



“If I Won the Lottery, I Don’t Think I’d Move”: Challenging assumptions with a Phenomenological Investigation of Relative Deprivation

Michael Croft

Supervised by Dr Geoff Bunn

April 2019

### Abstract

Relative deprivation, the perception that one's social standing is unfairly worse off than some appropriate referent, is described in the literature as being characterised by anger, dissatisfaction and resentment. The value of this concept to academics and policy makers is that broadens the paradigmatic scope of poverty research beyond the financial and economic to the subjective, spatial and intersubjective. As such, census-level measures of relative deprivation have become the de facto means of understanding deprivation and informing interventions in many western countries. Using a phenomenological approach, the current study aims to investigate the lived experience of individuals residing in an area described by such measures as among the 10% most deprived in England. Semi-structured interviews followed up by Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis sought to understand the extent to which deprivation experience can be characterised by aversive emotions, and the extent to which census-level deprivation measures are meaningful to the individual's whose lives they describe. Several conclusions were drawn that will hopefully inform future deprivation researchers to challenge assumptions inherent in deprivation literature and engage in more transparent, reflexive practices.

<b>Key Words</b>	Relative Deprivation;	Ecological Systems Theory	Community Psychology	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
------------------	-----------------------	---------------------------	----------------------	--

## **Acknowledgements**

*I would like to thank the participants of this study, and I hope that they and their community are fairly represented here. I owe debts of gratitude to Julie, Roger, Naomi and Geoff. Thank you all.*

## Introduction

Many western societies have become divided by socio-economic inequalities (Greitemeyer & Sagioglou, 2017). Given satisfaction with one's circumstances is often dependent on comparisons with others (D'Ambrosio & Frick, 2007), such inequalities could increase the belief that one is relatively disadvantaged (Greitemeyer & Sagioglou, 2017). This 'relative deprivation' (Stouffer et al, 1949) can trigger a variety of individual responses (Nieuwenhuis et al, 2017), yet the social isolation (Wilson, 1987) and stigmatisation (Wacquant, 2008) associated with low income can mean that phenomena around deprivation are bound to the neighbourhood level (Nieuwenhuis et al, 2017). As such, factors other than income can influence individual wellbeing (Bellani & D'Ambrosio, 2011) and material resources (e.g. money, food) and social resources (e.g. education, healthcare, neighbours) contribute to perceptions of deprivation (Sen, 1992). Experience of deprivation, therefore, is a complex, comprehensive element of quality of life (Bellani & D'Ambrosio, 2011). Unsurprisingly, relative deprivation is considered a 'major entry in the study of social justice' (Smith & Pettigrew, 2015:1) mentioned in hundreds of research papers (Smith et al, 2012). Yet some academics describe the concept as understudied and controversial due to disagreements over its ontology and epistemology (Zhang & Zhang, 2016).

Stouffer et al (1949) introduced the term to refer to an individual's belief that they are undeservingly worse-off compared to a relevant standard. Crosby (1976) added to this definition the feelings of resentment and anger experienced in response to this comparison. Runciman (1966) reduced relative deprivation to equations describing the 'extent of the difference between the desired situation and that of the person desiring it' (Runciman, 1966:10), and Yitzhaki (1979) furthered this quantitative approach by pronouncing income as the object of relative deprivation (D'Ambrosio & Frick, 2007), advocating the measurement of individual income versus average income to index consumer capability (Bellani & D'Ambrosio, 2011). Townsend (1979) developed such an index, but also broadened the ontology of deprivation research by considering indicators of actual standards of living (Eroğlu, 2007). Bossert et al (2007) built on this by proposing a measure that comprehensively assesses the different elements of an individual's quality of life (Bellani & D'Ambrosio, 2011).

This history charts the evolution of an intuitive explanation of people's interpretations of their circumstances (Smith & Pettigrew, 2015) into a fully developed social science theory with predictive statistical value (Smith et al, 2012). Relative deprivation became a 'classic social psychological concept [...] a subjective state that shapes emotions, cognitions and behaviour' (Smith & Pettigrew, 2015:2). The concept comprises four components: cognitive comparisons, subsequent cognitive appraisals of disadvantage, perceptions that this disadvantage is unfair and resulting feelings of resentment, dissatisfaction and anger (Smith et al, 2012).

The integral interpretation of positions with larger societal groups makes the phenomenon reliant on interpersonal and intergroup levels of analysis (Smith & Pettigrew, 2015). As such, relative deprivation demonstrates Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, wherein the self develops at the centre of subsystems ranging from the intrapersonal to the interpersonal, mapping the context of an individual's life, environment and surroundings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The constant, two-way influences between environments and individuals is emphasised (Watling

Neal & Christens, 2014), just as the antecedents and consequences of relative deprivation are produced by specific socio-cultural contexts (Smith & Pettigrew, 2015).

This interaction between individual and context is apparent in deprivation research findings. Antisocial behaviours are more likely to be observed in deprived neighbourhoods (Nieuwenhuis et al, 2017) because area effects compound local disadvantage (Rae, 2009). Furthermore, empirical investigations have linked deprivation to poorer mental and physical health (Callan et al, 2015) and feelings of inferiority, shame and envy (Nieuwenhuis et al, 2017). Such reactions can emphasise one's perceived disadvantaged place within a social hierarchy (Callan et al, 2015) and influence responses to interpersonal deprivation effects such as poorer access to education, healthcare and socio-economic support (Nieuwenhuis et al, 2017) and the formulation of hostile attitudes (Zhang et al, 2015).

