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**HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN AN ISLAND COMMUNITY WHERE URBAN
STYLE DEPRIVATION AND TRADITIONAL RURAL VALUES INTERACT**

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**This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explored aspects of the urban-rural interface within a densely populated, deprived housing scheme located on a remote, rural island lying off the north west coast of Scotland.

The thesis had two aims, the first related to health, health inequality and aspects of neighbourhood and from this exploration a second aim emerged that focused in detail on the effects of rurality and religion as significant cultural influences that determined the nature of health and the social environment.

The Cearns housing area of Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis is reminiscent of a mainland urban scheme in terms of housing design and layout with units spaced around a series of pedestrianised courts with little green space. Significantly, most tenants, both well-established and recent, have their origins in rural Lewis, bringing with them a number of rural beliefs and behaviours.

An in-depth qualitative study was carried out through individual interviews (N=55) and Cattell's social network typology was applied to inform interpretation of the nature of the social infrastructure.

The main findings demonstrated the existence of *traditional*, *socially excluded* and *solidaristic* networks from which a strong sense of island identity, described as 'Hebridean', emerged. In marked contrast to many urban areas, crime and vandalism levels were low, the housing stock was well maintained and the area was described by residents as friendly and close-knit. Hebridean communities are rural in nature, the Cearns being an anomaly, yet it shared with neighbouring villages close familial and other connections as most residents either know, or know of, their neighbours. Rurality and remoteness reinforced a 'can-do' self help culture where friendliness and co-operation is expected and this can be related to Freudenberg's notion of the 'density of acquaintanceship'. This study demonstrated that residents, irrespective of age or gender, have this view of the world, either from personal experience or through the rural upbringing of their parents and that either way a particular range of attitudes and behaviours has come with them to the Cearns.

In addition to themes associated with rurality, findings from this thesis demonstrated the effect of religion at the level of the individual in terms of social support, as well as at community level in relation to social cohesion, identity and social control. Communities on the Isle of Lewis are distinctive and possibly unique within the UK in their continued adherence to the biblically strict Presbyterian religion, apparent through high levels of church attendance and strict Sabbath observance. Use of Social Identity Theory with its understanding of in-groups and out-groups provided a framework for an analysis of the interface of religion with social cohesion. The study concluded that these remote, close-knit, Gaelic-speaking, religious island communities are amongst the most distinctive in the UK and that the methodology and findings of this study would have relevance in studies of similar communities elsewhere, notably within the hitherto under-researched rural communities of the Western Isles.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

"I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution."

Signature -----

Printed name -----

CHAPTER 1: SCOPE OF THE THESIS

1.1 Introduction

The development of this thesis was influenced by two considerations, both related to the variety of professional and personal experiences gained by the author over recent decades. The *first consideration* related to the implementation of the policy agenda around health inequalities and social justice at local level and the political context at the time of working in the scheme was that developed by New Labour as a result of the 1997 election. The UK Labour government came to power and pledged to address health inequalities through a range of policies that included a focus on the lives of residents in some of the Britain's most deprived communities. The first devolved government in Scotland in 1999 took a similar approach and produced a White Paper 'Towards a Healthier Scotland' (Scottish Office 1999) in which an approach urging action around life circumstances was promulgated - with the tackling of health inequalities and strengthening community-based health work given priority. Tackling health and the broader social inequalities evident in the country was reiterated in later policy documents emanating from the Scottish Executive, from departments other than the Health Department and disadvantaged groups and the communities in which they lived were to be targeted, in both urban and, for the first time in policy terms, rural settings. The area regeneration document, 'Better Communities in Scotland: Closing the Gap' (Scottish Executive 2002) was explicit in this regard.

The subject of this study, the Cearns housing scheme in Stornoway, provided an example of a deprived scheme with a high population density, uniform appearance and repetitive housing design and there had been some regeneration activities over recent years. The appearance and layout of the scheme felt urban and somehow inappropriate, as it is located in one of the most remote, rural and scenic parts of Scotland. The author, whilst employed as Health Promotion Manager with NHS Western Isles, had witnessed first-hand the effects of socio-economic deprivation and poor health in this area and was encouraged by

experiences gained through implementation of the national policy agenda to initiate a study of this urban neighbourhood.

The *second focus* for the development of this thesis was underpinned by the theoretical literature on place, neighbourhood dynamics and the effect of cultural influences on health and wellbeing. This was appealing to the author because of its potential in linking aspects of life in the scheme to health status, social capital and social cohesion, all of which are mediated through local cultural factors.

Three types of explanation have been offered for geographical variations in health within an area - compositional effects that identify the characteristics of the residents, contextual effects that relate to the physical and social environment and thirdly, a collective explanation (Macintyre, Ellaway and Cummins 2002). This last explanation emphasises shared norms, traditions and values, all especially relevant when applied to the Western Isles, an area that is culturally distinctive with a majority of native Gaelic speakers and a high proportion of the population seeing themselves as religious, with correspondingly higher than average levels of church attendance. The collective aspect, with its linguistic, rural and religious dimensions, makes the communities of the Western Isles' distinctive and the Cairns demonstrated the influence of these three characteristics, with an additional feature, that of an urban physical environment; making the scheme, it could be argued, within the context of modern Scotland, unique.

1.2 Context for the study

The thesis commenced as a health-related study within a deprived community located in the Western Isles; a study whose findings could potentially be related to the social determinants of health evident within the area. The study was initially planned as a broad-based exploration of health and social capital but it evolved into a study that sought to understand uniqueness through an examination of the effects that religion, rurality and language have as culture-

led determinants of health status. The exploration of distinctive norms, traditions and values within a specific community and how they in turn related to health and wellbeing began to excite the author.

The health, wellbeing and social networks of urban populations have been the focus of a number of studies (for examples see chapter 2); with rural populations and more particularly island ones receiving less attention. Few studies, if any, have had as their focus the interface between urbanity and rurality within the context of a housing scheme located in a town positioned on a remote island, a location with its own raft of specific transport and access difficulties.

Although there are a number of large island communities in the British Isles, the Western Isles have retained their distinctive linguistic and religious characteristics - because the Minch has acted as a buffer against both mainland and broader influences and geographical mobility has historically been low. The relative insularity of the north west Highlands has enhanced this isolation, to preserve what is probably one of the oldest forms of communal life left in Britain (Thompson 1968). Thompson described anecdotally, a crofting way of life that is dictated by the seasons, one relying on co-operation involving the willing help of others; pointing out that, as a consequence, such work becomes easier, lighter and more quickly done - sheep are easier to handle with more than one crofter and boats are best manned with a crew. Similarly, women would have spun yarn together and helped each other throughout life - in childbirth, child-care and death. To a degree such manifestations of communal life exist today, with many villages inhabited by people who grew up together, went to school together and who are closely or distantly related. Incomers have always been welcomed, possibly because they have tended to be relatively few in number and have usually been prepared to get involved in local village or community activities. The villages or crofting townships have in the past been called 'sociable hamlets' and are still regarded as a distinctive form of social structure.

It could be argued that a comparable close-knit structure is found elsewhere only in traditional working class manufacturing or mining communities (Dench, Gavron and Young 2006; Thompson 1968; Young and Willmott 1957). In recent

decades these communities and others, together with those in the Western Isles, have seen greater social and geographical mobility, improved electronic and spatial communications as well as a movement away from previous employment patterns. Significantly, the Western Isles are still viewed as distinctive in their close-knit, Gaelic-speaking and God-fearing traditions (Macdonald 1992; Macleod 2008).

The author was aware that the majority of this scheme's residents were local, being born and brought up in the area including the villages of rural Lewis. Individuals from a rural background value neighbours, may often be related, albeit distantly, to one another with other family members nearby (Jones 1992; Jones and Jamieson 1997) and this study sought to identify those attributes of rurality that were present in the community of the Cearnas. A second cultural influence at work within this distinctive community was that of religion. Evidence from recent surveys has shown that the Western Isles exhibits an above average level for Scotland of both church membership (UK Data Archive 2003) and religious belief (General Register Office for Scotland 2003a) and that the predominant religion, in the northern islands of Lewis and Harris, is Presbyterian. The strict Protestant religion exerts an influence on the religious and the non-religious alike, at both individual and community level and this thesis sought to examine the impact of religion on both the social infrastructure of, and the community cohesion within, the Cearnas. The religious influence is strong, explicit and culturally important, especially around symbolic behaviours associated with Sabbath observance.

The residents find themselves having to adapt to life in a scheme that has structural features in common with schemes found in urban Scotland. However, this scheme has much in common with other Hebridean communities, in terms of the background of the residents and the influence of religion at both individual and community level. A further distinctive feature of the community that interfaced with rurality and religion revolved around language, with many residents having Gaelic as their first language. Older residents were more predisposed to use Gaelic in everyday communication, with younger residents being non-Gaelic speakers or less fluent but nevertheless valuing the part Gaelic

plays within the broader Hebridean culture. Many younger residents confirmed they had a reasonable understanding of the Gaelic language.

The Western Isles of Scotland is a remote archipelago, some 40 miles west of the Scottish mainland and figure 1 below shows its position in relation to the north west coast of Scotland.



Figure 1: Position of the Western Isles showing its remoteness from the Scottish mainland (Boyd and Boyd 1990)

The predominantly rural and remote population of the Western Isles was, in the 2001 census, found to be 26,502 and is declining. Stornoway, on the Isle of Lewis, is the regional administrative centre for the local authority, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles Council) and has a resident population of approximately 12,015 (General Register Office for Scotland 2003a).

The Cearns is a settlement with a housing layout of 1, 2 or 3-bedroom units built around a number of squares each with grass in the centre. It comprises 250 units housing a population, in 2001, of 666 residents (General Register Office for Scotland 2003a). The scheme is located on the western edge of the town of Stornoway, astride the A857 to Port of Ness, as shown in figure 2.

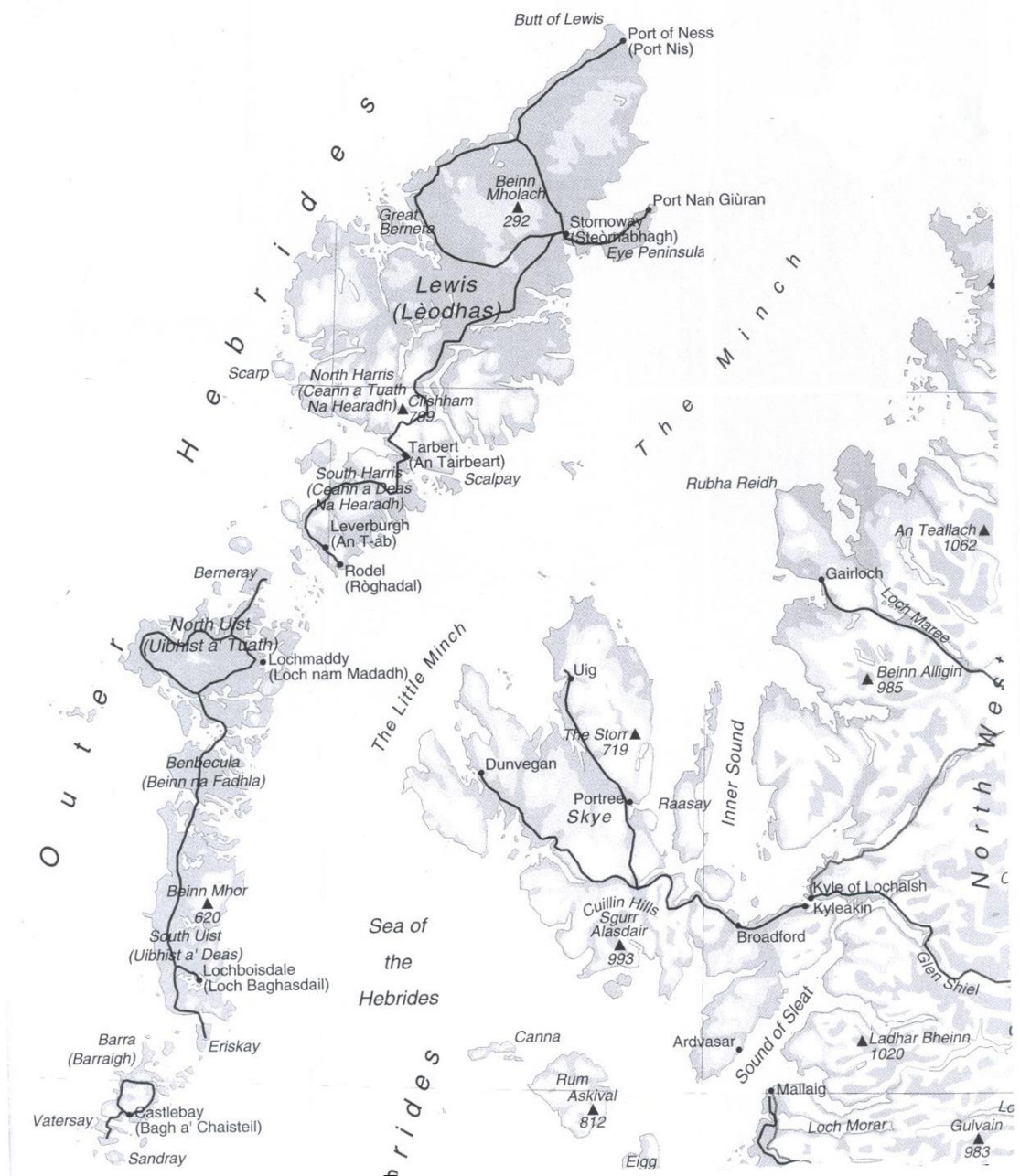


Figure 2: The position of the town of Stornoway in relation to the Western Isles (Scoffham, Bridge and Jewson 2006)

The Cearnas did not qualify for dedicated funding under Scottish Executive area-based regeneration policy initiatives (Scottish Executive 2002), because it was not within the top 10% (122) of the 1,222 Scottish electoral wards with the highest levels of deprivation (Scottish Executive 2004a). To fall within the most deprived 10% category, a ward had to be ranked between 1 and 122; the Coulegrein ward, in which the Cearnas was located, was given a Scottish Indices of Deprivation (SIMD) score of 179. In 2006, when the Scottish Indices of Deprivation were updated (Scottish Executive 2006a), none of the data zones in the top 15% of deprived areas fell within the Western Isles; nevertheless a number of physical and environmental improvements, funded through various local authority funding streams, have been made in recent years.

Other agencies have invested in the area. For example, NHS Western Isles in 1996 funded a community-led Health Needs Assessment, from which a number of initiatives were developed, including a programme of men's health activities, a parent and toddler group and a programme of walks (Western Isles Health Board 1996). Throughout the period from 1997 to 2005, the author in his professional role as Health Promotion Manager began to understand more clearly certain aspects of the residents' lives: their lifestyles and friendship patterns, their hopes and their concerns as well as gaining a sense of how a rural background and an exposure to a religious influence determined social infrastructure and contributed both to community cohesion and a sense of identity. During the 1970s and 1980s the author had worked in Corby, a New Town in the Midlands centred on the steel industry with large numbers of Scots and Irish workers moving in each week as the steel works expanded. Corby had high levels of multiple deprivation and poor health and it was this early experience that motivated the author to make a move from education into NHS-based health promotion. This thesis evolved from these origins and through it the author sought to further develop his academic and research skills whilst building upon his wide strategic and operational experience.

1.3 Aims of the study

The study had two aims.

Aim 1

To explore the health status, health inequality and perceptions of the built and social environment of the Cearns.

Objectives and Research Questions

Two main objectives with associated research questions were identified. These were:

- a) To examine health and health inequality by means of routine data and residents' perspectives.
- b) To identify the nature of the neighbourhood environment, both materially and in terms of social infrastructure. This objective focused on the following research questions:
 - How do residents perceive the Cearns, in terms of image and physical characteristics and how has this changed over the period of residency?
 - How close-knit is the community? How does the social network of friends, relatives and neighbours make itself apparent? In what ways do residents identify and access social support?
 - In what ways does the Cearns resemble and differ from mainland housing schemes?

A number of specific themes emerged from the investigation of this broad aim that led to the second aim. The foci of this aim were implicitly in the author's mind, but the findings from aim 1 were crucial in informing the sequence of development of objectives for aim 2.

Aim 2

To explore the specific ways that rurality, language and religion mediate the social environment. This comprised stage 2 of the research and had a focus that related to culture and its interface with identity. In relation to this aim there were five objectives:

- a) To uncover the meaning behind the term ‘rural’ and to ascertain how rurality determines social networks and social support. The following research questions were asked:
- What are the ingredients of the so-called ‘Hebridean culture’ and how do these ingredients relate to images of self and also to social cohesion?
 - In what ways is a rural culture perceived to be different to an urban one?
- b) To identify the perspectives held by those residents whose first language is Gaelic and establish whether a different set of norms and values is in evidence in relation to social infrastructure. This objective focused on the following:
- How do Gaelic speakers view the Hebridean culture; is the speaking of Gaelic a requirement to be seen as ‘a Hebridean’? How different are social network patterns amongst Gaelic speakers?
- c) To assess the extent to which degrees of religious adherence have an effect at both the level of the individual and that of the community. The following questions were asked:
- At the level of the individual, how does religious adherence influence both social networks and social support systems? How do the networks of communicants differ from those of other worshippers or those with no religious interest?
 - At community level, how is the effect of living within the strong religious culture of Lewis perceived?
 - In what ways does religion interface with individual and community health?
- d) To investigate any differences between the social support systems of incomers and locally born residents. This objective focused on the following:

- What are the characteristics of the social infrastructure of the incomer? Are there similarities to, and differences from, residents of local origin?
- e) To explore the influence of rurality, language and religion on certain aspects of health, especially alcohol consumption and depression.

Both aims related to the perceptions held by adult residents over the age of 18 years; the study did not seek to gain the views of young people.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The thesis begins by reviewing several bodies of literature that relate to the context in which the study was undertaken (Chapters 2, 3 and 4). Chapter 2 is primarily concerned with exploring bodies of literature that relate to the key concepts of health and health inequalities and their connections to neighbourhoods and social capital. As the research progressed a number of cultural themes emerged and the literature relevant to these themes is discussed in chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 3 focuses on rurality, its definition, its meaning and its characteristics and includes references to literature relating to rural health issues and the urban/rural dichotomy. The chapter concludes by discussing the literature around culture, language and identity. Chapter 4 initially examines the historic pattern of religious influence in Scotland from the sixteenth century to the present day, relating identified influences to the religious situation prevailing on the Isle of Lewis. The chapter moves on to examine the literature that relates to the sociology of religion, with emphasis on secularization, fundamentalism and the links between religion and modernity. The chapter concludes by focusing on the links between religious observance and physical and mental health.

Chapter 5 discusses the theoretical assumptions behind the study and outlines the methodology, describing sampling, recruitment, interview and data analysis processes.

In chapter 6 findings from stage 1 of the research process are outlined, in the form of a presentation of routine data including demographic, socio-economic and health-related data. Chapter 7 completes stage 1 of the fieldwork reflecting the views of residents on issues that relate to health, the built environment and the social nature of the area. Findings reported in this chapter helped to identify and inform the emergence of areas of particular interest, which were further examined in stage 2 of the research process; and these findings appear in chapters 8 and 9. Chapter 8 presents findings that identify those aspects of rurality that facilitate the acquisition of social capital, contribute to community cohesion and reinforce a sense of identity. Chapter 9 examines the influence of religion at the level of both the individual and the community. In both these chapters the findings are related to the relevant literature. Chapter 10 discusses the findings specifically in relation to the two aims and detailed objectives as well as providing a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the study. Chapter 11 summarises key findings and offers recommendations for future research. A short afterword follows.

CHAPTER 2: HEALTH, HEALTH INEQUALITIES, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

2.1 Introduction

The original aim of this research was to investigate health and structural inequalities evident within a deprived housing area in the town of Stornoway. A study exploring health and social capital was planned and the relevant literature was identified. An appraisal of the literature together with early empirical research allowed two influential themes to emerge. An open-minded spirit of enquiry using the familiar strengths of qualitative techniques allowed the thesis to emphasise, more strongly than the author would have predicted at the outset, the role that the themes of rurality and religion play in urban places in remote Hebridean communities. Thus the thesis, as it developed, changed its emphasis and began to examine more closely the impact of rurality, religion and language as cultural factors and how they facilitated or inhibited health and wellbeing, social infrastructure and community cohesion.

Chapter 2 is the first of three literature review chapters and focuses on the first aim of the thesis. Thus it is primarily concerned with exploring bodies of literature relating to the key concepts of health, health inequalities and their connections to neighbourhoods and social capital.

This chapter has been divided into four sections. The first section briefly explores the contested definitions of health and wellbeing. The second moves on to summarise evidence that health emerges from a complex interplay of factors operating at different levels including physical environment, social infrastructure, individual behaviour and genetic endowment. A theoretical framework follows showing the relationship between individual, community, societal and global elements. The third section of the chapter examines a range of national and international theoretical perspectives on health inequalities, including a discussion of the relevant policies within Scotland that seek to

address health inequality and social justice, covering the period of both New Labour / Liberal Democrat and SNP administrations since 1997.

It has been argued that the health status of the population within an area can be influenced by place effects that relate to features of the area (Barnes, J. *et al.* 2005; Macintyre, Ellaway and Cummins 2002) and the fourth and final section of the chapter reviews the literature on the operation of compositional and contextual factors at neighbourhood level. This section also includes research suggesting that social support, social networks and roles are associated with health (Kawachi, Kennedy and Lochner 1997) and that such factors are linked to the notion of social capital.

The author became able to understand the context for life in the Cearns as a result of three influences: his role as Health Promotion Manager implementing a health inequality strategy at local level; undertaking this literature review of health, health inequality, neighbourhood and social capital, and latterly the interplay between literature and fieldwork that produced the evidence that rurality and religion were significant influences affecting an individual's health, wellbeing, social networks and identity. The author wove together operational experience, strategic planning and academic learning into a sociological story of life in a social housing scheme, one enriched by the possession of local knowledge.

2.2 The concept of health

This section takes a chronological albeit selective approach to the health literature, tracing the use of the term from medieval times to the present as well as showing how a broad understanding of the term, as a balance between humans and their environment, gave way to a scientific, rational definition, which in turn has been subject to criticism. It will be shown that the range of approaches used by researchers within disciplines such as sociology and

anthropology has resulted in a broad understanding of the meaning of the term health, one that resonates with and draws from lay perspectives of the term. An understanding of the literature by the author of this thesis will inform the nature of the fieldwork and the extent of the discussion, especially around lay perspectives of health within a rural context.

Prior to the sixteenth century the view prevailed that a healthy mind within a healthy body could only be achieved by the harmonising of life with the ways of nature (for a detailed account see Dubos 1979). During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to some extent coinciding with philosophical developments associated with the Enlightenment, a body of scientific knowledge around medicine, human anatomy and disease emerged, leading in the West to the evolution of the 'biomedical model'. The model offered a powerful framework for preventing, treating and curing many diseases, and its significance has been recognised in professional and lay thinking up to the present day. However, two aspects of this model have come under scrutiny, especially from workers in the mental health field: its narrowly biological orientation; and its separation of individuals from their wider social and material environment (Busfield 1986). This has resulted in a dichotomy between the biomedical model and a looser, more holistic model, the 'social model' that takes into account the social, material and economic circumstances of an individual's life (Blaxter 2001). Application of the social model of health facilitated an analysis of the living conditions and social circumstances of populations, within the context of the 'New Public Health' movement, a movement driven by an acceptance that health and wellbeing were broad concepts, not merely the opposite of illness (Ashton and Seymour 1988; Beaglehole and Bonita 1997).

The latter part of the twentieth century saw a steady expansion of research in disciplines other than medicine that were relevant to the nature of health and disease, with researchers bringing expertise from the fields of the social sciences, history, English literature, demographics and journalism (Davey, Gray and Seale 1995). A multi-disciplinary approach reinforced the applicability of the

social model of health to the study of populations and contrasted sharply with the narrower focus of the medical model.

The definition of health incorporated into the constitution of the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 1946 became almost iconic and reflected a holistic view of the concept; yet it is a view difficult to conceptualise:

[Health is] “a complete state of physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease.”

(World Health Organisation, quoted in Ashton and Seymour, 1988: 8)

This definition lacks conceptual clarity. Several researchers, for example Downie and Macnaughton (2000), offered a critique of the WHO definition saying that within it health does not have a clear identity and that it becomes conceptually difficult to separate positive health from other states such as wellbeing, happiness, exhilaration, fitness or vigour. They concluded that whilst health may keep conceptual company with such terms as beauty or youth, it has a value base clearly illustrated by its appearance in such phrases as ‘healthy, wealthy and wise’.

The next subsection refers to a selection of pieces of work that tease out the nature of health as seen through the eyes of lay individuals and groups, although few studies are offered within an explicitly rural context. The concept of health is increasingly viewed as being dynamic and linked to social relationships and power structures and thus judgements as to its nature are conditional on a range of factors: age, sex, family status, occupation, ethnicity, culture, religion, class as well as geographical and temporal location (Curtis and Taket 1995; Helman 1995). The specific link between the concepts of health, culture and belief systems has been analysed by anthropologists; for example Helman (1984) studied lay beliefs in respondents from north London and found they embodied the notion of ‘a healthy body in a healthy mind’ a view reminiscent of medieval and earlier times where the emphasis was on balance.

Some researchers argued that health facilitated coping and functioning (Pill and Stott 1982) whilst others related the term to levels of physical fitness or

psychological wellbeing (Paxton, Sculthorpe and Gibbons 1994). In their study of social class attitudes in Aberdeen, Blaxter and Paterson (1982) found working class mothers did not define their child's symptoms as 'ill' if they could walk and play normally. Such a functional definition, common amongst respondents from low income households, was based on the economic need to keep working, however they felt, as well as on a low expectation of the healthcare system. Blaxter (1990) continues to point out that the idea of health as a 'reserve' has been found to be very persuasive. The notion of a 'reserve' underpins a view commonly held at the present time - a view held by those who believe that health is the foundation for the achieving of one's potential (Seedhouse 1986). Framed another way, health 'allows one to become all that one is capable of becoming' (Mansfield 1977), yet in none of these definitions is it entirely clear what range of factors might count as 'foundations for achievement' nor what constitutes personal potential (Aggleton 1990). He believes the notion of personal potential remains as mystical and as unattainable as the 'state of complete physical, mental and social well-being' referred to by the WHO in 1946.

