting the concept of 'place', I have incorporated the material form and the meaningfulness of environmental conditions (Gieryn, 2000). 'Place' captures how the physicalities of environmental conditions set bounds on experiences of vibration and noise in residential places. In this sense, I attended to Stedman's (2003) argument that 'place' has been 'overconstructed' and the physical form of 'place' has been neglected. 'Place' situates environmental conditions within the wider contexts of a physical environment that gives form to 'place' constructions (Stedman, 2003). It also incorporates the person as imbuing the physical environment with meaning. 'Place' constructions were fluid and dynamic as people negotiated environmental conditions for their identities. Thus, this research attended to the recent call for a greater focus on the role of 'identity' for environmental and place-based changes (Future Identities Report, 2013).

9.4 Adapting to Place

Within my analysis, I identified three interpretative repertoires of 'learning to cope', 'you get used to it' and 'not noticing it' which functioned to portray living alongside railways as something that people can adapt to over time. The repertoires enabled participants to negotiate their agency in the context of their continued residence alongside railways with environmental conditions that are often considered 'disruptive'. The railway's fixedness was negotiated by the interpretative repertoires which enabled environmental conditions to be presented in different ways for untroubled identities of 'place'.

These interpretative repertoires of adapting to 'disruption' can also be argued to represent a 'lived ideology' (Billig et al., 1988) of adapting to 'place' and further, adapting to life more generally. 'You get used to it' was particularly prevalent,

and as such, I considered this repertoire as hegemonic in terms of upholding 'adapting to place' as a culturally dominant position of fact (Gramsci, 1971). Where participants' talked about adapting to environmental conditions, expressions of annoyance about living alongside railways appeared constrained. The interpretative repertoires of adaptation enabled participants to present untroubled identities of 'place'. The alternatives to adapting would be to not cope or move to another location, which was often not a viable or desirable option for participants, particularly those who situated themselves within structural constraints. As an example, I have included an excerpt from Jim below who encapsulated the difficulties of being annoyed and 'choosing' to live in a place near a railway.

Excerpt 69

Jim: I mean you got, you've got a railway line there, you're going to move into that property you can see that railway line, you know you're going to get noise so you expect it when you move in, it's no good moving in and complaining afterwards is it really

Jim emphasised the fixedness of the railway, which is often there before the person moving in, and therefore noise is to be expected. Hugh-Jones and Madill (2009) noted this in their research with residents living near a quarry, where complaining was dependent upon temporality based rights, "*that is, that the right to complain depends on what occupied the space first: the person or the problem*" (p. 14). Jim also positioned the "*complaining*" person as agentic in that they can choose whether to live alongside railways or not. However, within this research, I have argued that whilst positions of choice were available to some, all of the participants positioned themselves as constrained in relation to 'place'. The excerpt above demonstrates how being annoyed presents 'trouble' for identities, particularly where the person positions themselves as choosing 'place'. Interestingly, Michaela and Roxanne were both unaware of the railway, which could offer further explanation as to how positions of annoyance appeared more available to them. However Roxanne, and Michaela to a

certain extent, also presented railways as something to which they are or have adapted.

Throughout the duration of this research, I became aware of the prevalence of the interpretative repertoires identified outside of the research context. In particular, 'you get used to it' was drawn upon to provide explanations of situations and circumstances which can be considered problematic or difficult in relation to the 'other'. 'You get used to it' appeared in a novel, on a television programme, and in conversations with others, some of which related to where people live and what people live near. I have included a number of examples from popular literature and from other research where I have found the 'you get used to it' repertoire. The first example is from the BBC1 'The Graham Norton Show', on which the singer Justin Bieber was a guest. The box below has a transcript of a conversation between Graham (host) and Justin (guest):

[Justin enters stage, greets Graham and his other guests while the audience scream and chant]

Graham: sit yourself down, sit down, sit down, sit down

[Screaming and chanting continues in the audience]

Graham: does that not drive you insane

Justin: what [Audience screams]

Graham: that noise

Justin: no it doesn't I, I got kind of used to it

Graham: I bet you have, it must be like living next door to a railway, you know, in the beginning [Audience laughs] because every window you open, that must be the sound [Audience screams]

Box 3: Transcript from The Graham Norton Show (2010)

This was a particularly important instance of 'you get used to it' as it specifically related to living alongside railways. The audience recognition of Graham's talk supports getting used to living alongside railways as a widely held, common sense understanding. Another example related to environmental conditions is from the novel 'One Day' by David Nicholls (2009).