Indeed, many researchers have sought to establish a relationship between relative deprivation and interpersonal aggression (Greitemeyer & Sagioglou, 2017). Deprivation has been empirically associated with hostility, aggression and antisocial behaviour (DeCelles & Norton, 2016) and violent crime (Kennedy et al, 1998), supposedly borne out of resentful deprived perpetrators targeting advantaged victims (Greitemeyer & Sagioglou, 2017). In particular, researchers have established a relationship between neighbourhood deprivation and problem behaviour in youths (Nieuwenhuis et al, 2017). Increased youth antisocial behaviour has been observed in deprived neighbourhoods (Leventhal et al, 2009), especially in areas of social housing (Flouri et al, 2015).

If consideration of wider spatial contexts is so relevant to understanding deprivation (Rae, 2009), however, then such rigid ontological claims may need to be tempered by considerations of the subjective standards of quality of life and wellbeing (Fu et al, 2015) and the multitude of interpersonal concepts (e.g. class, inequity, poverty) that can influence them (Mills, 2010).

Regarding deprived neighbourhoods, somewhat simplistic research purports that deficits in group behaviours such as face-to-face interaction and common value-sharing cause the deviation of a disadvantaged area from the ideal strong neighbourhood (Shen et al, 2017). In-depth investigation of neighbourhood-level experience, however, illuminates the complexity of life in an area that has gained a negative reputation (Musterd, 2008). As opposed to binary ingroup/outgroup models of hostility (Smith & Pettigrew, 2015), residents of deprived areas may experience heightened insecurity (Musterd, 2008) prompted by feelings of abandonment by authorities resulting from cues such as dirty streets, poor maintenance of public facilities and vandalism (Aalbers & Rancati, 2007). In turn, these subjective markers of deprivation can cause local authorities and employers to feel justified discriminating against residents (Middleton & Low, 1995). Neighbourhoods can therefore suffer from social exclusion (Aalbers & Rancati, 2007), leaving residents isolated from employment, resources and entertainment (Middleton & Low, 1995). This can lead to perceived deficits in provision for young people (Middleton & Low, 1995) creating fear, insecurity and a desire to live behind closed doors (Aalbers & Rancati, 2007).

Authorities have sought mechanisms by which to understand and alleviate deprivation (Rae, 2009). The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) has, in England,

become the de facto means of measurement and mapping of deprivation at the small-area level (Rae, 2009). The IMD has been central to decisions regarding government and local authority funding and policy (Rae, 2009) following a theoretical base that connects health levels to neighbourhood environments (Gordon, 2003). The IMD measures relative deprivation along the domains of income, employment, education, skills and training, health and disability, crime, barriers to housing and services, and the living environment (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2015).

Despite its reliability and validity (Rae, 2009), the IMD relies on subjective understandings of standards of living (Fu et al, 2015), and is thereby potentially flawed in accounting for the phenomenology of an area's spatial context (Rae, 2009). This limitation expands to deprivation theory generally, where scholars and policy makers profess an interest in abstract concepts such as wellbeing and quality of life yet investigate them through financial indicators (Lucchini & Assi, 2013). This creates difficulties in capturing the lived experience of relative deprivation and understanding its underlying causes due to differing interpretations among researchers (Lucchini & Assi, 2013).

In considering meaningfulness of the IMD 'a discussion on what constitutes socially accepted, institutionalised or customary standards of living is starkly absent' (Fu et al, 2015:28). Deprivation literature is marred by assumptions of negativity in deprivation experience and homogeneity of individual experience (Zhang et al, 2015). Researchers have been guilty of poor reflexivity and deference to political norms (Fu et al, 2015), and complicity in systems of inequality (Brecher, 2005). The value of relative deprivation as a concept is a broadened scope through which subjective disadvantage can be understood (Eroğlu, 2007). Yet researchers stick rigidly to objective, majoritarian ontologies and epistemologies of deprivation (Piachaud, 1987).

It is unsurprising that some recent studies have attempted to understand relative deprivation as an individual difference (Zhang & Zhang, 2016) related to one's interpersonal comparisons (Callan et al, 2015) or predispositions (Zhang et al, 2015). Nonetheless, such research still carries the assumption that deprivation is a wholly aversive state (Zhang et al, 2015).

The current research intends to sidestep mainstream research by capturing the lived experience of residents of a deprived area without making the assumptions that have undermined previous research (Lucchini & Assi, 2013). The study will investigate the following research questions:

-To what extent is lived experience of relative deprivation characterised by dissatisfaction, anger, and resentment (Smith et al, 2012)

-To what extent are measures of relative deprivation meaningful (Fu et al, 2015] to the residents whose lives they describe?

## **Methods**

### **Data Collection**

Consider that the 'locally sensitive spatial dimension' is often missing from deprivation research (Rae, 2009:1860), semi-structured ethnographic interviewing was carried out, allowing the researcher to become attuned to the community contexts of the participant's lived experience (Munz, 2017). Conducting interviews within the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), encouraged both individual-level (Nieuwenhuis et al, 2017) and society-level (Zhang et al,2015) phenomenological elements of experience to emerge.

Semi-structured interviewing enabled co-constructed conversations to reveal the subjective interpretations of experiential experts (Walford, 2007), appropriate for exploring the local, interpersonal nature of relative deprivation (Callan et al, 2015). In capturing the 'actual assessment of individual's standards of living; (Eroğlu, 2007:494) without assuming a 'generally aversive emotional state' (Zhang et al, 2015:248), the ability of semi-structured ethnographic interviews to generate rich, vivid, idiographic phenomenological data (Watkins, 2012) made the method most suitable. A semi-structured approach afforded interviewer and interviewee alike the opportunity to explore rapidly-developing, serendipitous narratives (Brooks, 2015).

A mixture of open-ended and probing follow-up questions (Bernard, 2000) were asked to avoid constraining participants' responses (Kaplan et al, 2003) and to elucidate embodied, sensory experiences of deprivation, feelings inseparable from actual conditions of disadvantage (Eroğlu, 2007).