The nature of health has been discussed in relation to freedom and human rights through the 'capabilities' approach (Sen 2005). Capabilities have been defined as aspects of human functioning that identify what a person is able to do or be, complementing the concept of human potential as outlined by Seedhouse (1986). When applied to notions of health the capabilities approach concentrated on the *opportunity* to have good health, or to be well nourished, leaving the individual free to choose to make use of this opportunity or not. 'Freedom' refers to the extent to which a person has that choice and critics of the approach, for example, Dean (2009) have posited that the individual is located within a context of power relations, ignored by Sen, through which identity, choices and life chances are mediated. Sen attempted to construct a list of capabilities that demand attention in terms of justice: the freedom to be well nourished, to lead a disease-free life, to be educated and to be sheltered. He went on to make it clear that such a list must be open to informed scrutiny and public debate and that everyone's voice should be heard. It is vital in any evaluation of moral judgements, he believed, that scrutiny occurs from a cultural distance, citing as

an example whether there is an equitable difference in punishments between the stoning of adulterous women by the Taliban and the widespread use of capital punishment in parts of America. It is only by scrutiny from a 'distance' that critical assessments can be made. The two concepts, of capabilities and of human rights, are compatible with each other and many human rights can be seen as rights to particular capabilities (Sen 2005).

To summarise, it is widely acknowledged that, at the level of the individual, health is more than just the absence of illness. Health can be viewed as a resource for living; a foundation for achievement or a capability for effective functioning; multi-dimensional with physical, mental, social and spiritual elements. Possession of good health can be regarded as one of the fundamental rights of every human being, a view reinforced by the world health community at the fifty-first World Health Assembly in 1998. Health is a precondition for wellbeing and quality of life and a benchmark for measuring progress towards the reduction of poverty, promotion of social cohesion and elimination of discrimination (World Health Organisation 1999). The next section examines the meaning of the term 'wellbeing', focusing on its usage in national and local health and social welfare policy.

2.3 The meaning of the term wellbeing

The concept of 'wellbeing', like that of 'happiness', has been widely used by lay people and professionals, but is hard to define. The phrase 'health and wellbeing' has become widely used in health promotion and public health policy at national level for many years (Department of Health 2003) and is now apparent in other policy arenas to the extent that, at the change of administration in 2007, the Scottish Government Health Department was renamed the Department of Health, Care and Wellbeing, offering greater potential for joined-up policy development. At local level across Scotland joined up working through the interagency Community Planning Partnership structure has been in operation for some years, often having community wellbeing as a theme (for example, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar 2005). The term 'wellbeing' has

entered regular usage because of its potential to unite the objectives of different sectors (Burke *et al.* 2002) and this was able to be seen, for example, in the approval, in 2004, of the Community Wellbeing Plan by the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership.

The term ‘wellbeing’ has increasingly been referred to in policy statements, yet it has been used in an unreflective way with an assumption that its meaning was shared and its definition agreed (de Chavez *et al.* 2005). A number of researchers, for example Baker and Intagliata (1982), Liu (1976) and Emerson (1985) cited by Felce and Perry (1995), have stated that there are as many definitions of ‘wellbeing’ as there are people studying the phenomenon, for example:

“[Wellbeing is] the satisfaction of an individual’s goals and needs through the actualisation of their abilities or lifestyle.”
(Emerson, 1985 cited in Felce and Perry, 1995: 58)

“[Wellbeing] comprises objective descriptors and subjective evaluations of physical, material, social and emotional wellbeing together with the extent of personal development and purposeful activity, all weighed by a personal set of values.”
(Felce and Perry, 1995: 60, 62)

De Chavez and colleagues concluded in their literature review of the concept that, as the terminology has changed from health education through health promotion to health improvement, so the phrase ‘health and wellbeing’ has been increasingly used where a broad definition of health improvement encompassing a range of medical and non-medical priorities was intended.

In their critique of the term ‘wellbeing’ Carlisle and Hanlon contended that a focus around happiness and ‘the good life’ served as a reinforcement of an individual’s position within Western consumer society; a locus that stressed the primacy of the individual whilst being surrounded by a field of alternative experts and therapies (Carlisle and Hanlon 2008). Existing structural inequalities are exacerbated as the concerns of the worried well of wealthy nations serve as a distraction to wider public health effort. Self-responsibility and self-reflection

become confirmed as significantly important values in the search for 'wellbeing', leading to a lack of acceptance of emotions such as dissatisfaction or disillusionment, both of which make up the normal repertoire of emotions faced by humans on a regular basis. Conversely, the media dialogue around individual wellbeing and happiness has resulted in the cultivation of unrealistic expectations, feelings of inadequacy, a reducing of self-esteem and depression from which a therapeutically based industry has evolved to improve and enhance the 'commodity of wellbeing'.

In its defence, the term 'wellbeing' has resonance with the public when applied to communities or to society in general, especially within the context of the resistance to consumerism or the rejection of neo-liberal Western economies. The search for wider societal wellbeing seeks, it has been argued, to resist over-consumption in the pursuit of social and global equity driven by ecological considerations and planetary climate change (Carlisle and Hanlon 2008). Use of the term wellbeing has helped to raise awareness amongst the public about aspects of modern life that threatens present or future societal welfare than would be the case if other terms such as happiness, mental health or the 'good life' were used.

The literature cited in this section refers to health and wellbeing as complex concepts that apply at both individual and population levels, concepts that are subject to a variety of differing interpretations. The strengths and weaknesses of both biomedical and social models have been outlined and there is broad agreement by workers in the public health field, including the current author, that the social model of health offers a comprehensive and inclusive theoretical framework for an analysis of factors that determine good or bad population health (for example, Mackinnon, Reid and Kearns 2006), and the next section of this chapter presents some of the evidence that shows the relationship between these factors. The determinants of health status are presented, including a theoretical model that shows the interrelationships between individual, community and society.

2.4 Social determinants of health

Poor social and economic circumstances affect health throughout life, with a social gradient in mortality, morbidity and much health-related behaviour being in evidence (Siegrist and Marmot 2006). The effects are not just confined to the poor; even among middle-class office workers lower-ranking staff suffered much more disease and earlier death than higher-ranking staff (Donkin, Goldblatt and Lynch 2002). Material and psychosocial causes contributed to these differences and their effects extend to most diseases and causes of death. Material causes of poor health include: a low level of income and savings; poor housing; and, being unemployed or being in a low-paid, casual work environment. Social and psychosocial circumstances cause anxiety, social isolation, low self-esteem and stress (Wilkinson and Marmot 2003), with friendship, social support and good social networks making an important contribution to good health through emotional and practical support and making people feel cared for, esteemed and valued. A lack of support can operate at the level of the individual, and a positive correlation has been found between social isolation and increased rates of premature death from all causes (Kaplan *et al.* 1988), including a poorer chance of survival after a heart attack (House, Landis and Umberson 1988) and higher levels of depression (Oxman *et al.* 1992). Berkman and colleagues argued that support operated at community level by the promotion of good social relations, increasing trust and the encouragement of social cohesion (Berkman *et al.* 2000). Health in populations has emerged from a complex interplay between physical environment, social environment, individual behaviour, genetic endowment and provision of services. These influences interact with economic and other factors from which the health status of a population emerges and this interaction and combination of influences continues over the human lifespan to create or destroy health (Hanlon, Walsh and Whyte 2006).

Determinants of health status at population level can be represented as models or frameworks, for example Evans and Stoddart (1998), or Graham (2000). One model that seeks to show the social determinants grouped, as 'layers of influence' is that developed by Dahlgren and Whitehead (1991), and modified by Barton and Grant (2006), shown in figure 3.

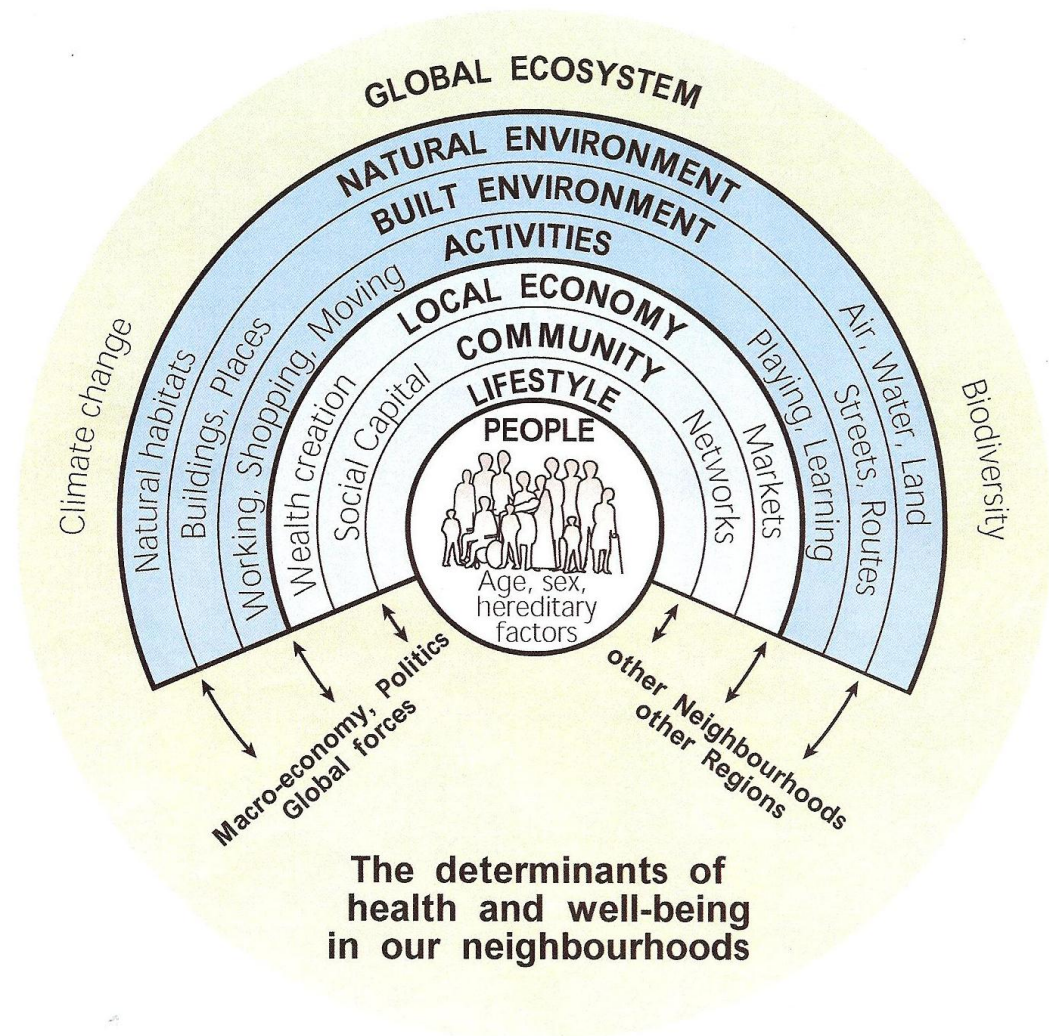


Figure 3: Determinants of health and wellbeing at the level of the neighbourhood (Barton and Grant 2006)

The inner layer embodies qualities that relate to the individual; such as age, gender and other genetic factors and this layer is surrounded by a layer that relates to individual lifestyle factors that can be either health promoting, such as healthy eating or health damaging, for example smoking. The next layer represents the interaction of the individual with friends, family and others in the local community, and may be envisaged as comprising relationships that generate social capital (a concept discussed in a later section of this chapter). Social connectedness can be related to identity and empowerment, which in turn can be related to the wider environment, to economic structures and to wider political and global forces. Connections, identity and empowerment have been shown to act together at community level resulting in a gaining of

confidence and strength, with local people feeling skilled and motivated enough to fight for change or improvement (Barr and Hashagen 2000). Higher level circles show wider influences on health, influences related to living and working conditions including access to essential services and facilities. The neighbourhood itself exerted a significant influence on health; for example, differences in housing conditions may relate to physical and mental health (Parkes and Kearns 2004). Environmental factors such as appearance, noise and the provision of green space also have determined whether a place is an enjoyable place to live (Greenspace Scotland 2005).

The model, developed by Barton and Grant (2006), differs from that originally developed by Dahlgren and Whitehead (1991) in that it recognised, in the outermost ring, the existence of global phenomena as determinants of health, including the effects of climate change, biodiversity and international trade. The author of the current thesis identified with the addition of global influences, believing on balance that it presented a more relevant framework, within a globalised environment. The model can be related to the notion of health and social inequalities and the next section discusses some of the relevant literature.

2.5 The nature of health inequality

This section defines health inequality, and then presents a discussion of the literature that explains health inequalities. It concludes by placing the health inequality agenda within a political and national policy context.

The range of literature is broad and within it there have been few efforts to define succinctly the term 'health inequality', an exception being that of Blamey and colleagues who defined health inequality as 'the differences found in various aspects of health between different groups in society' (Blamey *et al.* 2002: 5). Others identified that the term was used in different ways (Braveman and Gruskin 2003; Whitehead 1992) and that it was difficult to measure (Kawachi, Subramanian and Almeida-Fiho 2002; Mackenbach and Kunst 1997). However, there was general agreement that health inequality has a number of

different dimensions, relating to social, gender and ethnic circumstances. It is not simply the poorest that experience less than optimal health - there is a gradient across the whole population. It has become possible to recognise the health gaps between different groups and the social gradients across whole populations as well as the poor health status of socio-economically disadvantaged people, and all reflect dimensions of health inequality (Graham 2004; Graham and Kelly 2004). Since the 1980s, in general population terms, life expectancy, general health and prosperity have increased in the UK and death rates have fallen. However, while the health of the population as a whole may have improved, the health of the least well-off either has improved more slowly than the rest of the population or in some cases has got worse (Hanlon, Walsh and Whyte 2006). The term 'health inequality' has most commonly been used to refer to the differential impact that arises from the influence of a range of socio-economic factors, essentially income, class and education. There are, however, other ways that it manifests itself, for example through gender differences (Bartley *et al.* 2000) or ethnicity (Karlsen and Nazroo 2002). In addition, a geographical effect has been demonstrated whereby social groups with the poorest health are often clustered in particular localities and neighbourhoods (Judge *et al.* 2006).

The Black Report introduced by Townsend and Davidson (1982) can be regarded as having been the most significant piece of work in this field for many decades. Indeed, its publication has been described as a 'significant landmark' in the study of health inequalities (Benzeval and Judge 2005). This assessment serves to remind us how the report highlighted the issue, especially considering that only 260 typescript copies of the report were made available. However, its date of publication should be borne in mind when comparing it with contemporary evidence.

The Black Report offered four explanations for the relationship between health and inequality, one citing that it is an artefact associated with the measurement of social phenomena. A second explanation saw the relationship in terms of natural or social selection, whereby ill or sick people drifted down the social scale, rather than the opposite whereby socio-economic circumstances may have

contributed to the degree of inequality. Within the context of the current thesis it is the remaining explanations that are of relevance; the first revolving around the potential effects of culture and behaviour whilst the other takes a societal, structuralist stance believing that inequalities are caused by material and contextual conditions.

The cultural/behavioural explanation focused on the individual as a unit of analysis and often emphasised a perceived irresponsible behaviour or incautious lifestyle as a major determinant of poor health status. There is the possibility within this explanation that behaviours such as cigarette smoking, lack of exercise, poor diet and over-consumption of alcohol underpinned inequalities in health, however, research on diet and on smoking suggest that poor nutritional choices and the adoption of the smoking habit were the outcome of social processes and were not simply a reflection of fecklessness or ignorance (Shaw *et al.* 1999).

Whilst behavioural factors may have had a minor part to play in possible explanations of health inequality, there is an increasing recognition that broader psycho-social or cultural factors may be in operation (McIsaac and Wilkinson 1997) and indeed it may be posited that the relative lack of recognition of the importance of such factors is a potential weakness of the Black report. For example, perceiving oneself to be worse-off relative to others may lead to poorer health - in terms of increased stress levels and risk-taking behaviours (Graham *et al.* 2000) and within the workplace the degree of control over conditions experienced by employees has also been studied (Marmot *et al.* 1997), the findings illustrating that health inequality may not be only a matter of poverty. Findings concluded that an increase in stress levels exerted an influence indirectly through an increase in unhealthy behaviours or directly via physiological and neuro-endocrine pathways (Brunner 1996).

The materialist/structuralist perspective emphasised the role of economic and other socio-economic factors in the distribution of health and the Black Report was unequivocal in its view that material factors were crucial (Department of Health and Social Security 1980). Material factors included the physical

environment of the home, neighbourhood and workplace together with the living standards secured through earnings, benefits and other income (Graham 2000) and there is a considerable body of evidence that has demonstrated the direct and indirect links between unequal material and social circumstances and health inequalities (Graham 2000; Wilkinson and Marmot 2003). Inequalities in health have been linked indirectly to other socio-economic factors such as education, employment and income, as seen both in the outermost layers of Whitehead's model of social determinants (Blamey *et al.* 2002; Davey Smith *et al.* 1997; Wilkinson and Marmot 2003) and that of Barton and Grant (2006).

A further set of studies has looked at the relationships between income distribution across countries (Wilkinson 1996) or within smaller regions of one country, for example, Britain (Ben-Shlomo, White and Marmot 1996). Within developed countries it has been demonstrated that income distribution, not average income per capita, affected life expectancy. Wilkinson, to some degree bridging materialist and psychosocial explanations, believed that an important feature of egalitarian societies was their social cohesion; and that narrower income differentials and increased social cohesion had an important role in increasing life expectancy (Wilkinson 1996). A discussion of international inequalities is of little relevance to the current thesis but Benzeval and colleagues (1996) offer a useful summary of earlier studies undertaken in other parts of the developed world.

Prompted by the Black Report and the growing body of research demonstrating the extent of health inequalities in the UK, an independent inquiry into inequalities was established and led by Sir Donald Acheson in 1997 (Benzeval, Judge and Whitehead 1996). It explicitly recognised the link between poverty and poor health and called for action across a wide range of agencies and organisations. Acheson summarised thus:

“Socio-economic inequalities in health reflect differential exposure - from before birth and across the lifespan - to risks associated with socio-economic position. These differential exposures are also important in explaining health inequalities that exist by ethnicity and gender.”

(Acheson, 1998: 6)

Acheson's reference to the lifespan was underpinned by research that highlighted how exposure to disadvantaged environments and to health-damaging behaviour had a cumulative effect over the life course, resulting in differential socio-economic inequalities linking directly to adult mortality and morbidity (Kuh and Ben-Shlomo 1997). Grundy and Holt (2001) concluded that those who have followed more disadvantaged pathways through their adult lives, as marked out by longer periods of unemployment, earlier age at marriage and more children were at greater risk of reporting ill health and long-term illness. Adverse life effects like the death of a child or being sacked from a job were also risk factors for poorer health.

The extent of health inequalities in the UK has been examined at an ecological level with a number of studies finding a strong association between census-based measures of deprivation and health. Positive correlations have been found using census data at English electoral ward level (Townsend, Phillimore and Beattie 1988), at Scottish postcode sector (Carstairs and Morris 1991), electoral ward level (Scottish Executive 2004a) and at the level of 'data zones' (Scottish Executive 2006a). Work has also been undertaken at English Regional Health Authority level (Townsend, Phillimore and Beattie 1988) and at Parliamentary Constituency level (Shaw *et al.* 1999). Few studies have looked in-depth at health inequalities in a rural or remote area context and this thesis, informed by the broader literature, seeks to further that debate.

The next section of this chapter will discuss the literature around national and local policy that seeks to address health inequalities and will make reference to the approaches taken by NHS Western Isles from 1996 to 2005.

2.6 National government policies that address health inequality, 1997-2008

New Labour upon its election in 1997 inherited a fragmented system of public policy delivery and early on it sought to modernise all aspects of public service (Bauld and Judge 2002). Furthermore, it sought to rethink its understanding of

policy problems - taking the view that social welfare policy issues needed to be addressed in a more 'joined-up' way, locally and nationally. The concept of the 'wicked issue' was advanced (Rittel and Webber 1973), referring to core policy problems that could not be addressed by one agency alone. Addressing health inequalities was an example of one such issue, where action was required across several areas of government, nationally and at local level.

The General Election of 1997 saw an undoubted policy shift - WHO had reformulated its 'Health For All' strategy placing even greater emphasis on equity in health and child poverty/social justice issues were given greater prominence - due partly to pressure from Trades Unions and welfare organisations that had closer historic links to Labour. Approaches and processes involving enhanced partnership working, community involvement and patient participation became evident and were seen in the first Scottish post-devolution health policy document, 'Our National Health - a plan for action, a plan for change'. In this document, public participation and patient involvement were highlighted and partnership working emphasised, with the promotion of health and reduction of illness being given a major strategic focus (Scottish Executive 2000a). The direction of change was taken further in 'Partnership for Care: Scotland's Health White Paper' (Scottish Executive 2003b), whereby Trusts were dissolved and a move towards 'single system' working established. Like 'Our National Health', this latest document emphasised improving the health of the population of Scotland.

The need to reduce health inequalities was reiterated alongside the 'four pillars' of the post-devolution Health Improvement Challenge (Scottish Executive 2003c) - these being early years, teenage transition, healthy working lives and communities. Post-devolution health policy also saw recognition of the connections between the health and wider social policy agenda - in particular the Scottish Executive's commitment to Social Justice (Scottish Executive 1999a; Scottish Executive 1999b). This policy response focused on those in the poorest circumstances with the poorest health, thereby linking the health inequalities agenda to the social exclusion agenda. It is highly relevant to the current debate to point out that NHS Western Isles in its policy response to the addressing of

health inequalities followed this approach with the addressing of health issues within the Cearns being regarded as a major focus for activity.

Graham and Kelly (2004) argued from a different policy perspective. They recognised that, whilst those in the poorest circumstances were in the poorest health, this was part of a broader social gradient in health reflecting the fact that it was not only the poorest groups and communities who have poorer health than those in the most advantaged circumstances. The gradient varied across the life course, being the steepest at early childhood and midlife, with less inequality at adolescence and in old age (Kuh *et al.* 2003) and the gradient was steeper amongst men than women (Arber 2004). Graham and Kelly (2004), in their review of health inequality policy suggested that the targeted approach to the poor health of those in poor communities directed attention to those groups that had lost out in the general rise in living standards and life expectancy. This, they believed then turned structural socio-economic inequality from a phenomenon that affected everyone into a condition that only affected those at the bottom. The two policy approaches are best seen as representing a continuum, as shown in Figure 4, ranging from a focus that sought to address the absolute levels of health in the poorest communities through to an approach that focused on addressing the wider socio-economic gradient in health (with a dimension, the health gap, between best-off and worst-off in the centre).

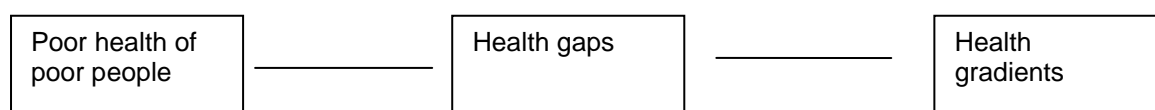


Figure 4: A range of meanings of health inequalities (Graham and Kelly 2004)

Tackling these different dimensions of health inequality can be viewed as representing three complementary goals, with improving the health of the poorest being seen as the first stage in the narrowing of the health gap, which in turn contributes to reducing the health gradient. The addressing of health gradients is in line with international health policy; one articulated by the World Health Organisation in 1998, that enjoyment of the highest attainable level of

health is a fundamental human right (World Health Assembly 1998). Focusing on addressing broader socio-economic differentials rather than on social disadvantages has widened the scope of health inequality policy implementation. It has become more inclusive, addressing both the health of those in the poorest communities and the health gaps between poorly-off groups and well-off groups simultaneously, and it has directed attention to the majority of the population.

New Labour developed a number of related policy initiatives, for example Sure Start or New Deal, but poverty reduction was not given overarching explicit prominence, even though it was reported by many researchers, for example Benzeval and Judge, cited by Martin Barnes and others, that a reduction in the extent of poverty was the major prerequisite for narrowing the health divide (Barnes *et al.* 2005). Work commissioned by Joseph Rowntree Foundation and carried out by Mitchell, Shaw and Dorling (2000), pointed out that annually deaths could be reduced amongst those under 65 years of age if inequalities in wealth were narrowed and that wealth redistribution would benefit particularly those in poorer areas.

Other policy areas were seeking to address health inequality, for example, social justice and regeneration policies interfaced in the document, 'Bringing Britain Together' (Social Exclusion Unit 1998). This document recommended the development of national and area-based programmes that were intended to invest in social as well as physical improvements, and within Scotland the policy debate continued in much the same way as south of the border. Geographical concentrations of deprivation, that is an area-based approach, remained the focus, and the wider causes of deprivation were to be addressed by fiscal, taxation and employment activities combined with welfare support (Goodlad 2002). The Scottish Executive was aware of the need for an approach that links people and place issues, the first Social Justice report stating:

“The strength and well being of communities and neighbourhoods is vital because this is where we live together.... For too many of Scotland's communities, there is a concentration of linked problems - high unemployment, poor health, poor services, poor quality of environment, inadequate housing and high crime...We will tackle the

problems in the worst of these areas and prevent others from becoming disadvantaged.”

(Scottish Executive, 1999b: 16)

The new SNP administration, voted into office in May 2007 reiterated opportunities for cross-cutting work at government level by streamlining departments, appointing the first Minister for Public Health and expanding the health and wellbeing portfolio to include poverty reduction, housing, social inclusion and sport. The strategic document, ‘Better Health, Better Care’ (Scottish Government 2007a), did not contain an explicit public health focus, having no statement or strategy on public health. The inclusion of a public health perspective across health programmes and topic areas would have allowed the reduction of health inequalities to be approached in a cross-cutting, co-ordinated fashion, instead of relegating the issue to a separate chapter. The document would have gained greater credibility in public health circles if the validity of the approaches to health improvement contained in ‘Improving Health in Scotland - a shared challenge’ (Scottish Executive 2003c) or the recommendations for community-led health improvement contained in ‘Healthy Communities - a shared challenge’ (NHS Health Scotland 2006) had been included; the addressing of health inequalities would then have become part of the mainstream health agenda. However, a new Ministerial Task Force on Health Inequalities, led by the Minister for Public Health was established and its report, ‘Equally Well’ (Scottish Government 2008) recognised that health inequality remained a significant challenge and one that was unacceptable.