At street level on the Cally Road, Ian's studio flat was lit only by the sodium of the street lamps and the occasional searching light of the double-decker buses. Several times a minute the whole room vibrated, shaken by one or more of the Piccadilly, Victoria or Northern lines and buses 30, 10, 46, 214 and 390. In terms of public transport it was possibly the greatest flat in London, but only in those terms. Emma could feel the tremors in her back as she lay on the bed that folded into a sofa....

'What was that one?'

Ian listened to the tremor. 'Eastbound Piccadilly.'

'How do you stand it Ian?'

'You get used to it. Also I've got these-' and he pointed towards two fat maggots of grey wax on the window ledge. 'Mouldable wax ear-plugs.'

Box 4: Excerpt from the novel 'One Day' by David Nicholls (2009, p. 151)

Central to both examples is the notion of getting used to something negative or unfamiliar, which offers further support for my interpretation of adapting to 'place' as hegemonic and as a 'lived ideology'.

The 'you get used to it' interpretative repertoire has also appeared in data in other research studies. For example, in Mason's (2004) research on residential histories, a participant called Gwen talked about her living situation where, along with her husband and children, she co-resided with her parents for thirty years. This was something that started out as a temporary arrangement and in Box 5 below, Gwen talks about getting used to living together.

Gwen: We found we didn't want to move. We liked the house, and we'd got used to it. The kiddies had got used to it, and we stayed there and eventually bought the house from my parents. They were going to look for a flat but then I went back to work and it was handy for my mum to be there to look after the kiddies. There was plenty of room for us and we had an extension built so we just all stayed together...It would have been different if we hadn't all got on but we did, we always did, so we didn't want them to move either quite honestly. (Gwen Mercer, aged 53, married)

Box 5: From Mason (2004)

Mason's (2004) analysis focused on Gwen's construction of place as 'taken-for-granted' in that she wanted to live near her parents. Mason (2004) did not analyse the construction of getting used to the living situation in detail, potentially because her work employed a narrative analytical approach. Within the analytical approach adopted in this research, getting used to living with her parents appeared to justify living in a way that could be considered 'disruptive' or 'unusual' by the other. Gwen's use of having "*got used to it*" addressed the unusualness of her living situation whilst enabling her to justify her continued residence within her parental home.

Stewart (2003) identified 'getting used to it' as the process through which children described adjusting to cancer. In doing so, the children were able to "*keep their focus on the ordinary nature of their everyday lives within the uncertain context of their illness*" (Stewart, 2003, p. 394). Although used in an entirely different context, Stewart (2003) noted three elements related to the process of getting used to cancer, two of which relate to getting used to living alongside railways. The first was the passage of time where children used very similar repertoires to the participants in this study (e.g. "With time, I got used to it"). The second element was repeated experiences which appeared as an inevitable consequence of the passing of time, but children emphasised the effort required on their part to get used to cancer.

Within this research, William also presented ill health as something which “you get used to” to convey a sense of acceptance in terms of how his life had turned out and how he had come to live where he does. In the excerpt below, William drew upon the ‘you get used to it’ interpretative repertoire to present a negative “grim” account of his life.

Excerpt 70

William: but you get into a situation you know I mean its grim, but it's not that bad it's just you get used to what you've got in a manner of speaking you always get what you want because you know apart from being born and dieing, everything else is just gradual you know and things happen along the way and you go with it you know

The interpretative repertoires of adaptation perhaps demonstrate a commonly held ‘lived ideology’ that “*people can get used to almost anything*” (Weinstein, 1982, p. 87). In relation to noise, Weinstein (1982) argued that “*it is commonly believed that people adapt rather easily to noise*” (p. 87). Adapting to ‘place’ works centripetally as a pervasive ‘lived ideology’ that is flexible in terms of its application for making sense of a wide variety of circumstances.