## **Data Analysis**

Interview transcripts were subjected to Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) following the guidance of Smith & Osborn (2008), allowing superordinate themes (Chamberlain, 2011) to emerge from participants' responses. Phenomenology is capable of revealing the individual viewpoint within social experience (Layder, 2006) and therefore provides a strong epistemological base for researching both the individual's psychological state (Nieuwenhuis et al, 2017) and the intersubjective neighbourhood and beyond (Greitemeyer & Sagioglou 2017) as influenced by deprivation. IPA illuminates idiographic understandings (Brooks, 2015) of the micro and macro aspects of social inequalities (Houston & Mullan-Jensen, 2012) and is therefore well-matched to comprehensive, subjective concepts such as deprivation (Bellani & D'Ambrosio, 2011).

By centralising the individual and their relative interpretations of phenomena (McCoy, 2017), IPA affords understandings of participants' perceptions and experiences (Murray & Holmes, 2014) of their lifeworld (Brooks, 2015); the intersection of intersubjectivity, temporality, spatiality and embodiment (Ashworth, 2006) that maps one's lived experience (Houston & Mullan-Jensen, 2012). The method is therefore ideally suited to deprivation research, a construct characterised by beliefs about one's relative standing (D'Ambrosio & Frick, 2007), features time as a critical component (Albert, 1977), is defined by the individual's spatial context (Rae, 2009) and is linked with emotional and physical wellbeing (Callan et al, 2015).

IPA's doubly-hermeneutic nature acknowledges the subjectivity of both the participant and the researcher (Finlay & Gough, 2003), enabling reflexivity and

relativism (Smith et al, 2009). Much deprivation research is lacking in such practices, hampering its application in promoting social justice and equity (Fu et al, 2015).

## Participants

In investigating housing estates that 'embody the threats of late modernity' (Aalbers & Rancati:2740) and the meaningfulness of measures used to support such claims (Fu et al, 2015), a Lower-Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) area described by the 2015 IMD as among the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in England (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2015) was selected. This area, one of the 32,844 LSOAs, is a peripheral housing estate in North-West England known to the researcher through employment. The researcher was aware of perceived disadvantage in the area, and its subsequent negative reputation, a defining feature of a deprived neighbourhood (Middleton & Low, 1995).

The IMD lists the area among the 10% most deprived in the domains of income, employment, education skills and housing, and health and disability, the 30% most deprived in the domain of barriers to housing and services, the 40% most deprived in the domain of crime and the least 30% deprived in the domain of Living Environment Deprivation (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2015).

To centralise subjective experience within the spatial neighbourhood context (Rae, 2009) and given that phenomenological study is well served by purposive sampling (Smith et al, 2009) participants were sought from only one LSOA.

Smith and Osborn (2008) advise that small participant pools suit IPA, and a small participant numbers provide a counterpoint to the national level quantitative data of deprivation research (Rae, 2009). Therefore, 5 participants who met criteria of being 18 or over and residing in the LSOA were sought. To recruit participants, the researcher approached individuals accessing a community centre in the neighbourhood.

5 individuals were recruited: Bob, 45, who has lived on the estate intermittently from childhood; Darren, 38, a resident for 2 years; Jan, 72, a resident for 52 years; Lucy, 28, a resident for 4 years; and Shekaila, 46, a resident for 20 years.

## Materials and Procedure

Individuals interested in participating were given information sheet. A measure of deception was required in making no reference to deprivation unless prompted by the participant. Thus, it was hoped that participants would not be influenced by assumptions about aversive deprivation experiences (Zhang et al, 2015).

Participants were informed of the psychological risks involved in discussing potentially distressing topics and were details of accessible support. Once informed consent was given, interviews were arranged at the community centre, a hub for their engagement with their wider spatial context (Rae, 2009) and a safe, comfortable, accessible location. The centre's operating organisation gave informed consent regarding use of the venue.

Interviews were recorded on a secure device and files were immediately transferred to a password protected computer for transcription and storage. Debriefing included a reminder of available support, contact details for complaints or comments and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. Participants gave pseudonyms to identify their data.

## **Ethics**

In addition to safeguarding participant comfort, confidentiality and anonymity, Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) and British Psychological Society ethical guidelines were followed in creating a distress protocol for the event of participant distress. Individuals were assured of their right to withdraw from the study. It was stressed that participation was optional and had no bearing on their other interests in the community centre.

## **Analysis**

IPA revealed experience of life in the neighbourhood to be a complex arrangement of embodied emotions influenced by the intersubjectivity and spatiality of the local environment. The participants' descriptions mirror Bronfenbrenner's model of ecological systems (1979) in their interacting layers rippling around individuals. The temporality of this lifeworld was vividly described in district strata of hours, days, seasons and years. Analysis illuminated three superordinate themes: 1) Emotions beyond dissatisfaction, resentment and anger; 2) Disparity between deprivation measures and lived experience; and 3) deprivation and time.

### **Emotions Beyond Dissatisfaction, Resentment and Anger**

Theoretical understandings of relative deprivation are founded on the negative emotions experienced by an individual feeling unfairly worse off than a relevant standard (Smith et al, 2012). To an extent, this simplistic definition seemed to form part of the embodied emotional experiences of the participants.

'I might be a bit jealous because they don't live on the estate' (Bob, line 226)

This envy, characteristic of relative deprivation (Smith & Pettigrew, 2015) seems capable of restricting one's spatiality, compressing one's ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) in to the point that 'you [...] get into a rut, where you'd rather stay in and not go out, [...] and not venture off far' (Lucy, Lines 356-357). It seems, however, that assumptions of the homogeneity of this experience is indeed open to critique (Zhang et al, 2015). Several participants described positive embodied feelings cued by the spatiality of their surroundings, rippling out from the home.

'It feels like a safe sanctuary [...] when I get back in, it's just wonderful (Shekaila, lines 87-88).