The Task Force identified priorities where action was perceived to be most needed (Scottish Government 2008). These included: focusing on children’s very early years during which inequalities may first arise; improving mental illness and reducing the high economic, social and health burden; addressing the ‘big killer’ diseases, for example cardiovascular disease and cancers and finally, targeting drugs and alcohol problems, especially in relation to links with violence and crime. There was, however, no explicit reference to investment in community development and infrastructure, despite evidence that these can pay dividends in terms of increased confidence and self-actualisation (NHS Health Scotland 2006).

This chapter continues by focusing on communities and neighbourhoods, and introduces some of the relevant theoretical concepts around the notion of 'place'.

2.7 An analysis of the dimensions of neighbourhood

The Cearns represents a discrete neighbourhood with its own physical and social characteristics, overlaid by a degree of material deprivation and social disadvantage. The next section of this chapter examines the literature that places health status in the context of the 'people and place' debate at neighbourhood level.

There has been a long tradition of investigating geographic differences in health, yet it was the late 1990s before researchers began to ask whether such variations were the result of the socio-demographic composition of the population that lived in the different places or whether there were important 'area', 'place', or 'contextual' effects on health. Compositional effects referred to the characteristics of the residents, including socio-economic features, ethnicity, age and gender whereas contextual effects referred to features of the area itself, and included such features as: physical qualities of the environment, provision of support mechanisms, socio-cultural features, reputation and the availability of healthy environments at work, home and play (Macintyre, Ellaway and Cummins 2002). The findings suggested a greater proportion of the difference in health status between areas was due to compositional effects, although 'area characteristics' played a small part (Barnes, M. *et al.* 2005).

Neighbourhoods created an identity, possessing both physical and social dimensions (Cattell 2001; Ellaway, Macintyre and Kearns 2001; Walker and Hiller 2007). The identity of a housing area was often established at an early stage in the history of the neighbourhood and was underpinned by social class and social status, both identities being resilient to change and both often being related to outdated male employment patterns (Robertson, Smyth and McIntosh 2008). This analysis, the author of the current thesis suggests, applied to urban schemes like

the Raploch in Stirling, but had little resonance within the Cearn, as there was little or no history of male industrial employment, yet the sense of identity in the scheme was strongly articulated by residents. Within the Cearn, two aspects of identity emerged, first a pride associated with living in an area that was perceived as being close-knit and friendly and secondly a residual emotion that related to a description of the Cearn as 'Colditz' by outsiders at the time the scheme was being built. Current residents were clear that this view was held by outsiders to the scheme, a view replicated by Hastings (2004), in her study of stigma and social housing areas. The findings of Hastings' study indicated that actors external to the housing scheme created the negative image, shaped that image and may do little to challenge it.

Neighbourhoods comprise physical and social dimensions and physical dimensions include environmental issues, for example: housing quality and maintenance, play area provision and maintenance, pavements, roads, open space and recreational facilities, plus issues that relate to crime, vandalism, disturbance and noise. Such influences have been shown to relate to the quality of the built environment (Kearns *et al.* 2000), and are able to be assessed through the perceptions of residents when asked about the quality of their surroundings (Dalgard and Tambs 1997). In addition, Dalgard and Tambs demonstrated that housing and environmental enhancements can be related to an improvement in the mental health of residents and that physical development runs in parallel with improvements in the social environment.

Social dimensions of the neighbourhood encompassed social networks that include reciprocal and trusting relationships with those nearby, together with mechanisms for social support operating through family, friends, neighbours, work colleagues or church membership. Social networks and social support systems together contributed to the social infrastructure of an area, in some cases reinforced by personal involvement in local clubs or activities (Pooley, Cohen and Pike 2005).

Cattell, in her study of East London communities developed a framework typology based on residents' narratives. The typologies referred to the degree of

homogeneity or heterogeneity in a network, this being estimated with reference to the range of 'membership groups' included (Bott 1957). The membership groups identified from residents' accounts comprised: family, ethnic group, neighbours in the block or street, people in the wider community, school friends, present and past work colleagues as well as church and other friends gained from membership of clubs and societies. Bott believed that an individual internalises the norms of his/her primary membership groups and may make class-based reference groups out of them; such psychologically real groupings act to help the individual in the structuring of their social world. Residents' networks corresponded broadly to five models: *socially excluded*; *parochial*; *traditional*; *pluralistic*; and *solidaristic*. Table 1 outlines their structural elements.

Socially excluded network	A small number of membership groups, limited in size. Examples of residents with these networks include newcomers, unemployed people, women in difficult relationships, isolated older people, single parents without local families and refugees
Parochial network	A small number of membership groups, but may be extensive contacts within them. Comprised of a local extended family, plus a smaller number of local friends or neighbours. Dense homogeneous structure. Examples include single parents, unemployed people.
Traditional network	Made up of family, neighbours, ex-workmates, old school, social/sports clubs friends. Tight knit structure. Examples are mainly long term residents, predominantly older people and a smaller number of younger people who worked locally, involved in unions or clubs.
Pluralistic network	An open network consisting of a relatively large number of membership groups; dissimilar people in terms of age, ethnicity, interests, employment status or occupation, and place of residence. Generally loose knit. Principal examples are people active in voluntary organisations, frequently not born locally.
Solidaristic network	A wide range of membership groups made up of both similar and dissimilar people; structure both dense and loose; wide range of positive reference groups. Networks share some characteristics of both the traditional and the pluralistic models, strong local ties plus looser contacts.

Table 1: The East London network typology: structural characteristics (Cattell 2005)

The *traditional* network was that most closely associated with traditional, often working class community and culture (Young and Willmott 1957), and for the *parochial* network, local ties, and particularly family ties, remained strong, as they did for the *traditional* group. The *socially excluded* model incorporated a wide range of people who, temporarily or long term, have truncated social networks. Both the *pluralistic* and *solidaristic* models reflected wide networks and participation, but the latter were also integrated into the local community and shared some of its traditional attributes. In addition, these residents

admitted to sharing interests with unlike groups and were more likely to hold tolerant attitudes (Cattell 2001; Cattell 2005). The Cearns, it is posited, exhibited both the *traditional* and the *solidaristic* network patterns, where a tight knit structure of long-term residents existed, yet a raft of looser ties existed between residents and others residing outwith the scheme.

Neighbours have been found to play a key role in the day-to-day lives of residents; with older and long-term residents having stronger, more supportive relationships with neighbours than shorter-term residents. A strong sense of support and goodwill is reinforced by opportunistic, 'low-key' street encounters (Walker and Hiller 2007) and people with friends were healthier, happier and lived longer than those without (Russell 2006). In terms of gender differences in relation to networks, women's networks have been found to be more extensive in terms of size and more intensive in terms of the perceived quality of support than those of men (Belle 1987) although women's network size declined with age (Turner and Marino 1994). In addition, women had more ties to family members while men included more co-workers in their networks (Moore 1990); and it was women that held a central position in the maintenance of social networks as well as assuming responsibility for the day-to-day running of voluntary and community organisations (Anderson and Munck 1999). Terraced housing and high population densities encouraged street-life and extensive contact with neighbours and near-neighbours with the development of informal networks (Silburn *et al.* 1999) and the spatial layout of the Cearns would encourage similar informal contact between neighbours. Social interactions evolved and matured over time and for younger or more recent tenants this can be a slow process, resulting in experiences of loneliness and isolation. Positive contact with neighbours, according to Mumford and Power (2003) generated community spirit, a phenomenon distinguished by a number of features, for example: acceptance and tolerance to others, availability of sources of informal help, a 'friendly feeling' and feelings associated with having a stake in the neighbourhood.

A recent study, by the Young Foundation, has charted social networks and bonds over the past 50 years and has concluded that the solid bonds that existed in

many communities have given way to communities that are less integrated; more divided by class, income and geography and that mutual support and neighbourliness have declined. Buonfino and Mulgan (2006) believed that isolation was increasing and the signs of day-to-day anger and tension were in evidence, with solid social bonds being replaced by distrust and anxiety, resulting in a 'quiet crisis' of unhappiness. This, they believed, was attributed to increased mobility, longer working hours and de-industrialisation, with a corresponding increase in low pay service sector jobs. In addition, they cited the changing role of women in society, resulting in fewer individuals being at home all day, plus television and other modern, more individualistic forms of personal entertainment. Kinship ties once provided a solid base for neighbourhood life throughout Britain (Barnes, J. *et al.* 2005; Young and Willmott 1957) and their perceived virtues have been described including: a strengthening of community structure, informal caring of children and elderly and a presence of family and other controls that curtailed anti-social behaviour (Brown and Dench 2006). In most areas of the UK such neighbourhood and family kinship networks have long gone (Mumford and Power 2003), but the author of the current thesis believes that both types of network still exist and exert a powerful influence within the Cearns area of Stornoway. When Young and Willmott wrote about the East End of London in the 1950s, the area was essentially homogeneous, residents being from one social class and local (Gavron 2006), and it was posited that the same homogeneity would be evident within the Cearns.

2.8 Social capital and the nature of social infrastructure

There is a growing body of evidence that social networks and social support systems can be placed within the theoretical framework of social capital - a contextual construct encompassing formal and informal social connections, reciprocity and trust. This section outlines briefly the literature relating to such terms as 'communal spirit', 'social solidarity' and 'neighbourliness', within the overall framework of the term 'social capital'. It is not intended to conduct a comprehensive review of this wide topic, instead a short summary will be provided followed by a discussion of issues that relate particularly to the

Western Isles. A comprehensive review of this wide topic and its links to health has been undertaken (Mackinnon, Reid and Kearns 2006).

Coleman in America was one of the earliest workers to adopt the term 'social capital' and he conceptualised it as having a number of elements that interact at individual and community level. The elements can be viewed as resources - social, financial and human (Coleman 1988). Putnam refined the term 'social capital' in terms of 'stocks' of resources available at a number of levels. The four 'stocks' were defined as: social resources - including support arrangements between neighbours or colleagues including the interactions of friendship networks, neighbourhood and community groups and collective resources - referring to local civic activity, for example, tenants' associations, food cooperatives or credit unions. In addition communities have economic resources - reflecting levels of unemployment, environmental and housing quality and crime levels and finally, cultural resources - referring to the perceived quality of local schools and facilities.

Putnam indicated the dynamic interplay between human activity for the common good and the fulfilment of individual need. He equated social capital with civic community described as a social organisation with trust, norms and networks that worked together to improve health, wealth and the economy of a community. He maintained that trust had a central position maintained through norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement (Putnam 1993). Putnam went on to stress the benefits of the term and has used it in his analysis of the perceived collapse of communities in America. Importantly, he distinguished between so-called bridging social capital from bonding social capital - the former being outward looking and the latter relating to the existence of specific networks. For example, the Civil Rights movement is an example of bridging social capital - people from different backgrounds uniting around a single and common cause whereas in bonding social capital individuals have more in common, like individuals in an ethnic enclave with a dense network. Putnam's tenet was that Americans have been dropping out of political life and organised community activities in large numbers - leading to a loss of both bridging and bonding social capital. Between 1900 and 1960 Americans were active in social

and political life. The 1960s saw a reversal and Putnam identified a list of possible contributory factors including busy working lives, commuting, the rise of urban sprawl and especially television as hugely significant - the latter 'privatising' leisure time and giving a sense of detachment. He pointed out that whilst more-organised groups have declined, support groups, encounter groups and self-help groups have prospered - because they focus more on individual rather than community need. In addition, student movements, peace movements and animal rights movements continue to be well supported possibly creating social capital by fostering new identities and extending social networks (Putnam 2000). Such societal forces may be of significance he suggested, but equally so are generational forces that reflected a society that is more individualistic, more materialistic and more self-centred yet more tolerant and libertarian with some degree of rejection of traditional social roles (Putnam 2000).

The concept of social capital has its critics and it is postulated by some researchers and practitioners that the notion of social capital may be of more use in the general study of communities and their interrelationships, where it is not conceptualised as a measurable entity but instead is viewed as a set of processes and practices (Morrow 1999). A summary of the views of workers who seek to add qualification to the concept of social capital is provided by, for example Stephens (2008). Stephens argued that there was a shift away from an acceptance of the notion of social capital as a set of norms that were universally beneficial towards a conceptual model that focused on social networks and the relative importance for the individual to be connected to such networks. The focus on neighbourhood as the site of access to social capital has limitations, as residents belong to wider networks, (as demonstrated by the solidaristic network, defined by Cattell (2005)). Broader social connections have been shown to exist with many people basing their social life outwith their neighbourhood of residence (Edmondson 2003). A focus on neighbourhood communities as units within which social capital has its effects omits the broader social issues whereby social capital, like economic capital or cultural capital, is more effectively seen as a resource, finite in extent and subject to competition, with winners and losers. Bourdieu, taking this approach, believed that all capitals can be seen as resources and that competition is constantly being enacted for access

to these interconnected resources across different fields of endeavour within everyday life, for example within sport, commerce or education (Bourdieu 1977). Bourdieu used capital as a metaphor for power and the social reality of competition for resources is exclusion of access by some groups within society. Furthermore, Bourdieu's analysis, as well as explaining the inter-relationships between material, cultural and social capitals, shifted attention away from discussions of 'people who live in poor places', or the deprived in society, towards a discussion of the role of the wealthy in perpetuating inequalities (Stephens 2008).

Another approach that looked at the dynamics of the social environment and not just at its nature was that followed by Popay and others. Many studies, they argued, looked at an individual's 'risk factors' and 'risk behaviour' rather than simply asking why it was that people located within the social structures where they were found behaved in the way they did (Popay *et al.* 1998). In essence, a person's life develops in conjunction with circumstances, and in sociological terms agency is exercised and constrained by social, economic and cultural structures. Thomas (1999) suggested that instead of reducing people's agency to a set of psychological, attitudinal, behavioural or emotional attributes, it was more effective to understand people's lived experience in its richness and many-sidedness. The project used stories - lay knowledge being expressed through narrative. Such research suggested that the two themes coincide - the health impact of 'lives lived in particular places' and the power of individual agency. Notions such as 'coping' and 'strength of character' were evident and were linked to feelings of moral and social identity.

2.9 Conclusion

This thesis has as one focus an analysis of the physical and social infrastructure within a deprived urban space located within the context of a remote Hebridean community; relating such contextual influences to health and wellbeing, at the same time as identifying how such influences were mediated by age, length of tenure or gender. Consequently, this chapter presented a broad sweep of

relevant literature on the nature of health and wellbeing, social determinants of health and the nature of health inequality, typologies of social networks and social capital.

From the literature it can be concluded that there is a complex interplay between the elements that make up structural inequalities and social determinants of health status at neighbourhood level. The frameworks and models presented show the range of influences that operate on a community and their application at local level can help inform an analysis of the effects of place on health. Similarly, the concepts of bonding and bridging social capital, and the relationship to social network typology gave a structure that allowed a deeper understanding of the mechanisms at work that determine both patterns and dynamics of social infrastructure; and this helped to inform stage 1 of the research process. The literature, albeit drawn from the urban environment, demonstrated to the author the complexities, both in extent and depth, of the factors at work in communities in general, and, whilst it is important to remember the Cairns is a community subjected to the same general raft of influences as any other, there are cultural influences operating on health and wellbeing that make it unusual and distinctive.

A detailed study of rurality, religion and language became the second major aim of this thesis and, as a consequence, a range of literature relevant to an understanding of rurality and rural life is presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: RURALITY, HEALTH AND CULTURE

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 connected bodies of literature on health and health inequalities with those on neighbourhoods and social capital. Many of these emerged from studies of health and wellbeing in urban settings. The conundrum at the heart of this thesis is how these concepts play out in a community that displays certain physical and social features commonly found in an urban area but where the majority of residents have a rural, island background and belong to a culture that is arguably distinctive. The literature review now moves on to the role of rurality and other cultural factors in shaping health and social networks. The first section of chapter 3 examines the meaning of rurality and outlines the main threads of rural sociology, with a later section addressing rural health and health service provision. This is followed by an examination of the literature around culture and how it relates to language. In the final section both rurality and culture are related to identity.

3.2 The sociology of rurality

In this section the meaning of the term ‘rural’ is outlined historically, beginning with a discussion of the work of the Chicago school and working towards the present day. Rapid changes in society as a result of the Industrial Revolution focused and organised the research on urban/rural differences, with the Chicago School of sociologists being particularly well known. Social disorganisation was studied (Park, Burgess and McKenzie 1925; Simmel 1994; Wirth 1938) with, for example, Wirth summarising clearly the argument that people in urban areas were thrown into superficial, anonymous and transitory relationships with each other (Wirth 1938). In contrast, other researchers made reference to rurality. Redfield, for example, who had been influenced by the Chicago School, developed an ideal society known as the ‘folk society’, intended to be the opposite of Wirth’s urban society (Redfield 1947). This model was based on an

anthropological study in Central America of small isolated tribes with no experience of industrialisation, and it found that such societies tended to be family-orientated, close-knit and in possession of clearly defined gender roles.

The emphasis within sociological research became orientated towards a strong and sustained academic interest in urban societies and the effects of industrialisation. In parallel, however, smaller localised evaluations were beginning to emerge resulting in a form of social research known as the 'community study', in which rural life was usually referred to within the context of contemporary rapid urbanisation (Day 2006). Between the late 1930s and the early 1970s well over a hundred British and American texts were produced in which the concept of community played a central part. Social geographers, social anthropologists, and sociologists, with their different methodologies sought to investigate perceived self-contained units, identified by them as distinct social worlds, or 'communities'. Early influential studies in the UK revolved around working-class identity and change, for example, the study of migration from Bethnal Green to Dagenham New Town (Young and Willmott 1957), whereas in USA ethnic diversity and assimilation was the focus (Suttles 1968; Whyte 1955). Recent foci for attention have included a Marxist study of life in a social housing area (Damer 1989) and polemic accounts of life on a housing estate in Birmingham (Hanley 2007) and in Rotherham (Baggini 2007). The migration study by Young and Willmott has been updated, tracing the lives of Pakistani immigrants to Bethnal Green over the past 20 years (Dench, Gavron and Young 2006) and Tunstall and Coulter (2006) have tracked the lives of residents in twenty housing estates in England over a 25 year period.

One of the earliest philosophers to address the differences between city and country was Karl Marx, who argued that rural life nurtures subservience to nature. He believed rural life bound the majority of people, especially women and children, to a subordinate, impoverished life, one that stifled the resources that the new and the young could bring to the community. Productive vitality is overwhelmed by deference to tradition (Marx and Engels 1965). Marx and Engels celebrated the development of a society, initially capitalist, later communist that released these productive forces, leading to human liberation for all. In

terms of the current thesis relating to the Western Isles, the significance of Marx's analysis is that what is described as an easy-going lifestyle rooted in the past may be a gloss for the preservation of static social relations that maintain domination of one group by another, for example, women by men or the non-religious by the religious, albeit within the context of a Hebridean identity. Marx, to summarise, felt the urban/rural difference to have a collective basis, one that actualised the potential for human liberation. Tonnies, through the terms *gemeinschaft* (community) and *gesellschaft* (association) recast the difference between urban and rural, based on two sharply opposing ways of life. Urban areas, based on industry and commerce encouraged *gesellschaftlich* relations, the country, by contrast with its family ties and its social institutions based on co-operation, created a *Gemeinschaft* (Liebersohn 1988). Tonnies was clear that *gemeinschaft* was not simply a term used to describe 'place', it was a term based on a social order, involving consensus, shared values, norms and traditional religion (Tonnies 1960), a view that echoed to some degree a concept of positive health, underpinned by equitable power structures and social relationships (Helman 1984). In contrast to Marx, Tonnies did not believe that the one kind of social organisation, the urban, evolved out of the other, the rural. Instead he took the view that they reflected two types of social organisation, rooted in two different orientations to life and work. This approach, that accepts the existence of distinctive urban and rural patterns of social organisation, contrasts with the approach evident within many community studies where the focus revolves around a perception that rural patterns of living, because of industrialisation, pass through an evolutionary process that results in something different, defined in urban language (Day 2006).

Gesellschaft, as a social order is underpinned by competition rather than co-operation, with people being socially and geographically mobile. Rational will undermined the link between people and community. *Gemeinschaftlich* relations, in contrast are rooted in the family, the actors being members of a common group sharing common bonds, interests and identity (Tonnies 1960). It can be postulated that communities in the Western Isles, including the case study area of the current thesis, resonate with such a framework for rural living - especially when associated with ideas around being 'close-knit', with high

levels of social health and wellbeing. Such views, it could be argued, relate back to the wide definitions of positive health as outlined in chapter 2.

In sociological terms, the concept of rurality can be seen to have moved from Marx's image of backwardness to that outlined by Tonnies, where rurality represents a kind of social organisation mirroring a particular way of life. In other words, rurality begins to relate to people, rather than relating to nature. Rurality is to be valued for its own sake representing a situation of relative stability and homogeneity and if understood in this way can be criticised as reflecting social orders of the past. Similarly, critics of Tonnies's approach would say it is idealistic and fosters a backward-looking sociology, irrelevant to many modern rural societies where geographical and social mobility is commonplace and where commercial organisations and public bureaucracies abound (Day 2006). However, this would be to polarise the debate and Bonner, quoting Tonnies, believes that a closer reading of his work recognises a phenomenon implicit in modernity, that being to react, to rebel or to resist. The reaction is to urbanity, with its notions of excess and individualism, with rurality representing an alternative to modern society (Bonner 1997).

Other critics of Tonnies' view stressed the value of individual freedom that is evident within an urban community, contrasting this with the lack of freedom of rural dwellers where unity, community and solidarity are paramount (Levine, 1971). In the metropolis, the citizen is free and not exposed to the trivialities and prejudices that bind together a rural community and result in the stifling of individual development. For Simmel, quoted in Levine (1971):

“the smaller the circle which forms our environment and the more limited the relationships which have the possibility of transcending the boundaries, the more anxiously the narrow community watches over the deeds, the conduct of life and the attitudes of the individual.”

(Simmel quoted in Levine, 1971: 333)

Simmel suggested that a tension or a competition of ideologies exists, and that this is positive, believing that if the *polis*, or place encouraged both individual reasoning and communal spirit to be in balance with one another, a real cultural

relationship emerged. This balance arises ultimately through tensions and resistance, through which genuine excitement and agitation occurs, resulting in a balance between self and others, urban and rural, reason and spirit, that is not oppositional, as Tonnies suggested, but produces a society where unregulated individuality may be moderated by a sense of community within the context of a modern consciousness (Bonner 1997). Simmel's view represents a refinement, an evolution of those of both Marx and Tonnies, one that offers rural sociologists a useful framework on which to build.

Weber, as a critic of Simmel, argued that the social significance of a rural society lies in its ability to sustain an alternative culture to capitalism and that a balance exists. Weber feared that, with the hegemony of the modern, scientific world, the dynamic balance would be difficult to sustain (Weber 1958). Pahl (1969), an urban sociologist, suggested that in the UK the majority is culturally if not physically urbanised and so settlement size was irrelevant when people read the same newspapers and watch the same television programmes.

This section moves on to a brief and selective discussion of postmodernity and rurality; a more detailed account can be found in the works of Bonner (1997); Cloke *et al.* (1994) and Cloke and Little (1997). Postmodernism can be regarded as a cultural and existential phenomenon, one that has resulted in a dismantling of current power structures. A further view reflected is that the Enlightenment belief in progress through scientific reason and rational thought has unrealistic aims and its time has passed (Bauman 1992; Smart 1993). The old certainties associated with modernity, that science will solve the world's ills become less and less accepted. In parallel, the capitalist system in its drive for innovation accentuates the volatility and ephemerality of fashions and commodities; it accelerates and distorts production processes and results in a rethinking of ideas, values and norms. Global communication systems result in a speedier understanding of international phenomena, with the result that the social meaning of space (or place, location, village), is to some degree removed from the people living in those places, as place becomes acquired by globalised forces (Harvey 1989). Spaces become networks of flows and channels (Castells 1983), and the local gives way to the global.

For the postmodern citizen the urban-rural difference no longer represents the choice of either community (*gemeinschaft*) or progress, but is instead an instance of choice amongst the diversity of choices, a diversity both within and between the urban and the rural; keeping one's options open is crucial. No longer does the citizen feel obliged to choose, for the duration of a lifetime, between the community of the rural and the association of the city, the new orientation challenging the modernist opposition of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* (Bonner 1997). The consumer, the postmodernist personified, sees the difference between city and country as one that revolves around lifestyle and choice rather than one that revolves around a choice of being with other people (community), or being part of a progressive project (Modernism). Choice, however, involves ambivalence and future risk, a life lacking earlier guarantees formerly taken for granted, and therefore a new relationship with place emerges (Bauman 1994). Being more geographically mobile, the postmodern resident sees little benefit in attachment to place, often having no sense of loyalty to an area, nor any pride in living there (Baudrillard 1994). In Baudrillard's discussion of the consumer society relationships and inter-human contact are replaced by 'objectification', and consequently places, villages or cities 'gain their desirability from their position in the mosaic of other commodities' (Baudrillard 1994: 349).

This is not without its tensions and dilemmas, as the need for identity and security are psychologically deep-rooted (Eyles and Evans 1987), and in order to develop fully a sense of place is essential, where time and space are brought together and it is realised by some workers that such integration is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve as place is undermined or jeopardised (Thrift 1994). At this point it is useful to introduce the notion of ontological security, a concept that refers to:

“the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action.

A sense of the reliability of persons and things, so central to the notion of trust, is basic to feelings of ontological security; hence the two are psychologically closely related.”

(Giddens, 1990: 92)

The postmodern approach to the study of rurality has also involved researchers deconstructing some early literature that centred around contemporary rural change. The literature is extensive and its review is outwith the scope of this thesis. Bell (2007) in a summary, identified studies that have looked at issues affecting the lives of so-called ‘others’, for example, rural lesbians, in-migrants as well as the politics of gender and power in the rural context.

The epistemological approach taken in the discussion of rurality and its meaning has so far reflected the views of sociologists from the interpretivist school, where the social world has been explored through socially constructed meanings. The final section seeks to provide a balance by examining the notion of rurality from the perspective of researchers taking a scientific, positivist approach. Positivists, for example Fuguitt, argued that rurality refers to a spatially-defined population, believing that:

“it is not a lifestyle, a state of mind, a communication network, or a self-identification, though these might be associated with such spatially-defined populations.....rural consists of areas having small population size and low density.”