However, adapting to place also answers the anticipated voices of ‘others’ and thus can be considered as centrifugal in challenging other prominent lived ideologies: ‘the rural idyll’ and ‘a peaceful and quiet place’. Whilst getting used to railways negotiated the presence of railways in ‘place’, it also highlighted their disruptiveness in terms of challenging the ‘lived ideologies’ of residential places in relation to the ‘other’. As questions of ‘place’ are questions for ‘identity’, the railway arguably presented trouble for ‘identity’, which was reflected in participants’ talk. Presenting living alongside railways as something to which people adapt also minimises the disruptiveness of railways. Adapting to ‘place’ as a ‘lived ideology’ contributed to normalising living alongside railways in that such places are no more different or unusual than others. Thus, adaptation enabled railways to be presented as ‘commonplace’ which was important to participants’ ‘identity work’ in the context of ‘disruption’.

Adapting to environmental conditions has implications if these findings are to be applied within the wider contexts of policy making. For example, moving away from an annoyance framework to one of adaptation has ethical implications in terms of the construction of new developments. Adaptation could offer a justification for new transport infrastructure such as high-speed rail networks and light-rail systems, whilst offering a counter argument to new environmental conditions as 'disruptive'. As Burningham's (1998) study on the development of a new road demonstrated, of all the anticipated issues, environmental noise was presented as a pervasive problem for residents who lived in close proximity to the road. The participants in Burningham's (1998) study were not employing interpretative repertoires of adaptation. Although this research highlights how residents made sense of environmental conditions through a 'lived ideology' of adaptation, the application of these findings to other physical features and environmental conditions should be done so with caution.

However, the research findings may offer a practical solution in other instances such as where urban Brownfield²⁸ land has been allocated for re-development. Such land can be located in close proximity to existing physical features such as transport infrastructure, commercial properties and industrial works. Drawing upon the insights of temporality based rights (also see Hugh-Jones & Madill, 2011), where environmental conditions from physical features pre-exist housing, interpretative repertoires of 'adaptation' may be available for future residents to make sense of living with 'disruption' in talk around 'place' and 'identity'. Further discussion of the practical and ethical implications of this research is included later in this chapter.

9.5 Methodological Considerations

The findings outlined above offer new insight into how people make sense of environmental conditions in the context of living alongside railways.

²⁸ Brownfield is the term applied to land that has been previously developed which "*is capable of redevelopment, whether with or without treatment, whether contaminated or not, and where such redevelopment would be in accordance with planning policies or urban renewal objectives*" (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2001, p. 2).

Predominantly, environmental conditions have been investigated via an exposure-response approach where measurements of environmental conditions (i.e. exposure) are correlated with measurements of annoyance (i.e. response). Exposure-response relationships have difficulty in accounting for the variance in residents' annoyance ratings in response to the same level of exposure to environmental conditions (see Guski, 1999; Job, 1988; Miedema, 2007 for reviews). This research answered the call of Moser (2009) to attend to the wider social contexts within which 'response' to environmental conditions takes place. Qualitative interviews illuminated the complexities of this research area and how 'response' to environmental conditions was multiple, fragmented, and contradictory as participants' negotiated the presence of railways within their constructions of 'place' and 'identity'. What people say about environmental conditions, and thus how people rate them on annoyance scales, has implications for identities of 'place'. This research emphasised how people actively imbue the physical environment with meaning and how constructions of environmental conditions are flexible and fluid.

Qualitative methodologies can assist and inform quantitative methodologies in the attempts to address the "*top-down*" approach of environmental policies which are based upon measurements of environmental conditions and annoyance ratings (Adams et al., 2006). However, the findings of this research demonstrate how the complexities of environmental conditions cannot be reduced to a measurement or a point on a data scale. Asking people to rate their annoyance on questionnaire scales arguably forces a monologue on environmental conditions. This research argues that a dialogue is underway around environmental conditions: people interpret environmental conditions in various ways for different purposes within talk.