'We're away from the main road, it's nice and quiet there, you feel quite safe' (Darren, lines 128-129).

A key distinction between participants seems significant here. As Middleton & Low (1995) describe, many peripheral housing estates in the UK were built cheaply to poor standards. Such deficits in the essentials of wellbeing are quintessential lines of comparison for individuals experiencing relative deprivation (Bellani & D'Ambrosio, 2011). Perhaps self-evidently, participants living in social housing managed by housing associations that 'make sure everything's up to date' (Darren, line 64) expressed less of the embodied dissatisfaction characteristic of relative deprivation (Nieuwenhuis et al, 2017).

'It's a very nice flat so I'm very very pleased' (Shekaila, lines 40-41).

'I just feel relaxed. I know there's not going to be any issues' (Darren, line 83).

On the contrary, Lucy, whose housing association's response to mould was 'treat it yourself and just keep painting over it' (Lucy, lines 79-80), seemingly perceives this unfair treatment in a manner characteristic of relative deprivation (Zhang et al, 2015) that prompts the embodiment of negative emotions about the wider environment.

'It's just not a comfortable environment' (Lucy, line 63).

'it affects your mood, [...] and the children, it affects everything' (Lucy, lines 110-111)

When participants discussed the intersubjective elements of their experiences, however, their testimonies sharply diverged from discourses in the literature suggesting that individuals experiencing relative deprivation should display increased aggression and hostility (Greitemeyer & Sagioglou 2017). The participants spoke positively about the sense of community in their neighbourhood.

'There's more of a community spirit. People are more likely to talk to each other' (Bob, lines 8-9).

'We've got a good community. Everyone knows each other' (Darren, line 142).

Here the study illuminates the workings of an inter-related lifeworld not visible through the metric paradigms of the IMD (Rae, 2009), nor understood by researchers assuming aversive states (Zhang et al, 2015) due to majoritarian thinking (Eroğlu, 2007). The participants' testimonies revealed intersecting elements that prompt this sense of community. The physical arrangement of housing, despite the 'downside of all the noise [...] because you are literally [...] on top of each other' (Lucy, lines 118-119) also seems to create 'less chance of isolation' (Bob, lines 389). Although this proximity can give rise to insecurity (Aalbers & Rancati, 2007) through occurrences such as Shekaila's exposure to 'a terrible case of domestic violence [that] had an impact on my flat' (Shekaila, lines 56-57), sharing facilities and co-ownership of common spatiality seemingly fosters a positive intersubjective community. This is evidenced in both the 'respect' described within well-managed residential complexes for communal areas (Darren, line 77; Shekaila, line 78) and in the positive regard for facilities such as local 'doctors [...] dentists [...] shops' (Darren, line 13) and 'this place' (Bob, line 268), i.e. the community centre.

This rippling effect of positive, embodied responses to broader layers of spatiality and intersubjectivity and the wider spheres of the ecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) that emerged as participants explored their experiences leads to a striking disparity with mainstream deprivation literature. While the participants all articulated acute awareness that their neighbourhood is 'not well looked after' (Bob, lines 399-400) and needs to 'be improved' (Lucy, line 12), their testimony featured very little acknowledgement that such deprivation placed them on any social hierarchy, a definitive notion in deprivation theory (D'Ambrosio & Frick 2007). As such, cognitions of resentment and hostility resulting from perceived deprivation (Smith & Pettigrew, 2015) are seemingly absent from the participants' descriptions of their experiences. While, somewhat self-evidently, some participants 'feel closer to these that live on the estate' (Jan, line 379), their attitudes towards people beyond their local spatial intersubjective experience were not described as dependant on any binary qualifiers of deprived local versus well-off other.

'I know quite a few people who don't live on the estate [...] and I get on with perfectly fine (Darren, line 167).

'It depends what the person is like themselves. It doesn't matter if they've come from outside or they're in here' (Shekaila, lines 237-238).

'People are either nice to you or not so nice to you, whether they live on the estate or not' (Bob, lines 215-216).

The phenomenological experience captured in this study, therefore, speaks to the notion that the aversive behaviours and cognitions of relative deprivation may bear no relation to the actual resources of the individual or group (Callan et al, 2015), and thereby relative deprivation as a theory base for census-level measures of inequality (Fu et al, 2015) may very well be undermined by its lack of spatial context of individual locations (Rae, 2009).

### **Disparity between deprivation measures and lived experience**

In considering the meaningfulness of deprivation measures (Fu et al, 2015), it is interesting to view the testimony of the participants in comparison to the IMD's statistical summary of their neighbourhood. According to the IMD 2015, the area is less deprived in the domains of the living environment and crime than in other domains related to economic and physical wellbeing (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2015). The participants, however, paint a somewhat different picture.

The physical spatiality of the neighbourhood is described as a 'mess' (Bob, line 8) blighted by 'dog dirt' (Jan, line 243), 'rubbish dumping and [...] fly-tipping' (Shekaila, lines 124-125) 'litter everywhere' (Bob, line 10) and roads and pavements that are 'terrible [because of] all the potholes' (Lucy, line 127). Such treatment of public spaces is often viewed as a hallmark of disadvantage (Middleton & Low, 1995) rather than a standard that would give the neighbourhood its place among the 30% least deprived areas in the country in the living environment domain (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2015).

Dissatisfaction with the shared spatiality prompted criticism of the local authority as an agent beyond the periphery of local intersubjectivity and echoed the feelings of abandonment linked to negative visual cues in deprivation literature (Aalbers & Rancati, 2007).

'More should be done [...] I don't know if it's [not done] because it's a council estate' (Lucy, lines 135-136).

'It could do with more maintenance that's for sure' (Bob, line 84).