(Fuguitt, 2004: 4)

This definition, Fuguitt believed, was complete and was in no need of socio-cultural elements nor elements that related to isolation; however, he recognised that areas of low size and density may well be isolated, but also could be in contact with or integrated into an urban area. He believed that the term ‘rural society’, by any all-inclusive definition had no meaning, as observed rural-urban differences reflected interdependence, rather than separateness. This demographic/ecological definition is in contrast to the perspective outlined by Cloke and Goodwin, in which environment, landscape and land-based industries predominated (Cloke *et al.* 1994; Cloke and Goodwin 1993). Rural areas have undergone rapid change over recent years, and therefore the limits of what can be defined as ‘rural’ have changed. Policy drives involving agricultural

restructuring or environmental conservation, together with in-migration of incomers and commodification of the countryside, as reflected by the rise of the heritage industry, have all contributed to a change in rural areas.

To summarise, it would be true to reflect that the term 'rural' has come under much scrutiny and is a source of much debate, with the literature moving through four phases (Clope *et al.* 1994). The first phase defined rural in terms of space and function, relating the term to population level and density, agriculture, environment, conservation and land-use issues. The second phase, focused on the urban/rural debate, taking a more political and economic approach. This approach perceived rural change as being initiated from outwith the area, with all communities being subjected to national policy drives and to the dynamics of a national and international economy. The third phase, championed by Mormont (1990), believed rural space to be composed of several different economic or social spaces which overlap in the same geographical space, so that rurality was best seen as a social construct, reflecting a world of social, moral and cultural values and in tune with the work of Tonnies and others referred to earlier in this section. Mormont believed, for example, that landowners and farm workers occupied different economic and social networks and that a cultural/symbolic hierarchy was in existence based on power and identity in the community. The fourth and current phase, reflects the views of the postmodernists whereby academic dialogue was focused on lay perspectives, allowing the voices of 'ordinary' people and groups in the category of 'others' to be heard (Halfacree 1993). Independently of each other, both Cloke and Little (1997) and Shucksmith (undated), in his review of literature entitled 'Social Exclusion in Rural Areas', made reference to Philo's work in opening up the debate on the lives of marginalized 'others' in rural society (Philo 1992). Gay people, single parents, travellers and black persons are examples, Philo quotes, of groups whose voices have rarely been heard and he urged rural geographers to be open to diversity. Postmodern times, it is posited, are characterised by a fluidity whereby previously understood concepts, such as rurality become detached from a geographical functional rural space or reference point, thereby acquiring a plurality of meanings that revolve around a number of socially

constructed rural spaces and Philo's approach resonates with this postmodernist agenda.

It seems relevant to the present thesis, relating to the Western Isles, to introduce the author's opinion that communities are experiencing phenomena more akin to a modern rather than a postmodern stage of development, with the notion of *gemeinschaft* being a relevant concept for discussions around neighbourhood dynamics. Family ties are strong and social institutions based on co-operation are apparent and shared values and norms, together with traditional acceptance of religion marks out Western Isles communities. However, postmodern influences are in evidence, operating in tension with traditional rural ways and values, as symbolically demonstrated by the local controversy around Sunday ferry sailings and sports centre openings. In addition, the postmodern notion of lifestyle choices is in evidence, even within such a remote, rural context.

3.3 Rural communities and wellbeing: a good place to live?

This section is in two parts: the first examines the characteristics of rural lifestyles, beginning with young people and running through the life stage to older residents; the second section examines the literature in relation to the physical, mental and social health of those who live in rural areas. The current thesis has its locus in the most deprived housing area within the Western Isles and therefore an understanding of the nature of rural health is relevant.

Community studies of specific small rural communities have regularly identified them as good places to live and grow up in (for examples of such studies, see Cloke and Little 1997). Sociological studies in England that have focused on the lives of residents in rural areas have shown that they generally feel satisfied with, rather than deprived by, living in the country. Levels of satisfaction were highest in small settlements and a sense of living in a secure and friendly community surrounded by an attractive, peaceful, unpolluted and unstressed environment was reported (Hedges 1999; The Countryside Agency 2004; Watkins

and Jacoby 2007). Within a national context, the terms 'rural' and 'countryside' evoked images of harmony and consensus, with such images relating to timelessness qualities and, culturally, are seen as ingredients of the nation's heritage (Murdoch and Pratt 1997). Rural communities are perceived to be safe both from crime (Francis 1999; Jones, Davis and Evers 2000; Valentine 1997) and from many of the other problems that occur in urban areas, for example, racial tensions and 'multiculturalism' (Lowe, Murdoch and Cox 1995). Some respondents in the study by Lowe and colleagues see rural areas as havens in which a white culture could settle down away from perceptions of harm. Positive perspectives on rural living focus on safety and freedom to develop and on images of rural community life as close-knit and stable. In a study set in Scotland, with its prime focus as rural disadvantage, Shucksmith and colleagues found that respondents felt that they were more likely to be advantaged, rather than disadvantaged, by their rural lifestyle. Within the four communities studied, one of which was in the Western Isles, residents presented a raft of positive features associated with rural living (Shucksmith, Chapman and Clark 1994). Residents believed that rural life provided:

“a better moral, social and crime-free environment; good communities; a willingness to share resources; an atmosphere of self-sufficiency and self-reliance; space and freedom from the problems of urban life, and also freedom from the restrictions of close neighbours [as might be the case in a city]; a better quality of life; good support networks and neighbourliness in times of individual or family crisis; and significantly, child safety.”

(Shucksmith, Chapman and Clark, 1994: 7)

The majority of respondents when asked to describe rural communities described them as 'good', 'caring' and 'safe', in turn presenting urban communities as 'degenerate', 'dangerous' and 'disadvantaged'. However, in the same study respondents demonstrated that they were aware that rural communities were not immune from wider societal problems, identifying, for example alcoholism and domestic violence as issues of importance.

There is a widely held view that rural life can be seen as an 'idyll' (Newby 1980), a view reinforced by popular radio and television programmes, for example 'The Archers', 'Heartbeat', or 'Where the Heart Is' (Phillips, Fish and

Agg 2001). By examining the experiences of those who have become neglected in rural areas and who experience social exclusion, subsequent researchers have found that life in the countryside may not be idyllic for all (Cloke and Little 1997; Williams and White 2002). This work, stimulated by Philo (1992) around the notion of 'others', has led to a number of studies that take exclusion as the theme and apply it to specific population groups, for example: young people (Glendinning *et al.* 2003); those in poverty (Cloke and Little 1997; Mullins, McCluskey and Taylor-Browne 2000; Shucksmith undated; Shucksmith 2000); lesbian migrants (Smith and Holt 2005); the homeless (Robinson 2004); migrant workers (Jentsch, De Lima and MacDonald 2007) and older people (Wenger 1995). Within the rural context women often experienced exclusion, with gender roles being viewed in a traditional manner - women's key identities being seen as wife and mother, men's as wage earner and provider. Heterosexual identities were dominant and uncontested and homosexual identities are absent (Little 2002) and such findings would resonate with those of Redfield's 'folk societies' of the 1940s (Redfield 1947). Little also draws attention to the extent to which migrants to rural communities appeared to invest in established ideas of rural community, embracing a belief in the continuing relevance of *gemeinschaft* social relations including these patriarchal and heteronormative values. Individuals who fail to conform face potential stigma and marginalisation. Other dissatisfactions identified by respondents in both English and Scottish studies revolved around particular themes, which are of lesser relevance to the context of the current thesis: costs of transport, affordable housing, lack of leisure opportunities and lack of amenities, such as shops, playgroups, schools or health clinics (for further details, see Hedges 1999; Scottish Executive 2001; Shucksmith, Chapman and Clark 1994). There have been no studies of potentially marginalized population groups within the Western Isles, since 1994 (Shucksmith, Chapman and Clark 1994) and the current author through an understanding of the relevant literature seeks in the Cearns case study to further this debate.

Rural communities are seen as good places for young children, but not necessarily for older children and teenagers. Glendinning and colleagues (2003) presented a contemporary study that focused on the lives of rural young people and, significantly for the present thesis, it had its locus in northern Scotland, an

area with similar cultural features to those of the Western Isles. For the young people interviewed by Glendinning and colleagues, any negative perspectives, such as lack of transport or shops, were outweighed by reference to their local community in positive terms, seen as a good place to live, inclusive and caring; but qualified by many in terms of being intrusive and constraining. Gender differences emerged, with controlling and constraining influences being felt more by young women than young men and Glendinning and colleagues quoted other research demonstrating that those young women who stayed in the local area felt more negatively about themselves, in contrast to the young men, who retained a positive self-image (Dahlström 1996; Elder, King and Conger 1996).

An earlier section of this chapter referred to the work of both Weber and of Simmel, concluding that residents in smaller communities know a greater proportion of their neighbours than those who live in cities or large towns. Freudenburg (1986) sought to expand this notion further through his notion of a 'density of acquaintanceship'. He believed that the term defines a community-level structural social characteristic that reflected the proportion of people in a community known by the community's inhabitants. This is of relevance to the Cearns, an area described as close-knit by residents and is an important theoretical concept in the understanding of rural social infrastructure. Density of acquaintanceship is affected by several variables, for example: community population size; length of residency; diversity and having some things in common with others; formal and informal points of contact with neighbours and personal knowledge of others. At community level, Freudenburg believed that a high density of acquaintanceship interfaced with aspects of social cohesion and even social control, and that it operated at three levels. First, neighbourly watchfulness when operating as an informal mechanism for deviancy control resulted in possible deterrence value. Secondly, in small stable communities, socialisation of young people was as much a community effort as a familial one, with neighbours helping out with aspects of childcare and general upbringing and finally, informal caring of the elderly and vulnerable was often provided by neighbours or small groups of neighbours.

Most of the research relating to social support in rural communities has been focused on the needs of the elderly (for example, Wenger 1995). In terms of the characteristics of support mechanisms, Wenger (1991) has shown that different types of network structure provided different types of support. High-density networks were found in rural areas where all members know each other have been shown to provide strong emotional support, often avoiding the use of professional services for care or advice and such networks were found in the Cearns. In contrast, low-density, more fragmented and heterogeneous networks were less in evidence, yet they were found to offer a greater variety of avenues to wider sources of help.

There is however, a small minority of residents in the Cearns who were not locally born and brought up, who were from other parts of the UK, or further afield. The next section of this chapter examines the literature around in-migration and out-migration and seeks to relate the resulting patterns and principles to incomers in rural Scotland.

Rural in-migration, especially counterurbanisation, the movement from city to country, has been a feature of migration since the 1970s, driven by economic structural change and historically such movements have been found to be cyclical in nature with phases of spatial concentration alternating with spatial deconcentration (Hugo and Smailes 1985; Kontuly 1998). Rural in-migration is also composed of groups other than the counterurbanites. These include former urban dwellers who have moved from smaller places upwards on the settlement hierarchy and lateral migrants who have moved between similar sized settlements (Stockdale, Findlay and Short 2000).

The motivations for migration varied, and included a desire for a rural lifestyle that was safe and pleasant, or were related to house price differentials, or a positive 'pro-rural' sentiment existed focusing on a green and pollution-free environment (Stockdale, Findlay and Short 2000). Other aspects of rural migration perceived as detrimental to the host community included incomers taking jobs from locals, commuters failing to use local services and incomers taking over the running of many community activities (Stockdale, Findlay and

Short 2000). The combined effect of these influences in many areas is at worst hostility between incomers and locals and at best a mutual recognition of each other (Cloke, Milbourne and Thomas 1997). However, as Robinson (1990) cautioned in his study of conflict in the countryside, it would be wrong to blame the incomer for the perceived negative changes in rural society; in-migration may be a contributory factor but in-migration has not occurred in isolation from other wider socio-economic changes.

A brief and selective look at the trans-national context for in-migration and out-migration and how it relates to counterurbanisation in rural Scotland is of relevance. In a trans-national context, immigrants have been described as essentially different from existing residents. Descriptions of group difference have often involved personal constructions that relate to identity, with racial, ethnic, religious and language dimensions (Wallwork and Dixon 2004). In terms of intra-national immigration, for example of English people into Scotland, there may be differences in important respects from trans-national immigration; ethnicity, religion and language are less relevant and in this context it is the notion of national identity that prevails, in other words, in what ways do Scots differ from English people? In one of the few studies of the English in Scotland (McIntosh, Sim and Robertson 2004), many respondents interviewed perceived themselves to be constantly reminded of 'difference' in day-to-day exchanges.

McIntosh and colleagues undertook their research in a number of rural areas in central Scotland and within the Greater Glasgow area, their participants being in professional and 'white collar' jobs so that their findings may be of lesser significance to an understanding of incomers to the Western Isles. Participants often commented that they felt it was difficult to 'belong' in the area in which they lived, and yet, overall, they did not feel the discrimination or anti-Englishness to be such a huge problem that they would consider leaving. A process was perceived to be at work whereby individuals built up a sense of self and identity in a variety of ways that came together to construct and mobilise a national identity (Bechhofer *et al.* 1999). Individuals are knowledgeable actors who experience innumerable micro-interactions over long periods and national identity becomes a part of self and naturalised. Those residents who felt they

did not *belong* to a particular nation experienced some dissonance if their national identity was scrutinised or debated regularly; their being reminded regularly that they were English and not Scottish. McIntosh and colleagues discussed the effect of accent and dialect and the context in which such dialogue occurred, relating their findings to the perceived differences between English and Scottish nationhood.

McKinlay and McVittie (2007) in their study of English incomers to a small Scottish island came to a different set of conclusions with their study population being remote and far from large centres of population. The researchers found that their respondents responded to the local/incomer distinction by developing a sense of identity that directly invoked their connection with and presence on the island. Residents conferred upon themselves a place-identity, for example describing themselves as an islander, or describing themselves using their particular location, for example as an Orcadian. Interviewees were involved in a renegotiation of self and identity, something the respondents in the study by McIntosh and colleagues appeared not to do. Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995), believed that this renegotiation of identity, (called new category membership), brought forward a different set of inferences and attributes, for example the incomer saw himself/herself as a 'local'; whilst never claiming the full island-related identity, that of the 'native'. A dilemma of identity might result for the incomer, yet these evaluations served to distance the participant from the category of problematic incomer, and offered a resource to meet the demands of the immediate context; in other words the incomer became accepted. The literature around trans-national migration and identity is extensive, with reviews on gender and migration (Anthias and Lazaridis 2000; Willis and Yeoh 2000) and the geographical trends associated with migration (Gould and Finlay 1994) being comprehensive. In concluding this section, it might be speculated that identity renegotiation of incomers within the Western Isles follows the mechanisms outlined in the above trans-migration studies, as well as the intra-migration study outlined by McKinlay and McVittie (2007).

The chapter now moves on to examine the literature that relates rurality to health status. Rural health issues have received relatively little attention in the

literature with the problems and needs of rural residents generally being much less understood than those of their urban counterparts. The review by Shucksmith and Philip provides a useful summary (Scottish Executive 2000b). Two reasons have been suggested for the apparent urban emphasis in health - firstly, that the rural population is relatively healthy and does not suffer from the social problems seen in urban areas and secondly the belief that the principles behind the establishment of the NHS prevent the problems of inequality of service associated with rural healthcare evident in other developed countries (Fearn 1987).

Studies that have looked at the health of urban and rural dwellers have found significant differences. Research in Norway and USA has shown that variations in health exist between urban and rural communities for outcomes such as self-reported health, ischaemic heart disease, cancer and suicide (Campbell *et al.* 2001; Kruger, Aase and Westin 1995; Levin 2003; Singh and Siahpush 2002). Likewise within Scotland, it has been found that areas of the country with the highest Standardised Illness Ratios (SIR) were essentially urban whereas the lowest were found in both urban and some rural areas (Levin 2003). However, it should be remembered that Scottish rural populations are more diverse than urban ones, there being relatively few large areas of either acute deprivation or affluence and a rural area near to a town will characteristically show different socio-economic and health profiles than those of a remote rural area. Within Scotland there is a geographical variation, with the remote rural population appearing to have experienced the greatest rise in health inequality (Levin 2003).

Whilst mortality rates appeared lower in rural areas, in line with general perceptions of the relative healthiness of rural life (Clope *et al.* 1994), the gradient of decreasing mortality from urban to rural areas did not persist for the more remote rural areas (Bentham 1984; Levin and Leyland 2006). In terms of specific health problems in remote or rural areas, there was a higher level of childhood diabetes (Patterson *et al.* 2000) and greater numbers of accidents from both farm chemicals and machinery; in addition, suicide rates were higher due to financial pressures and social isolation (Booth, Briscoe and Powell 2000).

Research evidence specifically undertaken in the Western Isles is sparse but a study of food choice and dietary habits showed clearly the effects on healthy choices of rural living. On the islands of the Uists and Barra, it was demonstrated that low income levels, limited availability of healthy foods and a variety of cultural factors acted as barriers to the adoption of a healthier diet (Clark *et al.* 1995). The importance of low-income levels and cultural factors in the Western Isles emerged in a further study, entitled 'Poverty and Social Exclusion in Rural Scotland' (Scottish Executive 2001). Respondents commented that lack of access to services and facilities affected their health and feelings of inclusion. In addition, particularly in rural locations when compared with urban ones, stigmatisation and labelling were found to be barriers to uptake of services, with confidentiality being an issue (Heenan 2006; Scottish Executive 2001). For example, in relation to community mental health services residents of a small community are likely to recognise the car of the social workers or Community Psychiatric Nurse as they visit a client. Likewise in a surgery visit it could well be the case that the patient's neighbour or relative works behind the counter - leading to questioning, gossip, embarrassment and lack of confidentiality, crucial barriers in the uptake of sexual health services.

It would be of little relevance to the current thesis to present literature that related to the distinctive nature of rural services as a whole. However, in terms of the wider background of placing the Cearns case study within its remote rural context it was felt appropriate to include a brief literature survey of rural health service provision. The quality of rural health service provision is perceived to be extremely high (Cloke *et al.* 1994; Shucksmith, Chapman and Clark 1994). This is also the case in the Western Isles (Rennie 2003). Rural residents, however, do face a number of problems arising from the nature of service provision. They have little choice of GP, with the number of doctors within each practice being limited - important if a particular GP holds strong views about, for example, family planning and contraception. GPs have been encountered in the Western Isles, who would only prescribe contraception for married women, any unmarried women being refused on personal moral grounds (Scottish Executive 2001; Shucksmith, Chapman and Clark 1994). Furthermore, access to health

facilities is a dimension of health care influenced strongly by rurality, in terms of distances travelled.

Paradoxically, rural residents may have better access to some types of care than their urban counterparts. Community and social provision for the elderly, for example District Nursing or Meals on Wheels services, may well be better (Fordyce and Hunter 1987) and, whilst there are fewer child health clinics, recourse to GP providers often resulted in higher immunisation rates (Li and Taylor 1991). Recent studies within the farming communities of Northern Ireland yielded similar findings (Heenan 2006). Access issues predominated and were related to assessments of unmet patient need. A culture of stoicism was in evidence and this, together with an absence of appropriate services, meant that support and help were not always available. Farming communities are, by their nature isolated and tend to produce a culture of fortitude, self-help and resignation - particularly in men (Heenan 2006). Such features, together with pride and a fear of stigmatisation tend to operate as cultural factors that restrain the use of health and social care services.

In concluding this section, it would be appropriate to conclude that the rural population may be deemed to be healthier than its urban counterpart, except for those older residents living in the most remote locations. Service provision was perceived by residents to be good, but very real issues existed in relation to access, travel costs, confidentiality and anonymity. Pride and a fear of stigmatisation of certain conditions and illnesses were often in evidence together with a culture of fortitude and self-help and this was recognised within the communities of the Western Isles (Scottish Executive 2001). The distinctive nature of the Western Isles is to some degree as much due to its culture as to its geography and location. The final section of this chapter examines the literature around the meaning of culture and identifies a study that has looked at the perspectives on health and wellbeing held by those whose first language is Gaelic.

3.4 Culture and the Gaelic language

The Western Isles is said to have a ‘distinctive and unique culture’ (Highlands and Islands Enterprise 2005; Comhairle nan Eilean Siar 2005), yet the term ‘culture’ is a difficult concept to define (Gesler and Kearns 2002). Culture, as a concept may be defined in terms of containing both a social and a material element. For example, using the taxonomy devised by Huxley (Haggett 1975), culture was seen to be composed of material objects that reflected the age in which we live together with social relationships, kinship networks and broader interpersonal interactions. In addition, socially agreed broader principles were included such as the general acceptance of the benefits of democracy or an abhorrence of racism. The use of such a taxonomy whereby culture was seen to encompass social relationships, norms and values is congruent with the elements that make up the concept of social capital, discussed in chapter 2. The interface between broader cultural factors, such as contemporary material possessions and elements of social capital is seen in the Western Isles, with additional religious and language dimensions.

Other definitions take these issues further by emphasising the postmodern view of the construction of society stressing specific features that it embraces or abhors. For example:

“Culture is the complex of socially produced values, rules, beliefs, literature, arts, media, penal codes, laws, political ideas, and other such diversions by which a society, or any social group, represents its view of the world as its members (or at least the members in charge) believe it is or ought to be.”

(Lemert, 1997: 21)

The passage across generations can be emphasised whereby culture can be thought of as ‘an inherited “lens” through which the individual perceives and understands the world that he [sic] inhabits, and learns to live within it’ (Helman, 1995: 3). Use of this approach would, for example, divide people into ‘healthy’ and ‘unhealthy’ or ‘lazy’ or ‘hardworking’ according to cultural norms. Others have emphasised the symbolic nature of culture, taking the view that culture is ‘a traffic in significant symbols’ (Geertz, 1973: 362) or that culture is

best defined as ‘the medium through which people transform the mundane phenomena of the material world into a world of significant symbols to which they give meaning and attach value’ (Cosgrove and Jackson, 1987: 99).

Culture, as a phenomenon contains further parameters. First, it is not to be seen as an entity that has a life of its own; in reality it only has meaning when it is related to the people who possess it. Secondly, it must always be viewed in its historical, economic, social, political and geographic contexts. Thirdly, culture is passed from generation to generation and will be, to some degree, constantly changing as people seek meaning and fulfilment from life. Fourthly, it is suggested that culture is possessed by groups of people of any size and since the term implies the sharing of ideas and practices it cannot be applied to individuals, more to groups of friends or members of a household who could be said to share a culture. Finally, within any one geographical area multiple cultures or a plurality of cultures are manifested, but there may well be some degree of domination by one that reflects the values of a majority (Gesler and Kearns 2002). In summary, physical environment, physical activities, economics, social organisation including kinship and marriage, politics and religion are all elements of a cultural system, one that is integrated and holistic and, as Hahn remarked it is local populations, not the outsiders who are the experts on their own socio-cultural environments (Hahn 1999).

A group of individuals that have resided over a long period of time in a particular place become a social and psychological group, perceiving themselves as a single unit, feeling, thinking and being self-aware as a collective entity. Shared group membership affects social relations and behaviour, resulting in a psychological group as distinct from merely a social arrangement (Turner *et al.* 1987). Descriptively, a psychological group is one that is psychologically significant for members, one in which norms and values are acquired from which rules and beliefs about appropriate conduct and attitudes are taken. In the context of this thesis, being part of the ‘Hebridean culture’ (or even being described as an ‘islander’) was perceived by locals as being subjectively important in determining one’s behaviour or actions, and was closely related to a sense of identity.

Social psychologists (for example, Hornsey 2008) believed that the possession of an identity can be related to a positive and secure self-concept and that the possession of a positive self-concept motivated people to believe that their group was a good group - a group that was constantly being evaluated against relevant out-groups. In the context of this thesis, an out-group may comprise incomers or mainland residents, in fact anyone not born in the Western Isles.

Use of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979) helps to interpret cultural narratives, where residents outlined with pride the qualities of island culture, seeing themselves as a sizeable in-group. The theory defined 'social identity' as 'those aspects of an individual's self-concept based upon their social group or category membership together with their emotional, evaluative and other psychological correlates, e.g., the self defined as male, European, a Londoner, etc.' (Turner *et al.* 1987: 29). Social Identity Theory assumed that people were likely to evaluate themselves positively in terms of any group membership, thereby reinforcing a sense of positive identity. Since groups were evaluated in comparison with others, a positive social identity required that one's own group be 'favourably different from relevant comparison groups' (Turner *et al.* 1987: 30). This does not imply that members of an in-group attribute negative distinctions to out-groups, they are just different.

Self-Categorisation Theory (Turner *et al.* 1987), sometimes referred to as the social identity theory of the group seeks to explain the assumptions that need to be made about psychological group formation in order to understand the mechanism for group interaction. Self-Categorisation Theory suggested that there may be a tendency within a group for personal categorisation that provides association with a higher status. The author of this thesis posits that Social Identity Theory offers a useful framework for understanding Hebridean identity and perceptions associated with island culture. The islands have been described as 'God-fearing and Gaelic-speaking' (Macdonald 1992) and this section looks at how attitudes to health and related knowledge may be mediated through use of the Gaelic language and its associated traditions. At the Census 2001 (General Register Office for Scotland 2003a), the percentage of people, over 3 years of

age understanding, speaking, reading or writing Gaelic was recorded at 72% (Scottish average = 1.9%).

Chapter 6 of this thesis outlines in detail the contemporary nature of life in the Western Isles, underpinned by data that focuses on self-reported behaviour across a range of issues (NHS Western Isles 2003; Scottish Executive 2005; Western Isles Health Board 1993). The Gaelic-speaking communities in the islands and the west coast of Scotland share common geographical and economic characteristics with other similar rural or isolated areas. These include poverty and lack of employment opportunities, high cost of living, and lack of access to leisure and other facilities, expensive transport options and weather-related service disruption, especially in winter. In relation to lifestyles findings showed consistently that some health-related trends are positive over time, with more respondents consuming higher levels of fruit and vegetables each day as well as increasing their levels of physical activity. Also there were fewer childhood dental problems and smoking prevalence has decreased. However, attitudes, best described as socially conservative, remain in relation to some aspects of health - especially in the areas of sexual and mental health.

The Gaelic-speaking peoples are as diverse in background, life experiences, attitudes and needs as any other linguistic group in Britain. Also, residents of Gaelic-speaking areas are exposed to national changes and secular trends that affect knowledge, attitudes and behaviour just as much as the wider population. However, there are differences in attitude associated with aspects of local culture and this can be illustrated by reference to both physical activity/exercise and to alcohol consumption. Surveys sampling adult health-related behaviour in the Highlands and Islands indicated that exercise amongst males related more to competitive sport and enjoyment than to health-related issues (Scottish Executive 2000c; Scottish Executive 2005).