Measuring 'response' in terms of annoyance does not allow for alternative ways of understanding and making sense of environmental conditions. Focusing on annoyance arguably creates the "*necessary condition to feel annoyed*" (Kroesen et al., 2011, p. 147) in that there is limited scope for participants to express their 'response' in another way. The participants in this study gave

ratings of annoyance in the Defra project, yet within interviews, annoyance was one way of making sense of living alongside railways. By taking a qualitative approach, how people made sense of their continued residence was largely through interpretative repertoires of adaptation and in how they located themselves in 'place'. Remaining within a quantitative/survey approach would not have enabled this knowledge to emerge.

Developing a discursive psychological approach also presented some challenges and tensions in terms of going beyond discourse to generate knowledge about the 'experience' of living alongside railways. Research that adopts a relativist ontological position has been argued to marginalise the "*experiences we may have that are out of the realm of language*" (Sims-Schouten et al., 2007, p. 102). As such, I now consider the epistemological and ontological contributions and challenges within this research.

9.6 Epistemological and Ontological Considerations

Rather than being approached as essentially 'annoying' or 'disruptive', environmental conditions were understood as social constructed within dialogue (Hannigan, 1995). The analysis of the data demonstrated how environmental conditions were situated within the wider contexts of participants' residential histories, and how living alongside railways was in a dialogue with prevalent 'lived ideologies' of residential places such as 'the rural idyll' and 'a peaceful and quiet place'. This research highlighted how people make sense of 'place' through the wider, shared discourses around residential places, with which "*people can assemble accounts for their own purposes*" (Burr, 2003, p. 60). Subsequently, this research addressed participants' agency and also how accounts of environmental conditions were constrained and enabled by language and social structures.

Focusing on language and/or dialogue as epistemology and ontology (Sullivan, 2012) challenged 'mainstream' understandings of people and physical environments. This research embraced how language "*does not act like a*

mirror faithfully reflecting the world” and that there is therefore “*no easy route through self-description to the true nature of worlds and minds beyond*” (Wetherell, 2007, p. 663). By understanding the person as dialogical, this research highlighted how people can take multiple positions within talk to present themselves as both annoyed and adapted for example. Constructions of environmental conditions were ‘multivoiced’ (Hermans, 2001) as participants shifted positions to negotiate the railways presence within their residential places.

Upon reflection, one of the challenges within this research related to ontology and the tensions between the ‘construction’ of environmental conditions and the ‘experience’ of environmental conditions. Although this research was underpinned by a relativist ontological position, it is important to note that a potential alternative ontological position of critical realism (also see Section 4.6) could have been used within this research. Critical realism could offer a way to account for what Sims-Schouten et al. (2007) call the “*non-discursive*” (p. 101) and therefore go some way to address the tensions between ‘construction’ and ‘experience’.

For the purposes of going beyond the dominant annoyance framework and accompanying exposure-response methodologies, the relativist ontological position supported and enabled a particular focus on the discursive world to understand how people talked about living alongside railways. The development of the theoretical framework conceptualised ‘place’ as location, material form, and meaning (Gieryn, 2000) in order to address the physicality of ‘place’. The role of material conditions such as financial situations and employment circumstances were also analysed within participants accounts in terms of both structure (e.g. constraint) and agency (e.g. choice). However, in relation to attending to the sensory experience of living alongside railways, a critical realist approach could be adopted in future research to attend to the non-discursive and embodied experiences of environmental conditions in the places we live.

9.7 Practical and Ethical Considerations

Psychological research has been argued as *“highly relevant for environmental policy formation at any level...particularly with regard to the more complex environmental problems”* (Vlek, 2000, p. 153). Thus I aim to emphasise the importance of research for policy making as well as the ethical and practical implications of applying this research to environmental conditions within the places that people reside.

One of the key contributions that can be made to the body of knowledge on environmental annoyance is that adaptation was more prominently drawn upon by participants to make sense of their continued residence alongside railways. Annoyance was not the primary discourse used in participants' accounts of living alongside railways. Within environmental annoyance research and environmental management policies, adaptation has arguably been widely ignored. By exploring how participants portrayed environmental conditions within dialogue, interpretative repertoires of adaptation were more prevalent than annoyance and both were found to be present within the same account of living alongside railways. Annoyance may be an appropriate concept for use in relation to the initial stages of living with environmental conditions that can be considered 'disruptive', however adaptation provided people with more flexible and complex repertoires for making sense of their continued residence.