This dissatisfaction seemingly draws in towards a layer of intersubjectivity at the neighbourhood level marked by frustration and negative judgements. A perceived 'snowball effect' (Bob, line 345) was described as creating the impression that neighbours 'don't care' (Bob, line 355) or 'can't be bothered' (Lucy, line 155) because of a lack of collaboration in the ownership of public spaces, beyond those few well-maintained housing association blocks and community services.

'A lot of the people don't own it, they're renting, or they're just living off benefits, in something that doesn't belong to them. And I think pride in something is something that is good for your wellbeing. So, it's just about not caring about where you live, and people should care for their own wellbeing' (Bob, lines 335-337),

While this description of differing attitudes towards deprivation contrasts with the homogeneity of experience often assumed by researchers (Zhang et al, 2015), Bob in particular outlined how this intersubjective indifference can be embodied by the individual.

'It's just not a brilliant place to be. It's not a nice place to be outside' (Bob, line 323).

'To walk out of your door and have, just, a rubbish environment around you doesn't exactly make you walk with a spring in your step' (Bob, lines 364-365).

The phenomena of intersecting layers of intersubjectivity and spatiality influencing the embodied emotions of the individual also seems to manifest itself in the participants' experience of the other domain in which their neighbourhood is supposedly less deprived, namely crime.

As well as 'burglaries' (Bob, line 43) and crime related to 'drugs' (Lucy, line 125), participants gave plentiful descriptions of problems with a 'yobbish culture' (Shekaila, line 12) characterised by antisocial behaviour from young people in the neighbourhood.

'The youths, they think they can run it. They think they can bully anyone' (Darren, lines 151-152).

'A lot of them are smoking drugs, and not in school' (Lucy, line 255).

'It's all the younger kids, and teenagers in gangs' (Shekaila, line 196).

Again, the experiences participants describe meet with findings in the literature, specifically those linking increased youth offending to deprivation (Leventhal et al, 2009), social housing (Flouri et al, 2015) and peripheral estates (Middleton & Low, 1995). Yet such testimony begs questions regarding the measurement of crime when defining an area as less deprived than nearly a third of the country along a crime-related domain (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2015). Far from being an aspect of deprivation felt to a less-severe degree than financial and health related components, the 'mischief' (Bob, line 137) caused by 'little devils' (Jan, line 98) was described as having 'an impact on the standard of living' (Shekaila, line 13) and seems to have much negative influence on the lifeworld of the participants. As with the domain of the living environment, this crime deprivation seemingly transcends layers of the ecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) affecting value judgements of the shared spatiality of the neighbourhood.

'There's problems from the kids [...] because of boredom [...] there's not a lot to do' (Bob, line 135-137).

'There's nowhere to go, there's nothing to do for them, and they're just fed up' (Jan, line 146)

In turn, these interpretations seemingly feed into intersubjective appraisals of neighbours, leading to doubts about 'the parents [...] whether they've got any go in them, to look after the kids' (Jan, 402-403), worries about 'broken households' (Shekaila, line 17) and fears such as 'my daughter being influenced easily by other people' (Lucy, line 324). Similarly, the actions of agencies beyond the immediate intersubjectivity of the neighbourhood seemingly bleed through spatial layers of ecology into embodied emotional experiences, with 'all the cutbacks with the policing' (Lucy, line 192) leading individuals to fear that antisocial criminal behaviour is 'always going to be there' (Shekaila, line 306), an example of the insecurity that deprivation can provoke (Musterd, 2008). Participants described the experience of 'getting anxious' (Darren, line 129) and 'apprehensive' (Shekaila, line 308) to a degree that was described as having 'a terrible impact on (...) mental health' (Shekaila, line 318).

It is interesting to note, however, that some participants expressed views of this situation that challenge notions in the literature suggesting that community-based interventions are hampered by passive and apathetic residents and resistant local authorities (Middleton & Low, 1995). Instances of increased investment of resources in the community spatiality, such as the community centre and dedicated football pitches, have 'played a very, very important part' (Shekaila, line 271) in reducing the intersubjective negativity in the area because 'a lot of [young people] use that' (Bob, line 144) which 'takes them away from doing bad things' (Shekaila, line 273). As such, some participants described an embodied confidence in being able to 'speak to them normal' (Jan, line 99) rather than 'shouting and bawling' (Jan, line 109), resulting in an intersubjective relationship where 'they really don't bother me' (Jan, line 99).

It is true to say that when participants discussed the issues of crime and the living environment they described embodied feelings and behaviours of intersubjective dissatisfaction and spatial resentment that align their interpretations more closely to mainstream deprivation research (Smith & Pettigrew, 2015). However, the disparity

between the domains of least concern to this neighbourhood according to the IMD (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2015) and residents actual experiences of them highlight the limitations inherent in using objective deprivation measures to capture subjective interpretations of phenomena (Lucchini & Assi, 2013).

### Deprivation and Time

The temporal element of the phenomenological lifeworld (Ashworth, 2006) that emerged from analysis of participants' responses revealed very particular time-bound experiences, and as such stood out as a superordinate theme in its own right. The individual's experience of time is seemingly felt relative to forces of intersubjectivity and spatiality.

'It's more effort to leave the estate, so I suppose people who live on the estate are more likely to spend most of their time on the estate' (Bob, line 184-185).

'You have your ups and your downs when you live in flats, because you're so close together' (Lucy, line 116-117).

'I think it's your surroundings. Like, my neighbour next door, because of how he is, his condition, obviously that does affect you as a person. If he's having a down day, like, it will annoy you, or make you feel whatever' (Lucy, lines 331-333).

The participants' comments give the impression that such an experience of time as relative to other conditions becomes embodied in one's lifestyle, in the sense that 'you just get used to it, it becomes normal' (Bob, lines 90-91). As such, management of time is an act of taking life 'day by day, [seeing] what each day throws at me' (Darren, line 273), where particular strategies bound to the local context can be vital.