There have been few sociological studies of Gaelic-speaking communities that focus on health, the most detailed being that commissioned by the Leirsinn Research Centre for Gaelic by the former Health Education for Scotland, and published in 1996 (MacNeil, Stradling and MacNeil 1996). The study examined

perspectives held by Gaelic-speakers on health, health services and the perceived relevance to the interviewees of national or local health promotion campaigns and materials that were delivered in English. The research design comprised two main elements. A series of face-to-face semi-structured interviews was held with 21 key professionals from the health service, the Gaelic media and schools. Selection for interview was through word-of-mouth and telephone invitation. The second stage took the form of eight focused group discussions held in different locations on the basis of age-groupings between 16 and 56+ years. A total of 44 individuals participated, and, unfortunately, the study offered no insight into the mechanism for participant selection nor was comment made on the socio-economic circumstances of those recruited. The findings are to be treated with caution, but in the absence of other research it is extensively discussed at this point in the review of literature.

The results from both professionals and from the discussion groups suggested that those interviewed shared the same health concerns and needs as the general population. Health-related behaviours were prominent in discussion and some points of interest around physical activity, alcohol and mental health emerged. In relation to the uptake of physical activity, every village had a football team with a strong social element involving player nicknames (MacNeil, Stradling and MacNeil 1996). Other forms of physical activity and exercise were much less prevalent and often less socially acceptable, as one respondent commented:

“...the low levels of physical activity...a lack of facilities contributes to this, but so does attitude...such as *‘What is my cousin going to think if I go jogging by his croft? Have I not got enough to do with my time?’* There is a climate of anti-enjoyment...walking is alien to a work-dominated culture, certainly within the Presbyterian way of thinking. Most people would rather not take that on....and anyway cars stop to give them lifts.”

(MacNeil, Stradling and MacNeil, 1996: 25)

They go on to suggest that, traditionally, a majority of people in the Gaelic-speaking areas had no need or time for exercise or leisure, as work at home or in the croft was demanding and active; they further postulated that such attitudes prevail to the present day, although they recognise that this may be changing.

Their research then moved on look at attitudes to the risks associated with alcohol consumption and their findings suggested that users of alcohol in the Gaelic-speaking areas were familiar with the risks associated with over-consumption but that there was a clear suggestion that individuals in those areas were less condemnatory and more supportive of individuals who drank, blaming, not so much the misuse of the substance, but more the vicissitudes of life. The suggestion was made that a higher consumption of alcohol has a greater acceptance in Gaelic-speaking communities and amongst Gaelic-speaking people. This may relate more to the creation of a cultural framework that tries to make sense of how groups use alcohol socially, as distinct from there being any link, causative or correlative, with the sense of cultural identity associated with the speaking of Gaelic.

It was found in the interviews that the Gaelic-speaking people living in the strongly Gaelic-speaking areas thought of themselves differently and perceived themselves as a different kind of people (MacNeil, Stradling and MacNeil 1996). Gaelic-speaking people were said to operate across two cultures and people that live in Gaelic-speaking areas were very well aware of the bicultural nature of their communities. Very few homes did not have television or radio and there were few Gaelic-speaking individuals who did not visit mainland towns and cities for shopping, visiting friends and relatives, leisure, education, training or work. They have both English-speaking friends as well as Gaelic-speaking ones, and they are culturally and traditionally accustomed to either mainstream or more Gaelic-associated cultures. Gaelic-speakers are not to be conceptualised as too distinct or separate, just different in certain fundamental ways. There is, they believe, a sense of *otherness* associated with being Gaelic-speaking. For example, there is nothing to stop individuals from being deeply embedded in mainstream culture experienced through music, art, dress or lifestyle choice and yet to feel a strong connection with, and commitment to, the Gaelic culture and the ways of thinking and relating which are characteristic of the Gaelic-speaking community.

Some findings relating to the culture were seen as less positive. Lack of self-confidence and lack of assertion skills were noted, skills associated with making

choices for the maintenance of health and wellbeing. Certain respondents traced this to a history and set of traditions that still emphasises the persecution and disadvantage connected historically with the use of the language. In addition, a distinct presence was felt of a social pressure to behave in certain ways. There was a widespread feeling amongst professionals interviewed that ‘social permission’ may be required prior to the making of choice:

“People need to be told that it is alright to take leisure, that there can be a positive view of it...that they will not be punished for it. Others may not be openly condemnatory, but this needs more than passive endorsement. There are good people in there working on this, but it needs to be general, and needs to be addressed from a few angles - home, health, education, social and the church too.”

(MacNeil, Stradling and MacNeil, 1996: 31)

The points above illustrate barriers, arising out of cultural or traditional ways of thinking and pressures for conforming that can prevent some people in Gaelic-speaking communities from accessing the full range of choices. In addition, the sense of otherness referred to earlier can be activated in an assessment of choices by stating that certain problems, issues or options ‘do not happen to people like us’ or ‘things like that don’t happen here’.

When asked about the provision of information by statutory bodies, the use of Gaelic was considered to be an effective means of bringing the message closer to home. As one respondent said:

“When discussed in Gaelic....it would be taken to heart more, it would be seen as closer to them.”

(MacNeil, Stradling and MacNeil, 1996: 44)

To summarise, the specific perspectives held by native Gaelic-speakers was more to do with their response to health issues, rather than any differences in health status or health need. For example:

1. The taking of exercise that was not related to work was seen as unnecessary and invoked the notion of idleness and time on one’s hands.
2. A denial existed of certain health problems together with a tendency to distance themselves from these problems; especially in relation to use of illegal drugs, teenage sexual activity and mental health issues.

3. A tendency existed to support unhealthy behaviours if the adoption of these behaviours was seen as related to, or caused by circumstances outwith the person's control.
4. A lack of acknowledgement existed concerning stress, anxiety and depression coupled with the fact that such conditions may require treatment or practical support.
5. A reluctance to get involved in community action on health matters often combined with a reluctance to volunteer to set up or lead self-help or community action groups - seen as 'putting yourself in the firing line', to be shot at by others.
6. A fatalistic attitude to ill health was shown which led to an unwillingness to respond by making positive choices or actions.

The Western Isles has been shown in this section to have a 'distinctive and unique culture' (Highlands and Islands Enterprise 2005; Comhairle nan Eilean Siar 2005), with elements associated with rurality, remoteness, history, language, religion as well as a distinctive social infrastructure with close ties to others; all inter-related within the context of identity. It is posited by this author that the Hebrides may well be uniquely distinctive and the next section briefly considers a similar community, outwith the UK, but located in Western Europe.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the literature that related to rurality, its meaning and the approaches used to study it, followed by an examination of the nature of rural health, rural health services, culture and language. The chapter presented an overview and not a detailed literature review of all aspects of rurality, selectivity seeking to contextualise the influences of rurality and remoteness on the lives of residents. However, it was not always a 'good fit', as the literature focusing on the effects of remoteness on health and culture, within the UK, is scant. The literature demonstrated to the author that the reality is more complex since Western Isles communities like the Cearns experience remoteness, exhibit a range of attitudes that have their origins in rural life, yet

they may have lifestyle and housing features that have more in common with their mainland urban counterparts. Unravelling aspects of this complexity forms an element of this thesis. Chapter 4 examines the final cultural element of relevance to this thesis, that of religion and its effect on health, social infrastructure and community cohesion.

CHAPTER 4: THE IMPACT OF RELIGION ON INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 offered an introduction to both the Western Isles and the Cearnas housing area, and introduced the notion that religion may exert an influence at the level of the individual and at population level. This chapter presents a brief selective tour through the literature on the effects of religion with a focus on three standpoints: the historical, the sociological and its relation to health status.

The first section defines the context by briefly and chronologically tracing the history and development of religious thought in Scotland from the 17th century until the present day, including an examination of the ways in which current religious thinking and practice in the Western Isles differ from that across the rest of Scotland. The second section applies a sociological approach to religion - with particular emphasis on the impact of secularization, the meaning of fundamentalism and the interface between religion and modernity. The final section discusses the relevant literature relating to the effects of religious adherence on health and wellbeing and identifies pathways that seek to explain how religion affects health.

4.2 History of religious thought in Scotland

From the 11th century until the 16th century Scotland had been a Catholic country with close links to Rome. The church paid for schools and colleges and cared for the sick and buried the poor. Works of art and architecture were believed to have been inspired by God and were offered to glorify the sacred. The church was the centre of spiritual illumination and the Bible was written in Latin, a language unfamiliar to the populace. The ceremonies, rituals and festivals of the church had the priest at the centre, he being the one who could ensure a

parishioner's place to heaven (Schama 2000). By the 16th century in many parts of Europe, corruption was rife within the Catholic Church and many monastic houses were theologically lax, having long since ceased to be houses of spirituality. Financial dealings were irregular with religious and non-religious standing equally accused and in many rural areas services were infrequent, leading to further dissatisfaction (Smout 1998). In the late 16th century, a popular revolution was emerging, backed by men of every class discontented with the political and the religious environment in which they lived, and in many countries the Catholic Church fell. In some countries, for example, Scotland and Germany, Papal supremacy and the mass were renounced by many, with parishes following the revolutionary theology of Luther and the still more radical teaching of John Calvin. (It should be born in mind, however, that in many other European countries, for example France and Spain, allegiance to Rome was maintained, with the Council of Trent in 1563 announcing that immorality and ignorance in the clergy would no longer be tolerated).

The success of Protestantism in Scotland was due to the fact that it was seen as theologically more radical and profound being brought alive at local level by merchants and mariners who had been to Europe and experienced the new, and, as they saw it, true doctrine in which papistical religion was openly rebuked. In addition, 16th century towns had large concentrations of the poor who could be galvanised into riotous groups to storm churches and monasteries to steal food and smash idols (Smout 1998).

The reformed Church of Scotland emerged in 1560 and, during subsequent decades, laws were passed making blasphemy a capital offence, thereby ensuring that any deviancy from a total acceptance of the teaching of the church was punishable by death. In parallel, a national purge was launched to enforce Presbyterian conformity with atonement expected for numerous offences: swearing, cursing, Sabbath breaking, adultery and drunkenness. As the historian Tom Devine states, in relation to the execution of the student Thomas Aitkenhead, for heresy in 1695:

“Aitkenhead’s execution above all else demonstrated the commitment of the Kirk to root out sinners and free thinkers and cleanse the land of those who arrogantly offended against God’s law.”

(Devine, 1999: 65)

There were some positive developments however, church schools were built in every parish, children were taught to read and write the Bible was translated into English and therefore became more accessible; and a sense of order was imposed on a lawless society.

The movement from the Scotland of the 1690s to that of the mid 18th century is to enter a different world, and the next section summarises some of the main points made by a selection of historians in their analysis of Scottish history over the past 300 years.

Intolerance, conformity and Puritanism were symbolic of the late seventeenth century and from the 1730s onwards a different world began to emerge, one in which Scotland gained an international reputation in the fields of philosophy, science, history, law and medicine - a phenomenon described as the Scottish Enlightenment. It was in this period that the blind acceptance of faith as decreed by Calvin, gave way to argument and reason, questioning and scrutiny being fundamental to the followers of the Enlightenment.

Traditional Calvinism, however, was still being maintained at parish level through the influence of a discipline exerted by the Kirk session, a discipline invoking public humiliation and punishment. Calvinism, in the later decades of the eighteenth century, held that all humanity was corrupted by sin and that an omnipresent God had decreed that mankind was divided into two groups: the elect who would achieve salvation and the reprobate who would be damned for all eternity. Godly discipline was to be a moral obligation but also a convincing public demonstration that the congregation of the church were members of the elect; therefore discipline must be enforced, sin rooted out and punishment exacted - to do otherwise would be to dishonour God.

Despite Scotland being transformed between 1700 and 1850 from an agricultural society to an industrial one, religious values remained central to the lives of Victorian Scots and continued to be important well into the twentieth century. The most visible sign of Christian life was the maintenance of the Sabbath when shops were closed, transport ceased, pubs were closed and no games or sport took place. Protestant churches exerted a huge influence on public life, for example sanitary reform, education and temperance. Much social policy in the mid-19th century was driven by religious vision that equated social improvement with moral improvement, with particular emphasis on hard work, self-help, thrift and temperance. The established Church of Scotland split in 1843 over the rights of congregations to choose their Minister, whatever the views of the local landowner. This was articulated in the Veto Act of 1834 giving congregations the right to veto any Minister proposed by a lay patron but this perceived challenge to state jurisdiction was rejected by both the Court of Session and the House of Lords. A crisis ensued at the General Assembly of 1843 when most of the Evangelical wing, led by Thomas Chalmers, walked out and formed the new Free Church of Scotland.

This momentous event, the Disruption, broke the national church in half. The Free Church attracted a loyal following of evangelical upper working class artisans and clerks who developed a strong culture of religious respectability - a trend that continued throughout the Victorian era. Evangelicals took the view that faith was a gift from God through revelation and conversion. They were interested firstly in transforming individuals, helping them to make a personal journey to God and, secondly, to transform society through 'aggressive Christianity' (Ascherson 2002; Devine 1999), by means of Sunday schools, Bible classes and prayer groups. In addition, they held that the Westminster Confession of Faith produced in 1647 held true and was still the creed of true Scottish Presbyterianism (Macleod 1993). The spiritual and social power of Evangelicalism was not confined to urban society; it was seen in the north west Highlands and Islands, manifesting itself in religious revivals attended by thousands where communities were seized with religious frenzy, convulsions, wailing and fits (Brown 1997). The evangelical message gave hope and consolation to a people experiencing the effects of the Clearances of the

Highlands and subsequent famine. Christian conversion was possible only through complete submission to the Divine Will, with Evangelicalism giving spiritual certainty amid the social upheavals of the time, focusing the minds and emotions of the people towards a personal struggle for grace and election (Durkacz 1983). The Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church had been the main standard bearers of Presbyterian dissent since the Disruption, and early in the 20th century parishes joined together to form the United Free Church of Scotland which, in turn, in most of Scotland re-united with the Church of Scotland in 1929.

The Highlands and Islands were an exception and in these areas the Free Church has maintained a strong and distinctive presence up to the present day. Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries Presbyterianism was central to a moral outlook that galvanised Scots to meet the challenges arising from involvement in the Empire, for example, wealth creation, missionary work and social reform; and these attributes defined the Protestant identity (Walker 2000). The re-unification of 1929 was seen as a means of restoring a traditional form of authority that had been undermined by the impact of World War 1 and its aftermath of social and labour unrest. It was a symbolic morale booster, an assertion of Protestants as guardians of the nation's welfare and identity in the face of perceived threats, including secularization, a growth in communist and socialist policies and the presence of a sizeable Catholic community of Irish origin which was considered 'alien' (Gallagher 1987). In a number of celebratory events during October 1929 many speakers referred to the importance of the Protestant church in nation-formation and establishment of a sense of identity. Walker (2000) quotes an article from *The Scotsman*, by Professor Main, written in 1929:

“Our country was not a nation, in any strict sense of the word, before the Reformation, and the most efficient instrument in the making of lowland Scotland was the reformed religion. The refashioning of the medieval Church accomplished more for the unity of the Scottish race than the victory at Bannockburn...after 1560...no more was the layman a humble puppet of the Mother Church - he could voice his views in Kirk sessions or [the] General Assembly, he could take part in the election of his minister [and] he had the opportunity of influencing public opinion.”

(Main quoted by Walker, 2000: 256)

The parishes of the north west Highlands and Islands remained as dissenters to the union and continued to practice their rigid Calvinism. The so-called 'Wee Frees' began to co-exist awkwardly with mainstream Presbyterian churches within the context of Scottish Protestantism. Culturally, socially and politically, as well as religiously, they have formed a very distinctive community and much liberal Presbyterian opinion in recent decades has distanced itself from their doctrinaire views (Macleod 1993). In the mid 20th century forces were at work to challenge Protestantism, including population emigration, increased secularization and Catholic emancipation. From 1963 onwards a collapse in membership occurred with only the Western Isles and some smaller communities defying this trend (Brown 1992). In conclusion, it might be argued that Protestantism has been an important feature of Scottish life since the 17th century and that varieties of Protestant identity have shaped the nation in terms of its politics, education, work and culture.

Craig, in her study of Scottish culture, examined Protestantism in the light of Scottish life in the early 21st century. She refers to the 'Blight of Calvinism' (Craig, 2005: 18), identifying a range of positive features; a strong belief in the importance of principles, a highly developed work ethic, a sense of duty and responsibility and an appreciation of the fact that the sixteenth century Reformers believed in the fundamental principle that every child should be educated. She identified some negative effects: a diminished interest in pleasure, a heightened sense of guilt and a disapproval of art and culture and quotes the poem 'Scotland 1941' where the poet Edwin Muir postulates that the Reformation was responsible for Scotland's artistic 'desolation'. In the poem he writes about this desolation 'crushing the poet with the iron text' (Muir 1960). Many modern writers have stressed the positive influences of Calvinist theology, believing it to have had a crucial influence in the intellectual and philosophical base that has been evident historically in Scotland and is still in evidence in the modern country (Beveridge and Turnbull 1997; Storrar 1999). However, the 'dour' and 'joyless' Calvinist description still exists within Scottish culture, including 'formless and unassuageable' guilt and a fear of what is to follow (Ascherson, 2002: 287); this is said by some writers to still be in evidence within the small, fundamentalist churches concentrated in the western Highlands and

Islands, manifesting itself through the dogmatism associated with the ‘Wee Frees’ (Hassan and Warhurst 2002).

In terms of religious faith, Protestantism has largely lost its position of religious dominance in Scottish society (Walker 2000), except, as will become clear through the fieldwork, within the communities of the Western Isles.

4.3 Protestant religion in the Western Isles: the current situation

Most literature that could be identified as having religion in the Western Isles as its focus tended to be theological or evangelical in emphasis (for example: Allen 2004; Ansdell 1998; Campbell 1995; Macdonald 2004; Macinnes 1951 and Macleod 1993). The Monthly Record produced by the Free Church of Scotland gives a flavour of the current debate around points of Presbyterian doctrine (for example, Free Church of Scotland 2008) and certain themes still recur as described earlier in this chapter: importance of a strong moral code, an intolerance of blasphemy and drunkenness and a suspicion or hostility to the Roman Catholic Church. Personal salvation and the maintenance of the Sabbath are of paramount importance, with notions of the saved, or elect and the unsaved still being articulated. The Rev. Angus Smith, writing in an oral history compilation believed, in relation to conversion:

“You’re not a Christian until your heart has changed, until you come to know the Lord as your Saviour and trust in Him....the Holy Spirit works in a man’s heart. He must be born again. He must be changed. [When I was converted], a kind of flame came into my heart. I don’t know how to express it any better than that. And I realised that this was salvation.”

(Smith, 1992: 67)

The Free Church doctrine believes that perceived immoral behaviour must be challenged and that judgementalism is acceptable, for example:

“By nature, men don’t like being told that they are going to hell unless they change. A man will tell you that he does his best that he is

a good, upright moral man. And you have to say to him that his best is not good enough, that his heart has got to change. He has got to believe in Christ....if you miss out things like judgement, if you miss out speaking about heaven and hell, you preach a kind of sermon which is really emasculating the Bible. But in Lewis we believe in preaching the Gospel.”

(Smith, 1992: 68)

Similarly, it is believed that the importance of Sabbath observance is written unambiguously in the Bible; it is to be seen as a day given over to public worship with all non-essential duties being set aside. During the 1970s, the writer Derek Cooper whilst in Lewis asked a Minister:

“Supposing I were staying here in the manse with you and it was a Sunday. Would you mind if I went out for a walk?”

The Minister replied;

‘Not at all, Mr. Cooper, providing you had a doctor’s certificate confirming that it was essential for purposes of your health that you went for a walk’”.

(Cooper, 1991: 24)

It is accepted by the author of this thesis that these quotes are somewhat dated, yet they give a flavour of an important cultural influence. The Western Isles, particularly the Isle of Lewis, has been described as the last bastion of fundamentalist Calvinism in Britain with large numbers belonging to the Free Church of Scotland or the still more conservative Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland (Seenan 2006). In the 2001 census (General Registrar Office for Scotland 2003a) a question was included for the first time about religion. In Scotland, the question was devised to yield separate information on the Church of Scotland, the Roman Catholic Church and ‘other Christians’ as well as other non-Christian faiths. The census responses for Lewis and Harris are shown in Table 2.

	Lewis and Harris	Scotland
Church of Scotland	46%	47%
‘Other Christian’	34%	8%
Roman Catholic	2%	17%
None/Not answered	17%	26%

‘Other religions’ have not been included in this table.

Table 2: Percentage of residents by current religion, census 2001 (General Register Office for Scotland 2003a)

There are some points to bear in mind when looking at this table. The census notes suggested that the category ‘other Christians’ included the Free Church of Scotland, Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, Associated Presbyterian Church of Scotland and the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). The Roman Catholic Church gains most of its parishioners from the islands of Benbecula, South Uist, Eriskay and Barra with only a small parish of approximately 200, centred in Stornoway. Most members of the parish are either incomers working for the statutory agencies whose principal workplaces are in the town, for example, local authority services or the hospital. Alternatively, some Catholics originate from Uists and Barra and are living and working in Stornoway, being employed by a number of organisations that seek to promote the Gaelic language (Father Tom Kearns O.P., parish priest, (personal communication 14 July 2008)). Finally,

within the Western Isles, 83% of inhabitants described themselves as 'Christian' (Scottish average=72%).

At the time of writing (2008), the local authority's 'policy on Sunday Working' (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar 2008a), prevents employees working on Sundays, unless they work in the caring fields or there is an emergency. In addition, any external contractors doing work for the council must not work on Sundays and any employees attending conferences or courses over a weekend must absent themselves from the Sunday sessions. Sports Centres remain closed and council-supported public transport ceases, and there are no sporting or cultural events programmed for a Sunday. Ferry services to the mainland from Lewis and Harris ran only on Mondays to Saturdays until Sunday 19th July 2009, when, amidst protestation and controversy, the first ever ferry sailing from Stornoway took place (see appendix 9 for press cuttings illustrating the depth of public feeling). Very few shops open, yet most pubs are open and since 2004, a limited mainland air service operates. The majority adhere to Sabbath observance, either through reasons of personal belief, or out of respect for the neighbours. For some of little or no faith it has become internalised as a feature of Hebridean island life; it legitimates the day of rest and residents can be certain that no one will ask a neighbour or friend to do anything specific on that day. The hanging out of washing, widely condemned on the occasions when it occurs, is to be regarded as a symbol of Sunday observance. It is commoner in Stornoway to see washing out, but in the rural areas it would be an exceptional sight.

Iain MacRitchie, himself a serving Lewis Minister, attempts to show how the Celtic culture has been held back by the strict interpretation of Calvinism followed by local Presbyterian churches. In summary, worshippers of the church in Lewis consist of communicants or members (the elect) and adherents (a Godly fringe who attend worship regularly and may have a deep faith but lack the 'assurance' that they are saved). To become a member, testimony has to be given to the elders of the church of a conversion experience from a time when the person was not a Christian through to the experience that led to the person becoming one. Some testimonies are very dramatic, some rely heavily on jargon and usually the wilder the life before conversion, the better is that person's

conversion. The expectations by the church community are formidable and every form of social activity outside the church is regarded with suspicion. Members have been asked to choose between the church and their involvement with the local football team or other sporting activities. Certainly, the frequenting of public houses, bars or cinemas would not be allowed. They are expected to attend church on a Sunday, morning and evening, services which last over an hour and a half (MacRitchie 1994). The Sabbath would be strictly observed with no work or recreational activity (Craig 2005; MacRitchie 1994). More harmful, believes MacRitchie, than the division into 'elect' and 'reprobate' is the alienation of the spiritual from things cultural. Church members are discouraged from involvement in celebrations of the language, music and dances of the Western Isles, especially if these are manifested as 'Ceilidhs' - these being spontaneous or organised 'get-togethers' where people sing, dance, recite poetry or just chat, usually in Gaelic. He goes on to comment that the church services have not taken account of societal changes and there is little use of imagery or symbol - they are biblically literal and joyless. Macdonald in his history of the Isle of Lewis agrees, pointing out that the oral traditions of song and music have to some degree been lost, actively discouraged by the Church. He does, however, concede that recent years have seen some degree of change with less strict Sabbath observance (Macdonald 2004). Finally, it is significant that the Westminster Confession of Faith, originally produced in 1647, is widely available in the religious bookshops of Stornoway!

Encouraging signs of change are beginning to emerge and some members, impatient with the slow pace of change, are adopting slightly more liberal attitudes. Young people in particular, made aware of the wider world through travel, education and communication, are less willing to accept such literal interpretations of faith. In addition, there is a renewed interest in the Gaelic culture, language and music (Craig 2005).

This section has sketched the national context for the development of religion in Scotland since the Enlightenment. The section has also made reference to those specific features of religious belief commonly held by Protestants before the Enlightenment and has shown how such beliefs are still strongly held by many

individuals resident in the Western Isles. The next section of this chapter looks at the literature that places religion within a broader societal context, examining first the process of secularization, followed by the place of religion in the postmodern western world and finally presents a discussion of the notion of fundamentalism.

4.4 Theoretical frameworks for the sociology of religion

Social research has tended to focus on the upheavals associated with urbanisation and industrialisation, with secularization becoming the dominant paradigm in the sociology of religion (Davie 2007; Gill 1996; Hamilton 1995) and it should be clarified at the outset that the sociologist of religion is not concerned with the various competing truth claims of the various belief systems - that is the province of the theologian. Sociologists have made the theoretical assumption that secularization would accompany modernism whenever it occurred and therefore sociologists have had difficulty accepting that religion remains an important part of everyday life for large numbers of people in the late modern world (for a summary of the literature that demonstrates the lack of interest shown by sociologists towards the sociology of religion see Davie (2007)). However, two defining moments have brought religion to the centre stage of sociology in a dramatic way (Davie 2007). The first was in 1979 when Karol Wojtyla became Pope and the Shah of Iran fled before the Ayatollah. Across the globe, conservative forces were becoming apparent again, economically, politically and in terms of religious doctrine. The second event was related to the 9/11 bombings, against which an understanding of global politics based on ideology from the era of the Cold War was giving way to one centred on identities within which religion finds a natural place. Samuel Huntington's book 'Clash of Civilisations' articulated this shift with his conceptualisation of relationships as a 'clash' rather than a dialogue (Huntington 1997).