Although some attempts have been made to understand annoyance theoretically (e.g. Stallen, 1999; Staples, 1996), this is relatively limited in comparison to the wealth of research adopting this concept to measure human response to environmental conditions. Thus, the findings of this research indicate that the theoretical work around the concept of 'annoyance' requires further development. As Fraser (2003) argued in relation to environmental policy making, *“we must move beyond simple cause-and-consequence to understand how humans and the environment interact”* (p. 138). Gaining a deeper understanding of how people make sense of railways through their talk around 'place' and 'identity' could enable policymaking around environmental conditions such as noise to be less 'top-down' (Adams et al., 2006).

Within research on environmental conditions and environmental management policies, the concept of annoyance has taken precedent over adaptation. This could be due to experimental and survey research that finds little evidence of (physiological) habituation to noise (e.g. Evans & Lepore, 1993; Griffiths, 1983; Smith et al., 2002; Weinstein, 1982). In contrast, this research demonstrates that people make sense of living with environmental conditions through interpretative repertoires of adaptation. The relative absence of adaptation within annoyance research may reflect the challenges of measuring adaptation via social survey questionnaires for comparison with measurements of environmental conditions (e.g. noise levels). It is therefore important to move away from the view that adaptation as something occurring within the individual (Berry, 1997) to focus on the individual within social discourse where adapting works as a social practice.

As previously noted, there are potential ethical implications of applying the research findings around adaptation to policymaking in that adapting to 'place' could be used as justification to build new developments in close proximity to residential properties. Within the study context, the railways pre-dated the housing built alongside it and therefore the issue of temporality based rights should be taken into account. The long history of railways within residential places in the UK may account for why railways have been under-researched within environmental psychology. In this sense, the railway can be considered as holding the 'status quo' (Bonaiuto et al., 1996) as something which is unchanging or difficult to change. Where new developments are to be built, residents may have temporality based rights (Hugh-Jones & Madill, 2009) in that they already in 'place'.

This research is perhaps timely given the upcoming changes that are planned and underway for the UK railway network (see Appendix 1). Shaw et al. (2003) emphasised the significance of these changes, which they described as a 'railway renaissance'. One question may be that where new railways are developed, as in the case of High-Speed Two for example, will residents draw upon interpretative repertoires of adaptation to make sense of environmental

conditions. Where identities of 'place' are entwined with notions of 'the rural idyll' and 'a peaceful and quiet place', a new source of 'disruption' could threaten 'identity'. Further discursive research could shed light on how people make sense of places that are changing in terms of environmental conditions.

Within the anticipated changes for the UK railway network, there are also current plans to increase freight traffic (see Appendix 1), which participants' presented as more 'disruptive' and noticeable than passenger trains. Through interpretative repertoires of adaptation, residents may negotiate these changes, if 'noticed', to justify and make sense of their continued residence. Therefore, policy makers could make use of the knowledge around adapting to 'place' within the rail changes that are proposed. Further research on the ways in which people make sense of continued residence alongside railways (and other physical features) could therefore assist in policy development.

Although railways were utilised as a research context to understand how environmental conditions can be negotiated by those that live with them, railways as an everyday aspect of residential places has been under-researched and subsequently requires further attention. In comparison to the wealth of research which has aimed to establish exposure-response relationships for the environmental conditions associated with railways, there has been limited research from the residents' perspective. This study arguably reflects the turn towards understanding rather than 'knowing' about lived experiences (Condie & Brown, 2009). The findings can be situated within the turn towards understanding 'everyday', 'ordinary' and 'commonplace' aspects of physical settings (Hummon, 1990; Knox, 2005; Sandywell, 2004) where the emphasis is placed on keeping "*in touch with the extraordinariness of the everyday*" (Jacobs, 2008, p. 242).