'Sometimes I'll go out to the shop in the morning and I'll forget something on purpose, only so I have to go out again, so I don't, like, isolate myself' (Darren, lines 242-243).

This phenomenon of the individual's temporal experience being shaped by spatial and intersubjective contexts seems to create, for some participants, a day-to-day time scale to be negotiated with care. Daytime, before 'the kids come out of school' (Darren, 108) and 'when it's quiet' (Darren, 109) presents an opportunity for intersubjective and spatial freedom. The hours of darkness, however, seem to present a different set of limits.

'Then I don't feel safe [...] I feel safe with someone but not on my own' (Darren, lines 120-123)

'I do feel safe when I lock my door, but I wouldn't go out at night' (Lucy, line 45)

'I wouldn't go out in the evening by myself, because I certainly wouldn't feel safe then' (Shekaila, lines 105-106).

These limits are so well established to some that they are embodied in a pattern that shifts with the seasons, wherein ‘the summer is probably easier because you get longer hours of daylight [...] but then, like in winter, when it goes dark [...] about 4 o'clock, then obviously I've got to be very very cautious’ (Shekaila, lines 289-291). The insecurity that prompts such time-bound personal limits was described as a feeling of being ‘a bit trapped’ (Shekaila, line 114), and even where personal safety wasn’t necessarily an issue, this time-scale is seemingly reinforced by the ‘frustration with people who’ve not got a lot to fill their time (Bob, 278-279).

This temporal element of participant’s experience highlights that, while time is highlighted in early research as central to the effects of relative deprivation (Albert, 1977), it is another significant subjective element of perceived disadvantaged overlooked by objective research methods (Lucchini & Assi, 2013). The temporality of the lifeworld illuminated in this study is not a feature the IMD attempts to capture or understand in any domain (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2015) and yet it seemingly contributes heavily to lived experience of subjective social exclusion (Aalbers & Rancati, 2007).

## Discussion

In considering the first research question posed by the study, analysis did reveal a degree of the dissatisfaction, anger and resentment associated with relative deprivation (Smith et al, 2012) within the phenomenological experiences of the participants. Far from their experiences being characterised by these emotions, however, the participants’ testimonies illuminated a much broader, deeper and more complex series of phenomena that could be conceptualised as their experience of deprivation, where individual’s interdependent preferences (Bellani & D’Ambrosio, 2011) and differing responses (Nieuwenhuis et al, 2017) are not solely reliant on economic dimensions (Lucchini & Assi, 2013) or perceptions of hierarchies (Callan et al, 2015).

It is the researcher’s hope that these findings could be used to inform the writing out of biased assumptions from future study of relative deprivation. The participants interviewed here described a broad spectrum of emotions and behaviours placed within their spatial context. It is doubtful if such detail would have been revealed by research that assumed a totally aversive state of deprivation (Zhang et al, 2015) or an epistemological approach that, like much previous deprivation research, was short-sighted as to the wider spatial contexts of local phenomena (Rae, 2009).

With regards to the second research question, the qualitative, phenomenological design of the current study confounds any ability of the researcher to challenge the statistical validity or reliability of qualitative deprivation measures. The experiences described by the participants, however, provide a vivid, first-hand discourse that, at times, deviates starkly from the theoretical underpinnings of deprivation measures. The disparity between the ranking of deprivation domains affecting a neighbourhood and the anecdotal accounts of residents living with them seemingly provides a demonstration of the methodological difficulties inherent in qualitatively measuring abstract concepts defined by subjective interpretations (Lucchini & Assi, 2013). As such, this study joins Fu et al (2015) in calling for deprivation research to consider more broadly the meaning of measures to the diverse

demographics within disadvantaged populations, as opposed to taking a homogeneity of deprivation experience for granted.

Similarly, and being mindful of observation that deprivation research can easily become complicit in systems of inequality (Fu et al, 2015), this study's findings regarding the positive elements of embodied spatiality and intersubjectivity should by no means let those in authority 'off the hook' when it comes to intervention in disadvantage. Very few of the negative elements of life in the neighbourhood that participants described are phenomena not already understood as hallmarks of living standards in deprived areas (Middleton & Low, 1995). The findings that emerged in this study regarding the resourceful and resilient nature of individuals within this community do not mean that investment and intervention from wider authorities is not required. Indeed, even the non-generalisable data gathered regarding a possible discord between deprivation measures and deprivation experience should trigger more concern and desire for improvement on the part of census-level researchers and policy makers, not complacency in a job well done.

This study has illuminated the wider spatial context and lived experience of individuals within an area ranked among the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods in England. It has raised questions regarding the ontology and epistemology of extant deprivation research and policy-making using the subsequent evidence-base. It is the sincere hope of the researcher that these questions go on to be addressed by deprivation researchers using all the methods at their disposal.

## **Reflexive Analysis**

The ontology of the current study called for both personal reflexivity, in order to acknowledge the preconceptions and motivations of the researcher (Finlay & Gough, 2003), and epistemological reflexivity, in order to highlight the socio-political context of the research encounter (Finlay, 2002).

The preconceptions of the researcher were key to this study. The researcher is employed by a wellbeing support service based in the area from which the participants were drawn and were asked to discuss, and as such had both pre-existing notions about life in the neighbourhood and an interest in maintaining the welfare, agency and power of local residents. As such, the study required critical examination on the part of the researcher to prevent the analysis and discussion of findings becoming an unconscious reflection of his own experience (Banister et al, 1994).

Doing so was, in part, aided by reading of the literature around deprivation. While the majority of previous research was epistemologically very different to the present study, its limitations give a stark warning about care in positioning deprivation studies. Even government-commissioned census-level studies used to inform social policy (Rae, 2009) are hampered by majoritarian thinking (Eroğlu, 2007), unfounded assumptions of homogeneity within disadvantaged groups (Fu et al, 2015) and rigid presuppositions of an entirely aversive experience of life in deprived settings (Zhang et al, 2015).