The next section briefly describes the literature relating to three theoretical frameworks that place an understanding of religion in its context in the modern

world. These frameworks provided a useful tool when seeking to understand the place of religion in communities of the Western Isles, an aim of the current thesis. First, Marx, believed that the form and nature of religion was linked to social and economic relationships and that the exploitative nature of capitalist society encouraged people to seek solace in religion. He believed that the social distress associated with capitalism couldn't be tackled until religion was stripped away (Marx and Engels 1975). Religion cannot be understood apart from the world of which it is a part and, furthermore, a function of religion may be to mitigate and disguise the hardships of the world. Nowhere does Marx legitimate the destructive doctrines of those Marxist regimes that sought to destroy the religious elements of society - he believed religion would simply disappear with the appearance of the classless society. Gramsci, a follower of Marx, gave weight to the concept of 'hegemony' whereby a dominant class or elite strives to retain a hold on political life, by exploiting public opinion or the popular consensus, so that the status quo is considered 'normal' (Davie 2007). It is suggested by the author of this thesis that the religious influence in Lewis and Harris may resonate with the Marx/Gramsci analysis, where a powerful group, in this case the Christians, exert an influence beyond the level of the individual.

The second approach is attributed to Weber (1963) who took a more psychological approach, believing that religion gave meaning to an individual. Whatever fortune befalls a person, whether it be good or bad, it cannot be accepted by chance, it must be explained and justified. Those who are fortunate need to know that their good fortune is not a result of good luck, it is deserved. Likewise, the less fortunate can account for their misfortune in terms of guilt and supernatural punishment. Religion, Weber believed, is a response to the difficulties and injustices of life and it helps people to make sense of these difficulties and injustices, thereby helping them to cope. Inequalities are not random, but part of a patterned structure. There is evidence from the first section of this chapter that such an approach as Weber's would resonate with the Calvinistic religious belief system that is a significant force in the lives of many of the residents in the Western Isles. In addition, Weber's early essay '*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*' should be mentioned, Weber claiming that the economic system known as rational capitalism with its

attendant growth in technology and production was rooted partly in religion developed at the time of the Reformation (Hamilton 1995).

Weber began noting how frequently Protestant religious affiliations could be associated with success in business and ownership of capital resources. For him, the spirit of capitalism was a characteristic of the rising stratum of the lower industrial middle classes. Such groups upheld the expression of virtue and proficiency in a calling - an ideal that had its roots in religious sources with the notion of the calling being a product of the Reformation. For the ascetic, austere Protestant the only acceptable way of life was one which did not seek to go beyond this world but to live in accordance with the obligations imposed by one's existence. It was the specifically Calvinist doctrine of the elect, or predestination combined with the idea of the calling, that provided its radical impact. Calvinist preachers taught that the devout could seek some sign of being amongst the elect, and everyone could attempt to attain a state of self-confidence in their elect status by engaging in worldly activity and by regulating their life conduct in an ascetic and rational way. There are points of congruence between the views of Weber and those of Smith (1992), expressed earlier in this chapter: the centrality of predestination; the regulation of behaviour; the recognition of sin; and, a literal following of the Gospel, based on the Westminster Confession of Faith. Some authors, for example, Bruce (1996), have argued that the modern economic system was able to thrive without the need of the religious ethic of ascetic Protestantism. They believed that a Protestantism that encouraged a promotion of worldly activity and consequent expansion of wealth and material wellbeing sowed the seeds of secularization in modern society. Such currents mirrored the rise in individualism and rationality, and such currents changed the nature of religion and its place in the modern world. Protestantism, in summary, sowed the seeds of its own destruction (Hamilton 1995).

A third framework for appraising the position of religion in modern society is attributed to Durkheim, a contemporary of Weber who believed that it bound people together to form societies. Durkheim distinguished the sacred (the set apart), from the profane (everything else), believing that the sacred enjoyed a

functional quality not possessed by the profane. The sacred bond, uniting the collective in a set of beliefs and practices, resulted in a moral community where the primacy was always that of the societal as opposed to the individual (Durkheim 1976). Society dictated a level of moral authority and it was in the interests of that society for individuals to obey.

Durkheim's framework can be used to appraise the influence of religion in the Western Isles. Whilst Weber focused on the importance of individual belief and meaning, Durkheim's view related to the importance at community or societal level of sacred rituals that bound that society together. Smith (1992) argued that such ceremonies as Sabbath observance, the quarterly Communion services, the Sabbath Schools and the weekday evening prayer meetings are important rituals that bind together the elect. There have been, however, no sociological studies within the Western Isles using the above frameworks; indeed there have been few books about Lewis in recent years that are contemporary and sociological in their approach (Macdonald 2004). The author of the current thesis believes that qualitative research based on Durkheim's framework of rituals that bind communities together would be of interest in determining how unifying or how divisive Sabbath observance is perceived to be.

4.5 Secularization

This chapter moves on to examine the literature in relation to a further major theme within the sociology of religion, that of secularization. Secularization is a multidimensional concept, whose dimensions frequently operate independently of each other. Conceptual clarity is needed at the outset to ensure like is being compared with like and that accurate inferences are drawn from the argument. Dobbelaere (2002) identified three dimensions of secularization: the societal, the organisational and the individual. At the societal level, the church is no longer the major provider of healthcare, education or social welfare; these roles have essentially been taken over by the state. However, the existence of Catholic schools and both Catholic and Church of Scotland care homes for the elderly act as a reminder of the role of the church in public service provision.

The organisational level relates to the identified reduction in the number of churches over recent years and the reduction in attendance at those churches. At the individual level, in contrast, there is little evidence that modernity implies a reduction in the level or extent of religious belief, just that the structures for its practice are changing.

Other researchers have contributed at the level of the individual. Berger (1967), in his sociological analysis of religion, has been concerned with the meaning that religion has for the lives of individuals and built his views on secularization around individual belief. Berger believed religion was a social construction, a 'sacred canopy' that protected the individual from the possibility that life had neither meaning nor purpose. He believed the 'sacred canopy' was sustained by meaning systems set in place over centuries and thus plausibility was maintained. Relative pluralism spells danger, Berger believed, in that there cannot be more than one 'sacred canopy', more than one claim to the ultimate explanation of the human condition and therefore they cannot both (or all) be true. Consequently, pluralism erodes plausibility structures generated by monopolistic religious institutions. The alternatives compete with the older traditions, further undermining their plausibility leading to secularization. Religion begins to enter the world of options, lifestyles and preferences - and religious organisations evolve, church and sect giving way to denomination and cult, aspects that reflect the increasing individualism of both religious life and life in general. Notably absent is the overarching 'sacred canopy', the all-encompassing religious frame expressed organisationally as the universal church. This is no longer able to resonate in the modern world.

The discussion thus far has focused on evidence that relates to the United Kingdom; a wider view can be taken by considering literature that relates to other countries and cultures. Such a consideration is outwith the scope of this thesis, although Martin (1978, 1996, 2002) has produced a comprehensive international analysis.

Stark and Bainbridge (1985) argued that secularization was self-limiting and that it was a normal part of religious development. A process of

‘denominationalisation’ takes place where sects progressively lose their sectarian character and become churches, which in turn declined as they become more and more worldly engendering the emergence of new and revived religious groups (sects) or new innovations develop and grow in a totally different form (cults). Cults abound where conventional churches were weakest and sects grow most commonly where established churches were strongest. In contrast, Fenn (1982) takes an approach that focuses on the dynamics of secularization, believing that the process of secularization sits on the boundary between sacred and profane in society. It is a struggle, a process involving social actors who attempt to press their own claims and views of reality; it is a boundary which various groups, collectivities, organisations and individuals seek for their own purposes to determine and therefore it is reversible.

The next section of this chapter seeks to place in context an assumption that the Western Isles has a lower than average level of secularization. A wide variety of research exists showing that the influence of religion in the communities of Lewis and Harris is strong (for example: Ferguson 2007; MacNeil 2006; MacRitchie 1997). This was seen through both high levels of church attendance (UK Data Archive 2003) and declared religious belief (General Register of Scotland 2003a). Dobbelaere (2002) uses an organisational indicator of secularization as a decline in church membership and attendance, but Western Isles levels remain high on both these indicators. In addition, at the organisational level, relating to church structures, Berger (1967) attributed a rise in secularism to religious pluralism, believing that only one ‘sacred canopy’ exists and that there is only one universal church. Such a view would be echoed by the Free Church ‘family’ of Churches, whose members believe that they are the only true church. This is believed because their doctrine insists that the Bible is to be taken literally as the word of God, and not as a symbolic representation of doctrine or as simply a guiding framework for belief (Ansdell 1998). In addition, there is little religious pluralism in Lewis and Harris, with numbers admitting to being of faiths other than Protestant, being low (General Register Office for Scotland 2003a). A second marker of religious influence to be identified relates to the effect of religion at societal level, epitomised by the churches’ withdrawal from healthcare or educational provision (Dobbelaere

2002). The local authority in the Western Isles, with its Sabbath working policy (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar 2008a) suggests that a relatively low level of secularization exists at the level of political administration. Furthermore, the same organisation refused in 2005 to conduct ceremonies for same-sex couples wishing to register under the Civil Partnerships Act, 2004. At the level of the individual, identified by Dobbelaere (2002), practices and behaviours antipathetic to the secular are frequently to be seen, with attitudes and norms that resonate with the strict Calvinist doctrine referred to earlier in this chapter being clearly in evidence (Macdonald 1998).

In concluding this section, the evidence showed Western Isles communities to have high levels of religious adherence, belief and membership, were committed to a strict religion in terms of doctrine, and frequently accepted a religious influence that moved beyond the individual, entering the sphere of the wider community. The evidence suggested it is a society where secularization is apparent, but at a lower level than in other parts of Scotland, and the author of this thesis hopes to test this assumption. The high levels of strictly observed religiosity have been maintained by a combination of features: the background and culture of the island residents, remoteness from the mainland offering insurance against change, the close-knit nature of the community and, until recently, a low level of geographical mobility. The chapter moves on to examine the relationship between religious thought and modernism/postmodernism.

4.6 Religion and modernity

It is appropriate at this point to examine the link between secularization and modernity and to enquire whether it is extrinsic or intrinsic in its nature. Some researchers, for example Davie (2001), believe secularization to be extrinsic to the modernisation process, that it is driven by wider social and economic forces and that it is possible to be both fully modern and fully religious. Others maintain that the present state of affairs is transitional and, in time, to be modern will necessarily mean to be secular, the driver here being intrinsic, where rational thought and empirical enquiry prevail (Bruce 2002). In order to

facilitate discussion on this issue, the terms 'modernity' and 'postmodernity' need clarification.

The terms 'modernity' and 'postmodernity' relate to economic and social structures, whereas the terms 'modernism' and 'postmodernism' relate to culture - although the distinction between them is fluid (Davie 2007). The economic and social structures evident within British society were disrupted by the movement of large sections of the population into the large conurbations and this movement, together with the parallel development of heavy industry, broke a pattern of life established over centuries. It also led to a distinctive pattern of organised religion, centred around established churches (Davie 1994). One hundred years later, in the 1970s, the areas of the UK that had experienced massive industrial expansion were now going through a process of mass unemployment, closures and de-industrialisation, yet these areas surprisingly were not the ones where decline was the greatest.

Evidence from the census of 2001 (General Register of Scotland 2003a), revealed that the largest number of people answering 'no religion' were not from the large industrial conurbations, but were to be found in the cities of the south of the UK, where universities and their employees form a sizeable proportion of the population. The industrial north of England, central Scotland and the valleys of south Wales remained relatively traditional, that is, more attached to Christianity, than the communities of the south (Davie 2007). Such findings support the view of Bruce (2002) and others that secularization has a strong intrinsic component, where rational thought has contributed to religious decline. Other structural forces were at work in parallel to de-industrialisation and the move from an industrial society to a post-industrial one. Shifts in the economy put pressure on the trade union movement and membership began to decline, political parties were re-focusing away from the traditional divisions of 'right' and 'left', and disillusionment with the overall political process became apparent. Davie (2001) whilst supporting a view more towards an extrinsic explanation, suggested that the dichotomy was, in reality, false as there is strong evidence to support the fact that secularization occurred as a process involving rational thought; at the same time as religious institutions, in common

with their secular counterparts, were undermined by a significant feature of late modernity seen across many European populations, that is the unwillingness of individuals to gather anywhere on a regular committed basis, described as ‘believing without belonging’ (Davie, 2001: 94). So far within this section the focus has been around the economic and social linkages with modernity and postmodernity, and these have been summarised in Table 3.

Modernity	Postmodernity
Industrialization	Post-industrialization/information technology
Urbanisation	De-urbanisation
Production	Consumption
Both modernity and postmodernity are problematic for religion but in different ways	
Modernism	Postmodernism
The grand narrative: religious or anti-religious	Fragmentation/decentring of the religious narrative, but also of the secular; i.e. of the scientific, rational or anti-religious narrative e.g. rationalism/communism
Progress	A space for the sacred but often in forms different from those which have gone before
Secularization/secularism	
God the Son	The Holy Spirit
The institutional churches	Varied forms of the sacred
Medical Science	Healing/alternative medicine
Agribusiness	Ecology/organic food
<i>Obligation</i>	<i>Consumption</i>

Table 3: Religion and modernity: a schematic representation
(Davie, 1994: 192)

Table 3 introduces a typology that relates religion and modernity, as developed by Davie (1994), and forms a useful locus for moving the debate forward, to a level whereby the cultural aspects of modernism/postmodernism can be

included. The changing nature of modern thinking from the certainties that prevailed in the 1960s has given way to a shift as fundamental as the Enlightenment two centuries earlier. These changes, from the peak of modernism in the 1960s, constitute 'postmodernism'. Early certainties gave way to a more fluid and complex situation, where at religious and secular levels, a variety of creeds were seen to compete with each other. Science no longer provided the answers that underpinned secular certainties, and this is summarised in the lower half of Table 3, with many postmodern beliefs being collectively referred to as 'New Age'.

As the historic churches of Europe lost the capacity to determine the beliefs or the lifestyles of the population, it became obvious that religion didn't just disappear. New and intriguing patterns of belief and language emerged, especially amongst young people. Lyon (2000) in his book, 'Jesus in Disneyland' offered an interesting slant on the modernism/postmodernism debate, taking as his theme a Christian rally, held at the headquarters of the Disney empire in the USA. The rally, Lyon argued, became a metaphor for postmodernism through which a range of issues were addressed, including cyberculture, consumerism, questions of identity and the notion of time. The spiritual quest did not disappear; it simply took a new form. In marked contrast to the changing patterns of belief evident in the young, older members of the community remained wedded to the traditional forms of religion and there appears little difference in terms of belief or practice, whether the historic church is strong or less strong. At the same time, tightly bonded groups emerged both inside and outside the mainstream churches, groups that provided security for those who had difficulty living with change and uncertainty - taken to an extreme degree this tendency has been associated with the rise of fundamentalism (Marty 1992). The author of the current thesis, relating the above to the Western Isles, posits that the formation in 2000 of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) follows this path. The Free Church (Continuing), defined in its shorter form, arose because during the Commission of Assembly held in January 2000, a majority appeared determined to follow decisions that were against the constitution of the Free Church. A number of Ministers and elders signed a 'Declaration of Reconstitution' in which they pledged themselves to continue the Free Church in

a constitutional manner. Therefore a sect perceived as being doctrinally purer came into being, the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) undated).

This section has made the links between religion and modernity, extrinsically and intrinsically and has presented the debate around postmodernism where spirituality may be reflected in either new movements or ultra-traditional directions akin to fundamentalism. It would be relevant in conclusion to introduce the concept of multiple modernities. This involved an acceptance that the best way to view the modern world was to see it as a 'story of continuing constitution and reconstitution of a multiplicity of cultural programs' (Eisenstadt, 2000: 2). These on-going reconstructions emerged as the result of endless encounters on the part of individuals and groups, all of whom engaged in the creation and recreation of both cultural and institutional formations, but within different economic and social contexts. As new organisations and social movements emerge, they assume some responsibility for involvement in addressing the perceived problems of the modern world, for example they may be feminist, ecological or religious in focus. All may exhibit traits known as fundamentalist, in that goals are set out, their outlook is international and they make use of modern technology. The global rise of fundamentalism, he believed, was best seen as an aggressive response to both the dynamics of civilisation and the tensions in modernity. The crucial point to emerge from the work of Eisenstadt was his belief that there is space for religion and religious movements within the unfolding interpretation that constitutes modernity, and that the forms of religion may be as diverse as the forms of modernity.

This subsection can be brought to a close by making a brief reference to the work of the philosopher Wilber and his postmodern views on religion and reality. He attempted to define a holistic or integral view of reality, one that was built on the strengths of the post-war 'baby boomer' generation: vitality, creativity, idealism and willingness to experiment with new ideas. Weaknesses were to be seen in the attitudes of this generation: an unusual interest in self, a narcissism and a perspective summarised as belonging to the 'me' generation (Wilber 2001a). Wilber postulated that pre-modern cultures identified three 'value

spheres', art, morals and science (the 'beautiful', the 'good' and the 'true' respectively) and that activity within these spheres was undifferentiated, the church defining what was acceptable in the spheres of art and science. The Enlightenment and resulting modernity differentiated between these spheres, and science, rational thought and objectivity became paramount. He then postulated that domination of a monolithic science, with its indifference to poetry, values, desires, love, artistic expression and religion, has resulted in a 'world of meaningless "its" roaming a one-dimensional flatland' (Wilber, 2001b: 57). Postmodernism, he argued, constituted a revolt against the 'flatland', a revolt against the power of science to answer everything, and a rise in the importance of personal interpretation of facts, instead of believing the 'expert'. Extreme postmodernists believe that there is nothing but interpretation and that the objective component of truth can be dispensed with altogether. In terms of the communities of the Western Isles, the author of the current thesis believes that, using Wilber's framework, aspects of a pre-modern, undifferentiated society exists, where the power of the church is still in evidence. It may be surmised that a greater differentiation of 'value spheres' is apparent amongst residents with no religious interest, or who belong to liturgically less dogmatic religions than Calvinism. Similarly, it may be surmised that there are postmodernists, in terms of an acceptance of personal spirituality but who would see themselves as having no interest in the rituals of organised religion.

Having made reference to fundamentalism in the contexts of doctrinal liturgy and pre-modernity, the next section of this chapter will look at aspects of fundamentalism in relation to its nature, its extent across the world and its relevance to the Western Isles.

4.7 Fundamentalism

Most definitions of fundamentalism involve some perception of the primacy of a truth. For example, 'Fundamentalism can be described as a world view that highlights specific essential "truths" of traditional faiths and applies them with earnestness and fervour to 20th century realities' (Kaplan, 1992: 5). Furthermore the specifying of the essential truths is crucial, and it is suggested by the author of the current thesis that this definition resonated with the views of many within the Free Church of Scotland 'family' where the essential truth would be found dictated literally by the Gospels. The term originated in the 1920s in the USA, where American Protestants were seeking to re-establish the traditional truths of Protestant teaching. They sought to set down the Protestant 'fundamentals', underpinned by an acceptance of the absolute truth of scripture (Ammerman 1987; Bruce 1988); and the New Christian Right within the US has retained its insistence on biblical truth to the present day. Furthermore, in order to achieve their ends, fundamentalists make maximum use of technology. Ironically, groups that see themselves as resisters of modernity make full use of its outputs (Davie 2007) and the Stornoway Free Church (Continuing) is typical in this regard, its website being modern in design and regularly updated (Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) undated).

A discussion of the literature around fundamentalism has been included in this thesis since many authors have described the Calvinistic Presbyterianism that prevails in the islands of Lewis and Harris in a fundamentalist way, for example it has been described as 'rigid and rabidly Presbyterian' (Grant, 1987: 3). Lewis Protestantism has been described as a 'traditional culture' by Macdonald (2004), and fundamentalisms usually occur in traditional cultures; cultures that over long periods of time have been relatively well protected from outside or inside influences (Marty 1992). External and internal threats can provoke a response, leading to the emergence of a new fundamentalist group. As Marty summarises:

"...the term 'fundamentalist' is first applied when leaders and followers take steps consciously to react, to innovate, to defend, and to find new ways to counter what they perceive as threats to the tradition that they would conserve. ...Reaction, counteraction, revanchist action: these are characteristic. If they are not present,

observers continue to call movements or cultures simply ‘traditional’ or ‘conservative’.”

(Marty, 1992: 19)

The split from the Free Church and the formation of the Free Church (Continuing) referred to earlier in this section exhibit a reaction, a course of action, accompanied by a threat to tradition and is mirrored by the split within the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland that gave rise in 1989 to the Associated Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

A number of fundamentalist movements have been described that rely more on ethno-national identities than on reactions to modernity or secularization, for example Ulster Protestantism (Brewer 2004) or the Pentecostal Protestants of Latin America (Levine 1995). The author of the present thesis has no evidence to support the view that ethno-national identity has resonance with residents of the Western Isles who see themselves as fundamentalist in outlook. It could be postulated that some residents may see religion as a requirement for the use of the term ‘Hebridean’; however, many residents with no religious interest would not see religion as a necessary ingredient of the Hebridean identity.

This section of the chapter moves on to make a brief reference to a typology of fundamentalism, derived from the work of the Fundamentalism Project, based in the University of Chicago and established in 1980. The project has defined fundamentalists in relation to the modern world as: world conquerors, world transformers, world creators and world renouncers (Marty and Appleby 1991). Fundamentalist movements move between these categories at different times and the author of the current thesis believes the Lewis Protestants do not fit either category with ease, as they predate the fundamentalist movements of the 1970s and have similar origins to their American fundamentalist cousins, with origins in the 19th century.

Fundamentalism has been regarded by some authors as both an anti-modern utopia and a modern set of social movements, having points of similarity with the totalitarian movements of the 1920s and 1930s (Eisenstadt 1999). In vision and action they can be profoundly modern and strongly revolutionary with

radical, anti-authoritarian principles. There is a tendency to think in 'black' and 'white', a tendency to shock and, at times, a willingness to inflict harm in the name of a higher cause - clearly ingredients held in common also by some non-religious single issue groups, for example the animal rights movement (Singer 1976). Within the perspective held by the Lewis fundamentalists, the author would suggest they are more concerned with establishing an island of certainty as a bulwark against what they perceive as a broken world comprising social and cultural chaos. As Macleod points out, Ministers and elders often refer to the perils associated with 'modern life in a fallen world' (Macleod, 1993: 203).

4.8 Religion and health: the interface

This section looks at the relevant literature around religion and health, including a possible theoretical model for its further investigation, as well as demonstrating the effect of religion at individual and community levels.

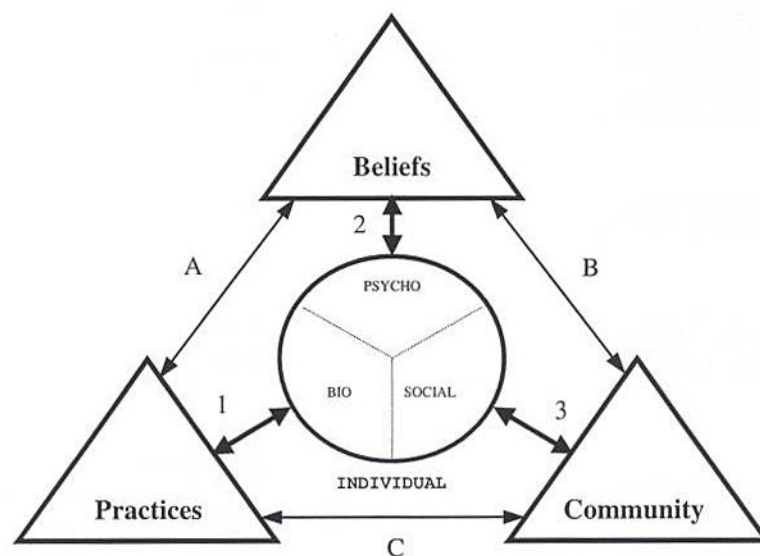
Marks (2005), in a review of literature focusing on the effects of religion on health status, pointed out that recent years have seen a big increase in the empirical research in this area. Research has focused on the effects of religion on physical and mental health (Judd 1999; Koenig 1998; Koenig, McCullough and Larson 2001), psychological coping (Koenig, McCullough and Larson 2001), marriage and family (Christiano 2000; Dollahite, Marks and Goodman 2004) and responsible fathering (King 2003; Marks and Dollahite 2001; Wilcox 2002). Although Marks points out that religion may not have a significant impact on the lives of most Americans, he believed that for a significant minority religion is a crucially important influence in their lives (Marks 2005). It is proposed that the same priority is accorded to religion by many residents of the Western Isles. Reviews by Matthews and colleagues (Matthews and Larson 1995; Matthews, Larson and Barry 1993; Matthews and Saunders 1999) found a modest but positive correlation, across 400 studies, between religion and health. However, research around the early 1990s tended to use measures of religiosity that were imprecise, focusing on such variables as denomination, church attendance and

values leading to the observation that ‘measurement of spiritual/religious constructs....has usually been poor in quality’ (Miller and Thoresen, 2003: 26).

Since the late 1990s, dimensions of religiosity have been more rigorously defined. For example, Marks (2005) identified three dimensions:

- Spiritual beliefs (personal internal beliefs, framings, meanings and perspectives)
- Religious practices (outward observable expressions of faith such as prayer, scripture study, rituals, traditions or less overtly sacred practice or abstinence that is religiously grounded) and
- Faith communities (support, involvement and relationships grounded in one’s congregation or religious group).

He went on to develop a model that conceptualised these different dimensions of religion and showed how they related to health.



Research Connections between Religious Beliefs, Practices, and Communities and Individual Biological, Psychological, and Social Well-Being

Figure 5: The connections between dimensions of religion and biological, psychological and social wellbeing (Marks 2005)

Arrow A: The Practices - Beliefs Connection: This relationship was significant because practices and abstinences, such as high-risk sexual activity and the use or avoidance of drugs and alcohol, are often influenced by religious beliefs. A public health study of lifestyles of Western Isles residents demonstrated that alcohol consumption levels were polarised with some very high levels of consumption; but that also the area had a higher proportion of abstainers than Scotland as a whole, the abstainers being essentially individuals who described themselves as religious (NHS Western Isles 2003).

Arrow B: The Beliefs - Community Connection: this relationship can be illustrated through evidence of the psychological coping that can result when a faith community offers support in times of stress, crisis or bereavement. However, the faith community also exacerbated certain kinds of stress, including stress resulting from behaviours unacceptable to the beliefs held by the faith community (Dollahite, Marks and Goodman 2004).

Arrow C: The Community - Practices Connection: certain practices are promoted by certain faiths, for example the Catholic mass, the Ramadan fast and the Islamic call to prayer. These all have a unifying purpose, and the Lewis attitude to Sabbath observance amongst churchgoers would fall into this category.