9.8 Final Thoughts

In conclusion, this research aimed to examine how people negotiate environmental conditions through their constructions of 'place' and 'identity'.

The concepts of 'place' and 'identity' highlighted the complexities of how environmental conditions can be presented by those that live with them. Understanding how people negotiate environmental conditions is particularly important given the concern for environmental changes and sustainable development in the future (Future Identities Report, 2013). Although the physical environment sets bounds to experiences of environmental conditions, people presented environmental conditions in various ways to negotiate the 'trouble' railways presented for 'identity'. However, within the wider contexts of finding somewhere to live, the railways presence within residential places was portrayed as insignificant, and something to which people can adapt. However, the importance of the railways as pre-dating the housing built alongside it should be considered in the application of the research findings.

I have previously stated that I did not set out to produce a 'finalised' account of how people experience living alongside railways (Frank, 2005). In many ways, this research has produced more questions than answers. For example, the extent to which discourses of adaptation have implications for environmental management policies requires further investigation. Future work could examine whether residents near other sources of environmental conditions that have been largely understood through a lens of 'disruption' also draw upon adaptational repertoires. An alternative ontological position of critical realism could also be used to examine the sensory experiences of environmental conditions as 'disruption' and as 'commonplace'. In addition, to further develop the concept of 'adaptation', research could focus specifically on how participants make sense of adapting to 'place' and 'disruption'.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Extract from Reforming our Railways (DfT, 2012)

Extract from **Reforming our Railways: Putting the Customer First (Department for Transport, 2012)**

Additional capacity into cities at peak times

- to provide around 2,700 new carriages for the rail network, of which around 1,800 will represent additional capacity, including extra peak capacity into London, Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester and other major cities;
- to expand light rail in Manchester, Birmingham and Nottingham;
- to deliver a major upgrade of the Tyne and Wear Metro; and
- to complete Crossrail and Thameslink.

Faster journey times, more frequent trains, and through journeys

- a major redevelopment of Reading station, unlocking additional capacity, helping to reduce journey times, and improving performance on the Great Western Main Line;
- for London Underground to deliver a 30% increase in peak capacity across its network, and enabling a link between the Metropolitan Line and Watford Junction (as announced in December 2011);
- for Transport for London to complete an orbital rail link for London, extending the East London Line to link Highbury and Islington in North London to West Croydon in South London and providing a direct connection from Surrey Quays to Clapham Junction;
- delivering the Ordsall Chord project in Manchester and (subject to the agreement of an appropriate local funding contribution) a new rail link between Oxford and Bedford, and Milton Keynes and Aylesbury; and completing the Intercity Express Programme, improving reliability, comfort and journey times on the East Coast and Great Western Main Lines.

A more cost-efficient, lower carbon railway

- carrying out electrification on the Great Western Main Line, in the North West of England and on the Manchester–Leeds–York TransPennine route.

More reliable journeys and a better passenger experience

- increased capacity and improved passenger experience through major redevelopments of London King's Cross and Birmingham New Street stations;
- a national programme of station improvements (NSIP), focused on stations with high footfall and low passenger satisfaction;
- enhancing access to stations through the Access for All programme;
- improving the resilience of the rail network to winter weather; and
- establishing a dedicated taskforce to target metal theft and the disruption to rail services that it causes.

Appendix 2: Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule

Introduction – *(guidance only, not to be read as script)* thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. I am interested in your experiences of living alongside railways. If it's ok with you, I am going to start with a few questions about the area in general and how you came to live here, and then move onto questions about the railway and your experiences of living here.

Can you tell me how you came to live here?

Can you tell me what it is like to live here?
Prompts: how does it meet your requirements?

Has the area changed over time?

(If appropriate) Can you tell me how living here compares to living where you have lived before?

Can you tell me about the things you took into consideration when you moved here?

Prompt: What were your thoughts about the railway/construction?

Can you tell me what about some of the things that you first noticed when you moved here?

Prompt: how did it differ from previous places?

Can you tell me about what the area generally sounds like?

Prompts – expected?

Can you tell me about **living** near the railway?

Prompt: What is it like?

How do you **feel** about living near the railway?