Such discoveries about extant literature provided strong motivation and clear instruction with regard to personal reflexivity in the current study. Regardless of the researcher's preconceptions about life in the area, the literature demanded work that did not prescribe any judgement. In order, therefore, to tread the line between the researcher's knowledge of elements of deprivation witnessed in the literature and through personal experience, and the personal and professional interest of the researcher in 'seeing the best' in the residents of the area and their future prospects, it became necessary to carry the study out using a naïve realist approach (Willig, 2008).

Similarly, epistemological reflexivity was borne out of a review of current deprivation literature. The subjective nature of relative deprivation (Callan et al, 2015) means that quantitative enquiry into the concept often lacks any mechanism for sensitivity to local, cultural, spatial dimensions (Rae, 2009). Therefore, both this deficit in the literature and the researcher's desire to promote and empower the voice of the residents in question were well served by the use of IPA.

IPA allowed for the emergence of idiographic, contextually rich and phenomenologically-grounded data (Brooks, 2015) and the revelation of the experiential expert's voice from within social experience (Layder, 2006). Crucially, however, the doubly-hermeneutic nature of IPA acknowledged and embraced the subjectivity of both the participants and the researcher (Finlay & Gough, 2003). As such, reflexivity and relativism were not only possible (Smith et al, 2009) but added weight to the impact of the study.

As a qualitative piece of research, this study cannot confound any empirical findings regarding relative deprivation. By encouraging reflexive transparency in the process of understanding deprivation experience, however, this work can hopefully inspire future researchers to embrace the different interpretations of deprivation experience that exist (Lucchini & Assi, 2013). The researcher welcomes disagreement and differing interpretations of the data gathered here and would hope that future deprivation researchers will do the same. There is much to be gained through such transparency, and the wellbeing of a great many individuals at risk in its absence (Fu et al, 2015).

## References

- Aalbers, M.B. and Rancati, S. (2008) 'Feeling Insecure in Large Housing Estates: Tackling Unsicherheit in the Risk Society.' *Urban Studies*, 45(13), pp. 2735-2757.
- Albert, S. (1977) 'Temporal comparison theory.' *Psychological Review*, 84(6), pp. 485–503.
- Ashworth, P.D. (2006) 'Introduction to the place of phenomenological thinking in the history of psychology.' In Ashworth, P.D. and Chung, M.C. (eds.) *Phenomenology and Psychological Science*. New York: Springer, pp. 11-44.
- Banister, P., Burman, E., Parker, I., Taylor, M. and Tindall, C. (1994) *Qualitative Methods in Psychology: A Research Guide*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Bellani, L. and D'Ambrosio, C. (2011) 'Deprivation, Social Exclusion and Subjective Well-Being.' *Social Indicators Research*, 104(1), pp. 67-86.

Bernard, H.R. (2000) *Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Bossert, W., D'Ambrosio, C., and Peragine, V. (2007) 'Deprivation and social exclusion.' *Economica*, 74(296), pp. 777–803.

Brecher, B. (2005) 'Complicity and modularisation: how universities were made safe for the market.' *Critical Quarterly*, 47(1-2), pp. 72-82.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979) *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Brooks, J. (2015) 'Learning from the 'lifeworld'.' *The Psychologist*, 28(8), pp. 642-646.

Callan, M.J., Kim, H. and Matthews, W.J. (2015) 'Predicting self-rated mental and physical health: the contributions of subjective socioeconomic status and personal relative deprivation.' *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6(1415), pp. 1-14.

Chamberlain, K. (2011) 'Troubling methodology.' *Health psychology review*, 5(1), pp. 48-54.

Crosby, F. (1976) 'A model of egoistical relative deprivation.' *Psychological Review*, 83(2), pp. 85–113.

D'Ambrosio, C. and Frick, J.R. (2007) 'Income Satisfaction and Relative Deprivation: An Empirical Link.' *Social Indicators Research*, 81(3), pp. 497-519.

DeCelles, K.A. and Norton, M.I. (2016) 'Physical and situational inequality on airplanes predicts air rage.' *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 113(20), pp. 5588-5591.

Eroğlu, Ş. (2007) 'Developing an Index of Deprivation Which Integrates Objective and Subjective Dimensions: Extending the Work of Townsend, Mack and Lansley, and Halleröd.' *Social Indicators Research*, 80(3), pp. 493-510.

Finlay, L. (2002) 'Negotiating the swamp: The opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice.' *Qualitative Research*, 2(2), pp. 209-230.

Finlay, L. and Gough, B. (2003) *Reflexivity: a practical guide for researchers in health and social sciences*. Oxford: Blackwell Science.

Flouri, E., Midouhas, E., and Tzatzaki, K. (2015) 'Neighbourhood and own social housing and early problem behaviour trajectories.' *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 50(2), pp. 203–213.

Fu, M., Exeter, D.J. and Anderson, A. (2015) "'So, is that your 'relative' or mine?" A political-ecological critique of census-based area deprivation indices.' *Social Science & Medicine*, 142, October, pp. 27-36.

Gordon, D. (2003) 'Area based deprivation measures: a UK perspective.' In Kawachi, I. and Berkman, L.F. (eds.) *Neighbourhoods and Health*. Oxford University Press, New York, pp. 179-207.

Greitemeyer, T. and Sagioglou, C. (2017) 'Increasing wealth inequality may increase interpersonal hostility: The relationship between personal relative deprivation and aggression.' *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 157(6), pp. 766-776.