The model focuses on religion in association with the bio-psycho-social individual and the three dimensions of religion (practices, beliefs and community) are respectively linked by arrows with the *biological*, *psychological* and *social* aspects of individual health.

Arrow 1 represents research that correlated religion-related practices with biological benefit, for example research on high-risk behaviour found that 'Religiosity was found to be a strong predictor of women's involvement in HIV-related risky behaviours, with the greatest risk reported by women who were the least religious' (Elifson, Klein and Sterk, 2003: 47). Similarly, religion may be a deterrent to alcohol or drug abuse (Koenig, McCullough and Larson 2001) and abstinence resulted in lower rates of certain cancers and better overall health in

certain groups, notably Seventh-Day Adventists (Koenig, McCullough and Larson 2001) or Mormons (Enstrom 1998).

Arrow 2 represents research that correlated spiritual beliefs and psychological health. For example, there appears to be a positive correlation between certain religious practices and coping in connection with acute and 'day to day' stresses of life, in many contexts (Koenig, McCullough and Larson 2001). Religiosity has been correlated with a number of positive mental health outcomes, including greater personal happiness and/or self-esteem and lower rates of depression (Ellison and George 1994; Judd 1999; Koenig 1998). In spite of the large body of data linking certain forms of religiosity with mental health benefits, not all religiosity has been found to have beneficial or benign effects and certain types of faith denigrate biological, psychological and social health (Dollahite, Marks and Goodman 2004). It is believed that religious adherence may actually 'produce' mental ill-health through the repression of personality characteristics in the face of strict teachings about conduct, sin and punishment (Scheper-Hughes 1979; Scheper-Hughes 2000).

Arrow 3 refers to research that examined the importance of community support, for example in one study fathers provided accounts of how the faith community offered social, emotional, financial and temporal support including transport and housing in times of need (Marks and Dollahite 2001).

The model offers a useful way of reporting, analysing and conceptualising the different dimensions of religion and their relationship to health with an overall conclusion that for many individuals the results of religious adherence were broadly positive, but in some instances the effects on health were negative.

It is relevant at this point to move the debate forward to look at the evidence for the health benefits associated with the benefits or otherwise, of religion within the context of the Western Isles.

Attitudes to exercise and leisure and to alcohol have been referred to in an earlier section. Attitudes to mental health issues are worthy of discussion, bound

up as they are with religion (MacRitchie 1994; Philo, Parr and Burns 2003). The incidence of depression associated with religion was perceived by some members of the public to be high within the Western Isles area, yet the area appears neither significantly better nor worse than the Scottish average for all mental health and function indicators (Scottish Public Health Observatory 2008). However, an interesting dimension relates to the number of female church members, in their late sixties and seventies, who appeared to become depressed - their condition being often referred to as the 'Highland Twilight'. These are women who have enjoyed good health and have been active and energetic members of the community who go on to experience a deep depression, sometimes initiated by a death or other family event but often with no apparent reason (MacRitchie 1994). The depression incurs a reported sense of guilt, since the Church attracts its members by guilt, and sin leading to forgiveness and redemption - but only in the case of the 'elect'. This leaves the so-called 'reprobates' with a deep sense of guilt, repression, anger and unworthiness. Forgiveness is not freely offered to all, only to the elect. It is not only anger that is repressed; a healthy view of sex and sexuality is repressed. Women's roles are sharply defined in the church, in the family and in society. They are not allowed to speak in church and despite mainland churches ordaining women since 1967 no woman has ever served in the Western Isles as a Minister. Sex itself is associated with potential sin and guilt, and the gossip that it creates can be hurtful.

Philo, Parr and Burns in their review of rural mental health literature identified a number of issues that relate to the above. Firstly, they suggest there is a gradient of decreasing incidence of mental ill-health or mental illness from the inner-city towards the countryside, but go on to point out that the use of more targeted questions around the theme of social isolation produced a gradient running in the opposite direction. It was concluded that social isolation exacerbated a tendency for vulnerable individuals to withdraw from normal social life and possibly turn to alcohol or drugs (McCreadie *et al.* 1997; Philo, Parr and Burns 2003). Secondly, the everyday lives of people with incipient and diagnosed mental health problems as they struggle to cope with the hassles of daily life and work was examined and an example quoted is the study of women

with psychiatric disorders living on the Presbyterian Hebridean island of North Uist (Prudo *et al.* 1981). Prudo and colleagues concluded that traditional lifestyles here, ones heavily structured by religion, family and possible disapproval by neighbours, cultivated an over-dependency on routine and discipline that made it particularly hard for women to cope with deaths (or imminent deaths) of loved ones, events that were highly disruptive 'to the daily organisation of their lives, their roles and their patterns of contact' (Prudo *et al.* 1981: 613). As a result the womenfolk of these remote rural places were left especially vulnerable to the onset of depressive illnesses.

Fuller and others examined 'cultures of self-reliance' in the remote north and west regions of South Australia and typified farmers and miners whose daily labours led them to be able to turn their hands to anything: 'There's nothing they can't do. They can make a machine, they can mend a machine. They can bend bits of steel. They are totally self-reliant' (Fuller *et al.* 2000: 151). This attitude coloured the response to mental ill-health, particularly because these rural dwellers end up supposing that they *should* be able to cope with their own emotional problems without resort to mental health services (Philo, Parr and Burns 2003). In conclusion, from the evidence presented in this section it would be appropriate to suggest that notions of self-reliance within a structured family and societal environment resonates with life experienced by residents of the Western Isles.

In addition, geographic, climatic and topographic conditions have been found to shape mental health outcomes in particular locations (Bachrach 1985). In a study, again from the Outer Hebrides, a number of female respondents acknowledged the weather impacting upon their health, 'particularly the long winter nights on the island which, along with heavy rainfall and storm force winds were considered to have a profoundly depressing effect on their spirits' (Morrison, 1995: 57).

Finally, a related part of the picture relates to the 'fatalism' that is sometimes reported in mental health literature. Bachrach regarded fatalism as being 'often derived from long exposure to poverty and the harsh demands of the rural

physical environment' (Bachrach, 1985: 223) and she supposed that it sometimes masked chronic depression and inhibited the willingness of individuals to seek help. A further observation was that this fatalism is often included within a wider frame of spiritual beliefs, wherein it relates to such notions as divine intervention or predestination. Morrison found in her Hebridean study, that: 'the Calvinistic faith of the islanders is based on the doctrine of predestination which is manifested in a fatalistic attitude towards life in general *but particularly in relation to health, illness and death*',[her italics], the implication being that *'health is viewed as being in the hands of God and therefore outwith the realms of individual responsibility'* (Morrison, 1995: 56).

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the literature that relates to the effect of religion at a variety of levels; firstly, societal in terms of tracing the history of religious thought in Scotland from the 16th century to the present day and secondly, the effect of religion on communities of the Western Isles, in so far as it informs the direction of the current thesis. The chapter then moved on to examine important strands of the sociology of religion: secularization and its meaning, modernism and postmodernism, showing the interface with religion and fundamentalism. Religion plays a big part in the life of many islanders, becoming synonymous with the notion of a Hebridean culture either directly through fulfilment of spiritual needs, or by the offering of social support. For others, its influence is perceived as malign and controlling, where the acceptance of a literal belief encourages intolerance towards others. Religion operates at the level of the individual, for example with its influence on health-related behaviour especially the consumption of alcohol and development of social networks. At the neighbourhood level religion operates at different levels, for example, facilitating social cohesion amongst believers whilst possibly excluding others. At a different level, its rituals, for example Sabbath observance, may be regarded as ingredients of the Hebridean culture, whether one agrees with them or not. The interface with secularising influences within the postmodern framework adds challenges and new perspectives that relate to spirituality

within the globalised context and this chapter offers a possible framework for analysis (Wilber 2001a; 2001b).

CHAPTER 5: METHODS

5.1 Introduction

The thesis paints two inter-related pictures; one is a study of the effects of urban deprivation and the other revolves around a wider geographical and a cultural dimension through which social infrastructure is mediated, notably through the effects of both rurality and religion. The effect of a rural upbringing, with its imputed spirit of cooperation and friendliness helped to determine friendship patterns, reinforced by a strong sense of Hebridean identity. The influence of religion on attitudes and behaviour at individual level and on neighbourhood dynamics at community level was apparent in the Cearnas and such influences sit firmly within the broad backcloth of strong religious observance in the Western Isles. The ability to speak Gaelic as the first language of choice is an additional cultural factor, conferring upon those who speak it a particular status within the overall context of being described as ‘Hebridean’.

Chapter 5 describes the methods chosen to collect and analyse data. First it provides the rationale for the choice of methods, tracing how decisions were underpinned by an understanding of the philosophical and theoretical nature of qualitative research. Secondly, the chapter moves on to discuss the case study approach, an approach that offers an in-depth understanding of a defined situation (Yin 1994). Thirdly, sampling procedures, including both convenience and purposive sampling are examined and discussed in relation to the aims of the study, with stage 1 of the fieldwork being a scoping exercise to identify emerging themes for closer analysis in stage 2. The chapter concludes by describing the processes of sorting and analysing the interview data.

5.2 Philosophical aspects

There is no single way of doing qualitative research; how researchers carry it out depends on a range of factors (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). Such factors include

views on the nature of social phenomena (ontology) as well as views on the most appropriate ways of acquiring knowledge about such phenomena (epistemology). In addition the purpose and goals of the research, the characteristics of the research participants and, crucially, the perspectives of the researcher him/herself must be considered. Mason (2002) agrees, stating that all research design issues should be consistent with the researcher's ontology and epistemology and adding that these need to be made explicit early on in the research process.

A key ontological debate concerns the existence of a social reality outside of its human description and explanation. One view is held by the Realists, who believe there is a distinction between the way the world objectively and measurably seems to be, and the meaning and interpretation of that world held by individuals. In other words, the natural and social sciences should use the same kinds of approaches to data collection and explanation. Realists hold the view that there is an external reality and that such reality is separate from our description of it. Realists could, whilst seeking to clarify the nature of a specific situation in the social world, extend their findings from the individual level to a level involving an analysis of structures. For example, interviews with white and Bangladeshi families in East London focusing on their day to day lives, produced findings that related to the nature of formal social welfare systems and how the state interfaced with kinship and family support (Dench, Gavron and Young 2006). Those from the school of Empirical Realism believe that, if appropriate methods are used, objective reality can be understood. Critics of this approach believe the view held by empirical realists 'fails to recognise that there are enduring structures and generative mechanisms underlying and producing observable phenomena and events' and is therefore 'superficial' (Bhaskar 1989). The task, therefore, for researchers within the school of Empirical Realism is to uncover the range of social relationships and underlying mechanisms that determine attitudes, knowledge and behaviour. Bhasker argues for 'critical realism' and similarly Hammersley (1992) argues for 'subtle realism' - both less extreme standpoints whereby social phenomena are believed to exist independently of people's representations of them but are only accessible through those representations. In addition, Critical Realists are content to

include in their explanations theoretical terms that may not be evident through observation - for example, the 'generative mechanisms' alluded to by Bhasker (1989). Using the study of white and Bangladeshi families as an example, Dench and colleagues were interested in the ways in which the statutory welfare system moderated the informal mechanisms of family social support common in Asian families. Universalism of state welfare support and the cultural commitment to informal social support represent two generative social mechanisms that would interact to produce a series of observable outcomes.

Bhasker elaborated further by distinguishing between intransitive and transitive realism. The former refers to scientific knowledge 'of things not produced by men [sic]....if men ceased to exist sound would continue to travel and heavy bodies fall to the earth...but there would be no-one to know of it' (Bhasker, 1989: 16). In contrast, 'transitive objects of knowledge include....the established facts, theories, paradigms, models, methods and techniques of inquiry available to a particular school or worker' (Bhasker, 1989: 16). Therefore, Critical Realism allows us to distinguish between the real or intransitive and the theoretical or transitive (Sayer 2000).

An alternative ontological perspective to Realism is that held by the Idealists, who assert that reality can only be experienced through the human mind and through socially constructed meanings or through ideas. Idealists believe that external reality does not exist independently of our beliefs and understanding and that a person's actions are governed by rules that the individual uses to interpret the world. Some idealists believe that it is possible for meanings and representations to be shared or collective, whilst others hold a relativist position believing that there is no single reality only a series of social connections, a collection of given positions and associated activities and practices held by individuals who are free to make choices and decisions (Hughes and Sharrock 1997).

It is important to reiterate at this point that a person's ontological perspective can be determined by asking about that person's view of the nature of social phenomena (Mason 2002) and the author of this thesis believes that people are

inherently social and, through regular interaction with others, they build up their views, knowledge and attitudes and ultimately their belief systems. A researcher can, using appropriate methods, seek to understand the context for such social functioning. Examples that demonstrate an understanding of social functioning within a number of contexts are to be found in recent health research. Examples are workplace absenteeism (Dew, Keefe and Small 2005), knowledge of risks associated with coronary heart disease (Angus *et al.* 2005) and studies of the health of older people (Fairhurst 2005). Similarly, in this thesis it may be postulated that residents of the Cearns who are incomers build up a perspective on both the positive and negative religious influences that prevail by meeting and interacting with others rather than through a local upbringing. The researcher, through dialogue, seeks to gain an understanding of the articulated manifestations of the phenomenon and thence an understanding of the underlying principles. This is a view that adherents of the tradition of subtle realism would hold - whereby a person's account of events is recognised as not being objective, straightforward and factual but instead is a representation of their own experience mediated through the discussion process with others, including the researcher. Subtle realism allows for approximations to objective truth to be arrived at: 'the subtle realist accepts there is no way the researcher can escape the social world in order to study it' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 17). Importantly, Hammersley and Atkinson emphasise that the aim should be the search for knowledge about which one can be reasonably confident, and that such confidence should be based on judgements about the credibility and plausibility of the knowledge claims.

The term ontology refers to beliefs that might be held as to the nature of social phenomena and the social world. By contrast, epistemology relates to attributes of knowledge and is concerned about the question of what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline (Bryman 2001) or the nature of knowledge and how it can be acquired (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). A major epistemological stance is positivism, and some positivists believe the methods of study used in the natural sciences are appropriate for social enquiry (for example Keat and Urry 1975 cited in Bryman 2001). Positivists would suggest that only observable phenomena count as knowledge and such knowledge is

acquired through the accumulation of verified facts from which hypotheses may be deduced and tested. Positivists believe that facts and values are distinct, thus making it possible to conduct an objective enquiry. A contrasting epistemology is interpretivism where the subject matter of the social sciences, individuals and groups in their living and working environments, is fundamentally different from the subject matter of the natural sciences. The distinctiveness of humans is stressed by interpretivists - this in turn requiring that a different logic be applied to the research process (Bryman 2001). Interpretivists believe that perceptions relate not only to the observable but also to the human interpretation of what our senses tell us - our knowledge is therefore further based on 'understanding' and the placing in context of particular experiences. The role played by self-determination and human creativity in guiding our actions is recognised by adherents of the Interpretivist tradition.

The epistemological position taken in this thesis is an interpretive one that is determined by the aims of the research, whereby residents are asked for their perspectives on a range of issues affecting their lives. In addition, researchers of this tradition need to acknowledge the influence of their personal values and to be prepared to make these transparent. Within the context of reflexivity, the researcher reflects on his/her background, beliefs, attitudes and position and how these might create bias. This author recognises that reality is complex but that approximations to objective truth can be reached and, as such, the author was influenced by the approaches of such critical realists as Bhasker (1989) and Hammersley (1992).

5.3 Applying case study methodology

The scheme under study is compact with approximately 650 residents living at a population density level of 47 persons per hectare, the Scottish average being 0.6 persons per hectare (General Register Office for Scotland 2003a). The housing provision is composed of 1, 2 or 3 bedroomed units developed around a number of courts, places or, in Gaelic, cearns. Each court is laid out as a square with a central grassed area, with pedestrian walkways linking the courts with

peripheral roads and car parking bays. On the south and west sides the scheme is surrounded by private housing, on the east side is the main road to west Lewis and the northerly aspect opens on to agricultural land.

The spatial discreteness of the location and the distinctiveness of the design of the scheme allowed the author to consider the merits of incorporating a case history approach in addressing research questions that focus on the health and environment of local residents. The study involved an examination of social phenomena within both historical and contemporary contexts. Case study approaches may be descriptive or explanatory, with data being read literally in the former and interpretively in the latter; however, there is often an overlap of categories (Yin 1994). For example, a descriptive case study outlines the incidence or prevalence of a phenomenon, whereas an explanatory case study involves further discussion of the 'how' and 'why', tracing change over time, providing explanations and allowing themes or issues to emerge. An intricate dataset arises from the narrative from which an understanding of complex social processes evolves and the research questions posed in the current thesis are congruent with the aims of an explanatory case study where the characteristics of complex real-life events are under investigation and explanations sought. A number of contextual conditions, for example friendship patterns will operate within a given social environment and these may interrelate with the phenomenon under investigation, for example, religious influence. A case study approach places an analysis of such phenomena within a distinctive cultural context.

Case studies of individual persons have been well represented in the clinical literature associated with the disciplines of psychology, psychiatry and social work, as well as in biographies and oral histories of famous individuals. It has been equally applied to studies of institutions, like universities or prisons, as well as to aspects of organisational development and, very significantly within the context of the current thesis, it has been applied to studies of communities (Yin 1994). One of the strengths of the case study approach is its ability to focus on the dynamic and the specific. Robert Stake, in his discussion of the art of case study research states:

“The real business of case study is particularisation, not generalisation. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, [and] what it does. There is emphasis on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself.”

(Stake, 1995: 8)

The advantages associated with thinking about methodology in this way influenced the author in his approaches to this study of the lives of residents within the Cearnas and it is appropriate at this stage to sketch out the author's level of professional involvement with the area over the years. The Cearnas presented itself to the author as a case study worthy of further research in the mid 1990s, both in terms of aspects of its physical nature and aspects of cultural distinctiveness. With its closes, courts and pedestrian walkways, and with its high population density, it mirrored patterns of urban social housing provision of the period 1970 - 1990. The possession of the Gaelic language by the majority of residents, who were born in Lewis, together with a distinctive religious influence that has demonstrable cultural and social effects, marked it out as an area that possessed many uniquely interesting aspects worthy of closer study. In addition, residents of the Cearnas, in common with others in the Western Isles showed pride at being described as 'Hebridean' or 'islanders', viewing both their culture and lifestyle as possessing distinctive qualities, underpinned by a strong sense of belonging and rootedness. The author, whilst employed as Health Promotion Manager by NHS Western Isles (formerly Western Isles Health Board) from 1989 until retirement in 2005, became involved in activities in the Cearnas as part of the Health Board's response to delivering the health inequalities agenda as reflected by national public health policy documents (Scottish Executive 2003b; Scottish Executive 2003c).

As outlined in Chapter 6, and using evidence from the 2001 census, residents of the Cearnas experienced a high level of material deprivation as measured by high unemployment levels, low car ownership and a high proportion of lone parent families (General Register Office for Scotland 2003a). Epidemiological data taken from NHS Western Isles Public Health Department provided evidence of local mortality and morbidity, including high levels of alcohol consumption, poor

men's health and higher than expected levels of coronary heart disease (NHS Western Isles 2007). The author throughout his involvement in the area employed a community development approach to addressing health issues, whereby local residents were encouraged to articulate their concerns upon which action would be taken. A community led Health Needs Assessment was undertaken and written up, utilising local residents as paid facilitators (Western Isles Health Board 1996). Crucially this brought the author in contact with residents from a wide variety of backgrounds and with a wide range of life experiences.

In 1999 a funding package was approved, resulting in the establishment of a Community Health Project, whose principle aim was to address the issues identified in the Needs Assessment. Premises were obtained from the local authority, staff were employed and a Management Committee established, with the author as an agency member. Upon retirement in 2005, the author was invited to remain on the Management Committee, neither as an agency representative nor as a resident, but in an individual capacity. In this new role it often became difficult to draw the line between observer and participant (Pope and Mays 2000), with the author having neither operational nor financial responsibilities for the project and now having a different status, that of a researcher. These roles over approximately 10 years, together with professional reflection and discussion with colleagues and residents, enabled the author to gain a closer understanding of the material and social infrastructure - the so called 'fine grain' of an area (Bartley, Blane and Davey Smith 1998). The author began to see the scheme as a friendly close-knit community with extensive family support networks. Structurally it was reminiscent of life in an urban scheme, with identical looking houses, a layout of closes and courts with expanses of grass and roaming dogs, but no flower beds. In addition the range of indicators of material deprivation was akin to those seen in an urban scheme, whilst its social infrastructure, whilst being close-knit, was undergoing change in a number of ways with some generational differences being apparent. The churches retained an influence on attitudes and on behaviour - an influence greater than expected considering that church attendance, whilst significant, was not undertaken by the majority of residents. The author felt that religion

exerted an influence throughout the area, unsurprising as most residents were from rural Lewis and would have experienced the effect of religion elsewhere or would have relatives who held strong views. It became clear from working in the area that most residents were either brought up as children in the Cearnns or had originated in rural parts of Lewis or other parts of the small town of Stornoway, moving later to the Cearnns. Family connections were often apparent and, because only one secondary school exists, islanders tend either to know, or know of, each other. In addition to being close-knit and having a religious dimension, the scheme houses many Gaelic speakers and questions began to emerge relating to possible differences in the social infrastructure of the Gael as opposed to the minority of residents that had no Gaelic. The author felt it important to try to relate the reflections above to issues around self-esteem, aspiration, social control and stigmatisation within the broad envelopes of social capital and mental/social health. The reflections led to the sense by the author that the Cearnns could be described as a 'uniquely distinctive' scheme, rural yet urban, multilingual but not housing individuals from Black and Minority Ethnic groups and an area where, unusually in Scotland, Calvinist religious principles were understood and accepted by a large proportion of residents. The author then built up a series of research questions that encapsulated the issues identified and felt the Cearnns exemplified those aspects of a case study that relate to the notion of 'uniqueness' as defined by Stake (1995).

In this respect the author's use of a case study approach mirrors those used in other community studies, for example the mining village of Grimethorpe (Dodd 2006), the district of Ruchill, in Glasgow (Matthews 2006) and the east end of London (Dench, Gavron and Young 2006).

5.4 The process of sampling

Within social research a key distinction is made between probability and non-probability sampling (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). Probability sampling is familiar to the quantitative researcher, allowing statistical inference to be undertaken to estimate the distribution of a phenomenon. Qualitative research often uses non-

probability sampling for selecting the population for study - units are selected intentionally to reflect particular features of groups within the sampled population and the sample is not intended to be statistically representative. The main types of non-probability sampling are *purposive*, *theoretical* and *convenience* and each is described in turn.

Patton (1990) has produced a typology of *purposive sampling*:

“The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth....there are several different strategies for purposefully selecting information-rich cases.”

(Patton, 1990: 169)

The terms ‘purposive’ or ‘purposeful’ are most often applied to this type of sampling in the literature, although both Burgess (1984) and Honigmann (1982) refer to judgement sampling whilst LeCompte, Preissle and Tesch (1993) maintain that criterion-based sampling is a more appropriate term. In *purposive sampling*, decisions about which criteria are used for selection are made in the early stages of design of the research. Prior to the formulation of the criteria the case itself must be selected; the criteria to be used for sampling being influenced by the aims of the study, the existing levels of knowledge, the hypotheses that the research seeks to test or gaps in knowledge about the study population. The process of purposive sampling requires objectivity and transparency so that the sampling method stands up to independent scrutiny.

Theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Mason 2002) is held to be a particular type of purposive sampling where the researcher samples incidents, people or units on the basis of their potential contribution to the development and testing of theoretical constructs. The process is iterative - the researcher picks an initial sample, analyses the data and selects a further sample in order to refine his/her emerging categories and theories (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). The process is continued until ‘data saturation’ is reached whereby no new insights would be gained by expanding the sample further. *Theoretical sampling* is mainly associated with the development of Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss

1967), with the key criteria for selection being theoretical purpose and relevance.

In *opportunistic* or *convenience sampling* (Burgess 1984; Patton 2002) the researcher employs a more flexible approach, taking advantage of unforeseen opportunities as they arise, and seizing the opportunity to interview any respondent who is likely to have relevant information for the study. Convenience sampling is viewed as less robust than other sampling methods, for example purposive sampling (Ritchie and Lewis 2003) as the subjects might be sampled because they are easy to recruit, or near at hand or because they are likely to be responsive (Bowling 2002).

Some authors of qualitative research (for example Mason 2002; Patton 2002) have argued that a systematic pre-defined approach to sampling is always important. Even if statistical generalisation is not appropriate, other forms of generalisation may be and the next section examines perspectives on generalisation.

5.5 The nature of generalisation

Perspectives on generalisation are strongly influenced by the ontological and epistemological orientations of the researcher. Questions begin to emerge: is it valid to draw 'meaning', of whatever kind, from research evidence? Does it have 'reality' beyond the context in which it was derived? It is apparent that there is not a clear set of ground rules in qualitative research. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) comment that if the findings of a research sample can be generalised to the parent population from which the sample was drawn then *representational generalisation* has been achieved, and this may take the form of a statistical portrayal of results - possibly as incidence or prevalence data. For example, in a study that seeks to look at the effects of place in a housing scheme, representational generalisation would be evident if the opinions of a sample of those over 65 years of age focusing on social support systems were extrapolated to all residents of that age living within that area. Such a study would evolve

from the principles that underpin the case study approach whereby the experiences of residents within a discrete area over a period of time were investigated and explained (Yin 1994). Ritchie and Lewis (2003) go on to suggest that it is the 'content' or 'map' of the range of views or experiences under study and the factors and circumstances that shape and influence them (rather the prevalence of the particular views or experiences), that should be extrapolated to the research population.

Other researchers hold different views; for example, Bryman (2001) believed that findings from case studies and interviews cannot be generalised as representative of populations - the aim is to generalise to theory not to populations. It is the 'cogency of the theoretical reasoning' rather than statistical or other criteria that is decisive in considering how far the findings can be generalised. The term *theoretical generalisation* is employed to allow theoretical propositions, principles or statements of a more general application to be drawn from the findings. For example, theoretical generalisation would have been demonstrated if ideas and theories about effective and efficient social care were inferred as a result of the findings of a study of support mechanisms amongst residents aged 65 or over in a community.