Prompt: Any advantages/disadvantages?

Can you tell me about the **vibration** you experience?

Prompt: what does it feel like? What does it sound like?

Can you tell me about the **noise** you experience?

Prompt: what does it sound like?

Can you tell me about how you **feel** about the vibration and noise you experience?

Prompt: is it acceptable? What you'd expect? Annoyance?

Has the vibration/noise changed over time? Has the railway changed?

Can you tell me what you think living here will be like in the future?

Prompt: expecting any changes? What about the railway?

Can you tell me about where you will live in the future?

Prompt: ideal situation? Plans to move?

Anything else....

Appendix 3: Information Sheet

An invitation to take part in a research study

Study Title: Exploring the Experiences of Residents Living Alongside Railways

Jenna Condie, The University of Salford

Contact details:

Jenna Condie, Postgraduate Researcher: 0161 295 5823
j.condie@pgr.salford.ac.uk

Information about the study

This is an invitation to take part in a research study. Before you decide to take part in the research, please read the following information about what participating will involve. The researcher Jenna Condie will be happy to answer any further questions you may have.

What is the purpose of the research?

The purpose of the research is to explore people's relationships with their home environments. It is important to explore how living alongside railways impact upon people's everyday lives. The research is particularly interested in what people think about living alongside railways.

Who is Jenna Condie?

Jenna is a postgraduate researcher within the Acoustics Research Centre at the University of Salford. Jenna's research is interested in people's experiences of living alongside railways. Jenna should have identification, if this is not visible do ask to see it.

Who will take part?

As the research study is concerned with people's relationships with their home environments, Jenna would like to interview people who live in close proximity to railways.

What will it involve?

If you agree to take part in the research, Jenna will carry out a one-hour in-depth interview with you to explore your experiences of living alongside railways and what this means to you. With your permission the interviews will be tape-recorded and then Jenna will produce a written account of this.

Where will the interviews take place?

As the research is about how you feel about your residential area and the things in it, it would be great if the interview could take place at your home. However, if this is not possible, then the interview could take place somewhere else such as a coffee shop or anywhere that is reasonably quiet.

What are the benefits of taking part in the research?

The information gathered from an interview will be used to gain insight into some of your experiences of living alongside railways. It is hoped then that this information will help us to understand some of the issues people may face when living alongside railways.

Will my taking part in the research be kept confidential?

All of the information that is collected from you during this research will be kept secure and any identifying material such as names and addresses will be removed in order to maximise the anonymity of your involvement. However, you should be aware that Jenna would have to pass on information to other professionals that raised serious concerns about risk to yourself or others, including serious child protection concerns.

Who will know about my involvement in the study?

As few people as possible will know about your participation in the research. The people that will know about your participation will be the members of the research team from the University of Salford. If you have been contacted to take part through local authority officers, they may be aware that you have spoken to Jenna and participated in the research – however, if this occurs they will not be made aware of anything that you have discussed.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of the study will help Jenna complete her research project and it is hoped that a greater understanding of people living alongside railways can be generated. With your permission, it may be that actual words recorded in your interview will be used in presentations and publications of the research.

How can I take part?

If you are interested in taking part in this research study, please contact Jenna on 0161 295 5823 or via email j.condie@pgr.salford.ac.uk

Finally, if you agree, thank you for taking part in this research. If you choose not to participate thank you for reading this information.

Appendix 4: Consent Form

Study Title: Exploring the Experiences of Residents Living Alongside Railways

Jenna Condie, The University of Salford

Contact details:

Jenna Condie, Postgraduate Researcher: 0161 295 5823

j.condie@pgr.salford.ac.uk

Consent Form

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above research project and have had the opportunity to ask questions
2. I understand that my participation is on a voluntary basis and that I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I give permission for the researcher to use my words from the interview in presentation or publication of the study. I understand that all of the information collected will be kept confidential and if presented or published, every effort will be made to ensure my anonymity.
4. I give permission for the researcher to tape record the interview
5. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant*

Signature

Date

Name of Researcher*

Signature

Date

**Please write in block capitals.* One copy of this form to be retained by the participant, one copy to be retained by the researcher