Houston, S. and Mullan-Jensen, C. (2012) 'Towards depth and width in Qualitative Social Work: Aligning interpretative phenomenological analysis with the theory of social domains.' *Qualitative Social Work*, 11(3), pp. 266-281.

Kaplan, B., Farzanfar, R. and Friedman, R.H. (2003) 'Personal relationships with an intelligent interactive telephone health behaviour advisor system: a multimethod study using surveys and ethnographic interviews.' *International Journal of Medical Informatics*, 71(1), pp. 33-41.

Kennedy, B.P., Kawachi, I., Prothrow-Stith, D., Lochner, K. and Gupta, V. (1998) 'Social capital, income inequality, and firearm violent crime.' *Social Science & Medicine*, 47(1), pp. 7-17.

Layder, D. (2006) *Understanding Social Theory*. London: SAGE.

Leventhal, T., Dupere, V. and Brooks-Gunn, J. (2009) 'Neighborhood influences on adolescent development.' In Lerner, R.M. and Steinberg, L. (eds.) *Handbook of adolescent psychology*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, pp. 411-443.

Lucchini, M. and Assi, J. (2013) 'Mapping Patterns of Multiple Deprivation and Well-Being using Self-Organizing Maps: An Application to Swiss Household Panel Data.' *Social Indicators Research*, 112(1), pp. 129-149.

McCoy, L.K. (2017) 'Longitudinal qualitative research and interpretative phenomenological analysis: philosophical connections and practical considerations.' *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 14(4), pp. 442-458.

Middleton, A. and Low, J. (1995) 'Peripheral Housing Estates in Britain.' *Urbanis Izziv*, 28-29(28-29), pp. 9-14.

Mills, C. (2010) 'Health, employment and recession: the impact of the global crisis on health inequities in New Zealand.' *Policy Quarterly*, 6(4), pp. 53-59.

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. (2015) *English indices of deprivation 2015*. 30<sup>th</sup> September. [Online] [Accessed on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019] <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015>

Munz, E.A. (2018) 'Ethnographic Interview.' In Allen, M. (ed.) *The SAGE Encyclopaedia of Communication Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, pp. 455-457.

Murray, S.J. and Holmes, D. (2014) 'Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and the Ethics of Body and Place: Critical Methodological Reflections.' *Human Studies*, 37(1), pp. 15-30.

Musterd, S. (2008) 'Residents' Views on Social Mix: Social Mix, Social Networks and Stigmatisation in Post-war Housing Estates in Europe.' *Urban Studies*, 45(4), pp. 897-915.

Nieuwenhuis, J., van Ham, M., Yu, R., Branje, S., Meeus, W. and Hooijmeijer, P. (2017) 'Being Poorer Than the Rest of the Neighborhood: Relative Deprivation and Problem Behavior of Youth.' *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 46(9), pp. 1891-1904.

Piachaud, D. (1987) 'Problems in the definition and measurement of poverty.' *Journal of Social Policy*, 16(2), pp. 147-164.

Rae, A. (2009) 'Isolated Entities or Integrated Neighbourhoods? An Alternative View of the Measurement of Deprivation.' *Urban Studies*, 46(9), pp. 1859-1878.

Runciman, W.G. (1966) *Relative deprivation and social justice*. London: Routledge.

Sen, A.K. (1992) *Inequality re-examined*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Shen, C., Wan, A., Kwok, L.T., Pang, S., Wang, X., Stewart, S.M., Lam, T.H. and Chan, S.S. (2017) 'A community based intervention program to enhance neighborhood cohesion: The Learning Families Project in Hong Kong.' *PLOS One*, 12(8), pp. 1-15.

Smith, H.J. and Pettigrew, T.F. (2015) 'Advances in Relative Deprivation Theory and Research.' *Social Justice Research*, 28(1), pp. 1-6.

Smith, H., Pettigrew, T.F., Pippin, G. and Bialosiewicz, S. (2012) 'Relative deprivation: A theoretical and meta-analytic critique.' *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 16(3), pp. 203-232.

Smith, J.A., Larkin, M.H. and Flowers, P. (2009) *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: theory, method and research*. London: Sage.

Smith, J.A. and Osborn, M. (2008) 'Interpretative phenomenological analysis'. In Smith, J.A. (ed.) *Qualitative psychology*. 2nd ed., London: Sage, pp. 53-80.

Stouffer, S.A., Lumsdaine, A.A., Lumsdaine, M.H., Williams, R.M., Smith, M.B., Janis, I.L. and Cottrell, L.S. (1949) *The American soldier: Combat and its aftermath (Volume II)*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Townsend, P. (1979) *Poverty in the United Kingdom: A Survey of Household Resources and Standards of Living*. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books.

Wacquant, L. (2008) *Urban outcasts*. Cambridge: Polity.

Walford, G. (2007) 'Classification and framing of interviews in ethnographic interviewing.' *Ethnography and Education*, 2(2), pp. 145-157.

Watkins, D.C. (2012) 'Qualitative Research: The Importance of Conducting Research That Doesn't "Count".' *Health Promotion Practice*, 13(2) pp. 153-158.

Watling Neal, J. and Christens, B.D. (2014) 'Linking the Levels: Network and Relational Perspectives for Community Psychology.' *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 53(3), pp. 314-323.

Willig, C. (2008) *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: adventures in theory and method.* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Wilson, W.J. (1987) *The truly disadvantaged.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Yitzhaki, S. (1979) 'Relative deprivation and the Gini coefficient.' *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 93(2), pp. 321–324.

Zhang, H., Tian, Y., Lei, B., Yu, S. and Liu, M. (2015) 'Personal Relative Deprivation Boosts Materialism.' *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 37(5), pp. 247-259.

Zhang, H. and Zhang, W. (2016) 'Materialistic Cues Boosts Personal Relative Deprivation.' *Frontiers in psychology*, 7(1236), pp. 1-8.