The term *inferential generalisation* is used when the findings of a study are extrapolated to other settings or areas that have similar characteristics to the sample one. For example, the findings derived from a study of housing support services utilised by those over 65 years in a given housing area could be extrapolated to those over 65 years in another housing area having similar social and material characteristics. The findings may also be relevant if a new service for a similar client group is proposed, perhaps around services offering financial or other forms of social support. Such extrapolations however, should be seen as working hypotheses rather than as conclusions. Patton, discussing this, sees extrapolations as:

“....modest speculations on the likely applicability of the findings to other situations, but not identical conditions. Extrapolations are logical, thoughtful and problem-orientated rather than statistical or probabilistic.”

(Patton, 2002: 584)

The appropriateness of transferability of findings to another context must be carefully assessed, for example Lincoln and Guba argued that transferability depended upon the degree of congruence between the ‘sending context’ within which the research is conducted and the ‘receiving context’ where it is to be applied (Lincoln and Guba 1985 cited in Ritchie and Lewis 2003).

The differences between the three forms of generalisation can be demonstrated and presented in tabular form. For example, in a hypothetical study of attitudes to homosexuality held by weekly church-going males, aged between 35years and 45years, the three forms of generalisation are portrayed in table 4.

Representational Generalisation	Inferential Generalisation	Theoretical Generalisation
The prevalence of views of those respondents surveyed could be extrapolated to reflect those of other males between 35-45yrs who are weekly church-goers and who live in the same area.	The views gained from respondents could be generalised to another context with similar socio-economic characteristics.	The views held on homosexuality would be related back to group behaviour theory and the notions of in-groups and out-groups, including marginalisation and stigmatisation.

Table 4: Examples of Representational, Inferential and Theoretical Generalisation

The researcher sought through this study to produce findings that would be relevant to other contexts, inferring that applicability elsewhere might inform the debate around inferential generalisation. As the central research question does endeavour to position the Cearnas area and residents within a wider context both regionally within the Western Isles and nationally within Scotland, there is scope for a consideration of the findings within the context of other island communities within Scotland. Similarly, the use of inferential generalisation would allow the findings to be considered within the context of other communities outwith the islands where religious influences may be in evidence, for example some housing areas within west central Scotland or communities

within Northern Ireland. In this study the use of theoretical generalisation would allow the findings to be generalised to, or contribute to, the development of theory, for example, within the context of network typologies or within the frameworks around religion and health.

5.6 Reliability and validity of qualitative research

It is appropriate to conclude this section with a brief discussion of the development of criteria for the evaluation of qualitative research. It is clear from the various ontological and epistemological perspectives that issues will arise relating to the development of criteria. Some held the view that criteria of 'goodness' are paradigm specific (Lincoln and Guba 1985 cited in Ritchie and Lewis 2003), whilst others adopted the more traditional quantitative criteria of validity and reliability (Kirk and Miller 1986; LeCompte and Goetz 1982; LeCompte, Preissle and Tesch 1993). A third group, including relativists and anti-realists argued that reality is mind-dependent and therefore deny the possibility of a context-free reality that might be used as a criterion against which findings could be judged (Smith and Heshusius 1986).

Such views are based on an anti-realist ontology and a relativist epistemology and the author of this thesis admits difficulty in the adoption of such a viewpoint, feeling more at ease with the perspective of a fourth group, the Critical Realists. Critical realists believe that the topic, the researcher and the interpretive process interact, thereby allowing the establishment of criteria (Altheide and Johnson 1994; Hammersley 1992). Hammersley, in his work on subtle realism holds to the idea that researchers can search for a 'truth' whilst being clear that such a truth may be impossible to attain. He goes on to say that the two criteria by which all research should be assessed are those of validity and relevance (Hammersley 1990; Hammersley 1992). Murphy *et al.* (1998) argue against a formulaic check-list of rules that qualitative research must follow and refer to the possible use of the respondents' perceptions of the findings as a check on the credibility of a study's results - defined as respondent validity (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Others have raised doubts about such an approach (Bryman 2001; Hammersley 1992) and triangulation methods can be postulated

which underline the validity of findings if the data collected produces identical results when a number of methods have been used.

Henwood and Pidgeon (1994) have pointed out that research activity inevitably shapes the objects of an enquiry - meaning that the researcher must reflect on his/her own impact upon the setting and this underlines the importance of reflexivity in qualitative research. Reflexivity is used to indicate the ways in which a researcher's presence in the research setting has contributed to the data collected and how his/her own assumptions have shaped the data analysis (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995) and the author of this thesis agrees that the researcher is part of both data collection and interpretation processes. In addition, the author has reflected on ways in which bias might creep into practice, for example through the use of leading questions, and is aware that his own background and beliefs will have an influence on the research process. The fieldwork stage therefore involved reassurance, putting respondents at ease, demonstrating non-judgementalism and active listening. Issues around reflexivity and the author's personal perspective, as they relate to the findings generated, will be outlined further in the discussion chapter (chapter 10).

5.7 Thesis aims and the development of sampling methodology

Chapter 1 of the thesis identified the rationale for the development of the study with the sequential development of two aims: first, to explore the effect of a specific neighbourhood on general perceptions of health, material and social infrastructure and, secondly, to unpack in more depth the effects of rurality, religion and language on the social infrastructure of Cearn residents. Chapters 2 to 4 presented the literature around a number of themes. Health and health inequality, the nature of neighbourhood, social capital, rurality and religion were all covered by bodies of literature that informed collectively the sequential development of the two aims.

This chapter so far has outlined the philosophical approach taken and will now move on to link the approach of the critical realist to a discussion of the

theoretical aspects of the sampling process from which appropriate methods have been devised.

Fieldwork was started after receiving approval by the University of Glasgow ethics committee in April 2006 (for details see appendix 1). Although the committee raised no issues the author was aware that qualitative studies in close-knit communities have specific ethical issues. Confidentiality and anonymity must be understood and respected by researcher and respondent throughout the research process.

Focus groups were considered inappropriate as the author sought to understand the perspectives taken by the individuals themselves rather than seeking views that individuals might collectively hold and construct around a phenomenon. The author was aware that, in a small housing area, residents know one another, often intimately, and by using focus groups honesty and confidentiality could be compromised. Accordingly, a set of semi-structured interviews was conducted.

Interviews were held in a location of the respondent's choice, usually being the 'Ceilidh Hoose' a community meeting room. The author arrived before the interviewee and ensured that the room was warm and welcoming and tea or coffee was always offered. The participants were given a full explanation of the purpose of the study, including the possible use of a digital voice recorder and this was followed by a discussion of the consent forms which they were then asked to sign giving their consent. The importance of anonymity and confidentiality was discussed and an opportunity to ask any questions was offered, with the author giving an explicit commitment to respect respondents' views with an undertaking that they would not be discussed outwith the interview. Reassurance was given that all personal details would be removed from transcriptions. At the time of interview it was expected that participants would provide highly personal accounts that might contain sensitive material and consequently interview rooms were made available that were self-contained and quiet. Two individuals with clerical experience assisted in the transcription process; being employees of NHS Western Isles, they were familiar with issues

around confidentiality and anonymity. They both agreed to follow the ethical principles laid down by their employing authority.

All qualitative data collection makes reference to structure, with some data collection methods following entirely the direction taken by the participants, whilst others show a degree of configuration predetermined by the researcher. Two formats outlined by Rubin and Rubin (1995) were felt to be of particular relevance to the design of this study: firstly, 'cultural interviews' where an understanding of underlying values, concepts and norms is sought. Broad questions are asked that encourage the participant to take the lead, and the researcher probes in depth as issues opportunistically arise. Alternatively, in 'topical interviews', the researcher has a set of issues that need to be covered by all participants and the emphasis is more on gaining factual and descriptive data than on exploration. The researcher had, in stage 1 of the current study, a number of issues that needed to be covered and followed the format of the 'topical interview' whereas, in stage 2, broader in-depth perspectives were sought and the model of the 'cultural interview' was followed. The author did not want the process to be formulaic and respondents were encouraged to develop a relevant theme in their own words, expanding on reality as they saw it. Throughout, the intention was to be flexible and to allow participants space and time to respond, including time for reflection. The study, following the principles of critical realism, sought to provide descriptive evidence of people's experiences of life and consequently a degree of detail was required in order to facilitate discussion of the neighbourhood and its social functioning.

5.7.1 Stage 1: development of a methodology

The aims, objectives and research questions relating to stage 1 are reiterated in Figure 6.

Health, inequalities and the neighbourhood environment: aim, objectives and research questions

To explore the health status, health inequalities and perceptions of the built and social environment of the Cearns.

Objectives and Research Questions

Two main objectives with associated research questions were identified. These were to:

- a. Examine both routine data and residents' perspectives of health and health inequality
- b. Identify the nature of the neighbourhood environment, both materially and in terms of social infrastructure. This objective focused on the following research questions:
 - How do residents perceive the Cearns, in terms of image, and physical characteristics and how has this changed over the period of residency?
 - How close-knit is the community? How does the social network of friends, relatives and neighbours make itself apparent? In what ways do residents identify and access social support?
 - In what ways does the Cearns resemble and differ from mainland housing schemes?

Figure 6: The neighbourhood environment: aim, objectives and research questions

A convenience sampling approach was adopted, whereby respondents were selected because they were known to the author, or they volunteered to take part in the research through self referral via a third party or they responded to adverts placed in the local shop. The intention was to use, opportunistically, a number of key respondents to scope the relevant themes as they emerged, as stage 1 of the research process.

The author decided that the scoping of emerging themes complemented the collection of routine data on the Cearns, both as a locality in its own right and within the context of the wider Western Isles including socio-economic profiles

and demographics; findings that are presented in chapter 6. Stage 1 is best seen as an exploratory stage by which meaningful information around the area of social capital in the Cearns was gained leading to a more sophisticated analysis of certain emerging themes, as part of stage 2.

The themes listed in the schedule, summarised in Figure 7 (see appendix 2 for the full schedule) were covered in all interviews, but the style of questioning varied to take account of respondents' particular circumstances and interests.

Topic areas covered	Content of topic area
Health - at the level of the individual Health - at the level of the population	Good health: a resource, a coping mechanism, physical/mental fitness or a reserve of strength/energy Community health: alcohol and depression
The neighbourhood - general perceptions and temporal change	Positive/negative aspects, changes over time in relation to place, people, services and image
The built environment	Housing: style, layout, density, green space, play parks Crime and safety Stigma Right to Buy and Buy to Let
The social environment	Density of acquaintanceship: expressed as friendly, close-knit, mutuality of interest/involvement Social networks: pattern in relation to age, gender and tenure. Typology Social support
The Cearns and the mainland	Comparison with mainland schemes

Figure 7: Summary of the interview topic guide used in stage 1 of the research process

In order to promote an understanding of the different ways in which respondents' circumstances and interests could influence the style of questioning employed, a profile of the respondents' age, gender, family structure and employment status is presented.

5.7.1.1 Profile of respondents.

The profiles are most effectively viewed as reflecting the results of the sampling process, as distinct from specific research findings, and therefore they have been included in this chapter rather than in chapter 7 - 9.

Ten of the twelve participants of the study were females. The age range of the respondents was between 19 and 70 years. Three participants were retired, only one of whom was a university graduate with three other respondents holding part-time jobs and a further three in full-time work. Two were occupied with child-care full time and only one, a male, was unemployed. All had lived on the scheme for at least 5 years and eleven had local origins, with one incomer born in England. The age and gender profile of the respondents have been shown in table 5.

	18 - 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	51 - 60	61+
Men	1	0	0	1	0
Women	2	3	1	3	1

Table 5: Profile of respondents' age and gender (N=12)

Most respondents were either directly involved in locally-based childcare activities, or had previous experience of bringing up a family on the Cearns, as shown in table 6.

Family Structure	Number
No Children	2
Children at home *	2
Child or children at nursery or school	2
Adult children living at home or on the Cearnas	1
Adult children not living at home nor on the Cearnas #	5

* = That is not attending nursery or its equivalent

= Taken to include children brought up on the Cearnas

Table 6: Profile of respondents' family structure (N=12)

Employment patterns show diversity with residents integrating family life with full or part-time employment, as seen in table 7.

Employment Status	Number
Employed, full time	3
Employed, part time	3
Unemployed	1
Retired	3
Childcare, full time	2

Table 7: Profile of respondents' current employment activity (N=12)

The findings from this stage are presented in chapter 7 and two major themes emerged; from these stage 2 fieldwork evolved. The key themes that shaped stage 2 of the fieldwork are summarised below:

- The influence of a rural upbringing on social networks and social support and how this related to the identity of the Hebridean.
- The influence of religion at the level of the individual as a source of support and at the neighbourhood level as a mediator of social

infrastructure as well as a perceived promoter of moral development; and a possible agent of social control.

5.7.2 Stage 2: evolution of a methodology

The second aim of the thesis emerged from stage 1 and the five objectives and associated research questions are included in figure 8.

The Effect of Specific Cultural Influences: aim, objectives and research questions.

To explore the specific ways rurality, language and religion mediated the effects of the social environment of adult residents within the Cearnas.

Objectives and Research Questions

Five objectives were identified with associated research questions. These were to:

- a. Determine how residents' origins (in terms of their 'rurality') is perceived to influence the formation of social networks, the extent and purpose of social support and how these related to a sense of Hebridean identity and to community cohesion.
- b. Identify the perspectives held by those residents whose first language is Gaelic and to establish whether distinctively different relationship patterns existed.
- c. Assess the extent to which religious belief, from non-believer to communicant influenced the social environment of the individual and the perceived cohesion of the community.
- d. Appraise how incomers to the area perceived support systems and networks and how they, in turn, are perceived by longer-term residents.
- e. Explore the influence of religion and other cultural factors on certain aspects of health, especially consumption of alcohol, depression and perceptions of self-esteem.

Figure 8: The effect of specific cultural influences: aim, objectives and research questions

Purposive sampling was employed as the selection process to identify participants and the criteria for purposive sampling of potential respondents was shaped by the findings from stage 1. This contrasted with the convenience sampling methodology used in the first stage of the fieldwork process. A sampling frame was devised that allowed for potential participants to be identified using criteria relevant to rurality, language and religion. The criteria developed for rurality included place of birth and upbringing, and those for religion were developed to reflect the consequences of adhering strictly or otherwise to biblical doctrine. It was decided initially to purposively sample for religiosity and to accept that sampling those with no religious affiliation would be more problematic and would involve a modification of the approach.

A number of standpoints are to be found in the various denominations to the adherence of dogma with Ministers and elders expecting strict adherence to biblical dogma by individuals that profess faith in the following denominations: The Free Church of Scotland, The Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland or the Associated Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The Free Church has the greatest following and, within this study, this denomination and the others listed above have been described as the 'Free Church Family'. Affiliation to any of the churches mentioned above is conditional upon a high level of observance of a strict and literal interpretation of biblical word, especially for those individuals that are Members. Members are individuals who have undertaken a personal and deep religious experience and have professed their faith to a group of elders and the Minister, stating how they believe Christ has changed their lives. If their testament is accepted they become full members of the church and they take communion twice yearly in public, with an understanding that their place in Heaven is assured. Individuals, as either Members or Adherents are expected to follow a lifestyle of behaviour and belief system that may be described as socially conservative, in terms of personal morality, social norms and Sabbath observance. The Church of Scotland, as well as the Roman Catholic Church believes less literally in biblical truth, accepting that symbolism is evident within the bible and therefore giving more scope for individual interpretation. There is less emphasis on personal salvation and more on social justice and equity.

Gatekeepers, such as elders, ministers and others, for example the Free Church Youth Worker who knew local residents well, were contacted and asked to distribute an A4 proforma to known church-goers who resided in the scheme inviting them to be a part of the research process (see appendix 3 for further details). The proforma was a filter for potential respondents to complete and return to the interviewer, from which a selection of those to be invited to take part in the interview process would be made - provided that the criteria were met. There was some reluctance and suspicion on behalf of certain gatekeepers about getting involved, and this appeared to be related to whether or not they had worked with the author.

The relationship between numbers of forms issued the numbers meeting the criteria for interview and the numbers finally interviewed are shown in Table 8.

	Church of Scotland	Free Church 'Family'	Other Churches and Faiths	No religious interest
Number of forms given out	20	20	0	n/a
Number of responses	4	4	0	n/a
Numbers rejected	0	0	0	n/a
Numbers interviewed	4	4	0	n/a

Table 8: The relationship between forms issued by gatekeepers, response level and subsequent interview, by denomination

The number returning completed proformas was low and it was decided to seek other gatekeepers. A number of individuals were recruited as gatekeepers from other locations where residents meet in order to access religious and non-religious individuals plus those who may describe themselves as religious but in practice are church non-attenders. Such 'community' gatekeepers included shop staff, playgroup leaders and Community Association office bearers. A further

group of potential gatekeepers, mainly staff from the Social Work Department of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, were unable to get involved as there would be issues around child protection involving confidentiality which could not be easily overcome. A similar situation presented itself when health visitors employed by NHS Western Isles were approached.

The Housing Officer for the Cearnas area, employed by Hebridean Housing Partnership, the public body that took over ownership of the social housing stock from the local authority, also agreed to issue forms during conversations with tenants. However, no forms were returned and therefore selection could not be made using this gatekeeper. Gaining access to a sample of men and women who did not attend formal groups was challenging and so a research assistant was recruited. The research assistant was a young lone parent of local origin who had lived in the Cearnas as a child, and then returned two years ago with a family. It was hoped that she would be able to gain access to other young men and women in the area in a sensitive manner. A combination of purposive (Burgess 1984) and snowball sampling (Bowling 2002) was used whereby purposive sampling was used initially to identify the research assistant and thereafter snowball sampling was to be employed, through which those individuals identified by the research assistant would be interviewed and would be asked to name others. It was acknowledged that snowball sampling has its limitations, yet it is an appropriate sampling strategy for accessing hard-to-reach or hidden populations (Bowling 2002). Whilst the research assistant herself was willing to be interviewed, no further potential interviewees emerged through this gatekeeper. The relationship between numbers of forms issued by 'community' gatekeepers, number of responses and numbers interviewed is shown in Table 9.

	Shop staff	Playgroup leaders	Community Association	Housing Officer
Number of forms given out	20	5	10	10
Number of responses	14	0	6	0
Numbers rejected	0	0	0	0
Numbers interviewed	14	0	6	0

Table 9: The relationship between forms issued by ‘community’ gatekeepers, response level and subsequent interview

Respondents in stage 1 of the study spoke of the shop staff with affection, respect and appreciation and it is relevant to reflect on their role as gatekeepers in this study. Details of the study and forms inviting residents to take part in the study were placed on the shop counter and the two staff, familiar to residents, would encourage customers to leave their details on the form which would then be stored out of sight. The shop staff had been interviewed themselves, having met the selection criteria and could therefore reassure potential applicants about the nature of the research process. Similarly, six members of the Community Association agreed to be interviewed - these being older residents who were members of the Spring Chickens Club that meets fortnightly. (For details of the proformas used by the shop and the Community Association for engaging with potential interviewees see appendix 4). The author achieved 28 interviews through the use of church-based or ‘community’ gatekeepers.

Anecdotal feedback from gatekeepers suggested that some residents were suspicious of an older male and an incomer being seen to ask questions about their lives and were not prepared to complete the A4 filter. Other reasons for non-involvement included such comments as ‘pressure of work’, ‘have children to look after’ and ‘not interested’.

The researcher then took the decision to change the sampling methodology, deciding that it was appropriate to view the residents as a 'hard to reach' group. 'Hard to reach' populations include isolated groups that are often difficult to engage with and where purposive sampling methods yield few respondents. Such populations include the homeless, drug users or prostitutes (Faugier and Sargeant 1997) but increasingly the term 'hard to reach' is applied to residents of disadvantaged areas (Reid 2008). Trust and familiarity are important and interviewees agree to use their social network to identify others for interview, offering reassurance to potential new interviewees about both the research subject and the researcher (see review by Browne 2005). Consequently, within the overall approach of convenience sampling, the technique of snowballing or chain sampling (Ritchie and Lewis 2003) was used in the Cearnas, with the initial contact being used to identify others who meet the selection criteria; the initial contact or the researcher then contacted those people. The author of this thesis felt that use of this technique, bearing in mind the sensitive nature of some of the subject matter especially around the area of religious belief, would be appropriate. Potential participants were given the opportunity at the point of first contact to 'check out' the nature of the research and the skills and attitudes of the researcher and this author believed that if residents had not 'liked' him or 'been able to get on with him' difficulties associated with recruitment would have been even greater. Consequently, by using snowballing techniques and asking each respondent to identify others that met the selection criteria a further 15 interviews were completed, making a total of 43.

Aim 2 sought to unpack the influence of the emerging themes of rurality and religion that emerged during stage 1 of the fieldwork on the social environment of residents; the topic areas covered and content of the topic areas are summarised in figure 9 (see appendix 5 for full details).

Topic areas covered	Content of topic area
Exploration of social environment	Purpose of network: instrumental, emotional, reciprocal
Influence of rurality on social infrastructure	Effect of upbringing on network development and sources of support Role of the family Social infrastructure of incomers The nature of the Hebridean identity and its relationship to network maintenance and support
Impact of religion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> at the level of the individual at the community level 	General support and friendship and support in times of need Positive impact of religion on attitudes, behaviours and lifestyles Conversion Positive impact: respect for others, dignity and politeness, a basis for an effective upbringing Negative impact: judgementalism, social control Sabbath observance, positive and negative aspects

Figure 9: Summary of the interview topic guide used in stage 2 of the research process

5.7.2.1 Profile of respondents

The age and gender profile of those interviewed is shown in table 10.

	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
Male	1	2	4	4	1
Female	8	8	7	6	2

Table 10: Profile of the gender and age of respondents (N=43)

The employment status of the respondents is shown as table 11 and could be classified into a number of categories, including full and part-time unemployment, full-time student, unemployed, retired and disabled (the latter not precluding the option of work, but in this sample those with disability were not working).

Employment Status	Number
Student, full-time	3
Employment, full-time	15
Employment, part-time	10
Retired	7
Unemployed	6
Disabled	2

Table 11: Profile of respondents' employment status (N=43)

Respondents from a number of denominations were interviewed, see table 12 with most worshippers being from the Church of Scotland or the Free Church 'family'. Respondents from other denominations included small numbers from the Roman Catholic Church, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Mormons.

	Church of Scotland	Free Church family	Other Churches and Faiths	No religious belief
Men	2	3	4	3
Women	11	13	1	6

Table 12: Denomination of interviewees by gender (N=43)

The number interviewed in stage 1 of the research was 12, with a further 43 being interviewed in stage 2, making a total number of 55. The data gained from each stage was processed and analysed separately.

5.8 Data management; processing, coding and analysis

This section moves on to describe the processes of managing, coding and analysing the data generated through the methods described in the two stages of the fieldwork.

The organising, indexing and analysis of data can seem an overwhelming task when faced with conversation recordings, transcriptions of interviews, field notes and memos. The process of management can therefore be seen as formulaic comprising a number of stages requiring specific skills. An alternative perspective on data management is to view it as a continuous and iterative process with only two distinct stages and this approach was followed in this thesis. The first stage required the data to be ordered and managed whereas the second demanded a higher level range of activities involving interpretation and explanation. The nature of the iterative approach, however, required that, whilst the two stages are distinct, there was some movement back and fore between them and the distinction between data organisation and making sense became frequently unclear (Mason 2002).

The approach taken in this thesis to data management was an iterative one, but also a reflexive one, an approach that recognised the role and perspectives held by the researcher, especially in the ways he became implicated in the

generation and interpretation of data. The researcher as a male, middle-aged incomer cast a particular dynamic on the process and required the author to interpret data through this lens. The author displayed a high level of awareness of situations and understanding of contexts, especially around the sensitivities associated with religious belief, and it was born in mind that such awareness and insight was crucial and was of greater importance than the tools used to manage the data. As Ritchie and Lewis (2003), point out:

“Making sense of the data relies, in part, on the method or tool that is used to organise and categorise data, but it is more dependent on the analyst and the rigour, clarity and creativity of her or his conceptual thinking.”

(Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 219-220)

It is recognised that movement takes place between data organisation and explanation, yet it is useful to separate the two stages and to outline the activities associated with each. This section moves on to look at the processing of data; data in the form of transcribed interviewee records, interview conversations, field notes and memos.

Each interview was recorded, with the participant's permission, onto a digital voice recorder and each interview was allocated a unique reference number prior to being downloaded onto the transcriber's machine. Each interview was transcribed verbatim and all transcripts were checked by the author as soon as possible for mistakes and mis-hearings. This enabled any recording and transcribing problems to be addressed whilst the interview was still fresh in the author's mind. Each transcription was saved as a Word file and named using the unique reference number given to each interviewee; during this process any references to other individuals were removed and replaced with the letter X. This checking process enabled the author to gain an overview, showing the range and diversity of the material, as well as contributing to overall data familiarisation. The Word files were converted into a text file and were imported into ATLAS/Ti (Muhir 1997), a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) package designed to manage and code qualitative data.

Data familiarisation is the first stage of a method of matrix based analysis, known as 'Framework', developed during the 1980s at the National Centre for Social Research (Ritchie and Spencer 1994) and applied to the findings of this study. The name 'Framework' comes from the 'thematic framework', the underpinning element of the method, used to classify data according to key themes, concepts and emerging categories (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). The technique has five stages: data familiarisation; identification of a thematic framework; indexing (or coding); charting; and, mapping and interpretation. As the series of main themes emerges, these are subdivided by related subtopics and as these evolve they are refined through re-familiarisation with the raw data. Throughout the familiarisation stage the process of abstraction and conceptualisation begins, a process that results in the identification of key issues, concepts and themes, against which the data can be examined (Ritchie and Spencer 1994). For example, issues around neighbourliness and its meaning derived from the literature, together with findings from the fieldwork, led to themes that related to network typology, identity, effects of remoteness and influences of religion.

The data were then re-examined and the themes and sub-themes that emerged were coded. A code was assigned to a quote, a chunk of data within a theme, and in total 60 codes were assigned. During analysis codes were constantly reviewed, some merged with others and some generated from new as new quotes were imported into the database. Blocks of data were allocated appropriate codes, and the database allowed for easy retrieval and clear display of the coded quotes against any given theme/sub-theme. ATLAS.ti allowed memos to be constructed as the analysis developed, and these, together with fieldwork notes, helped to inform the decision-making process if the coding of quotes needed to be changed. For example, a code had not been included for the effect of drunkenness on social cohesion until it was mentioned in interview; transcripts were searched and no code had been specified for this issue. This could then be addressed.

Figure 10 below provides an example of a block of coded/indexed data.

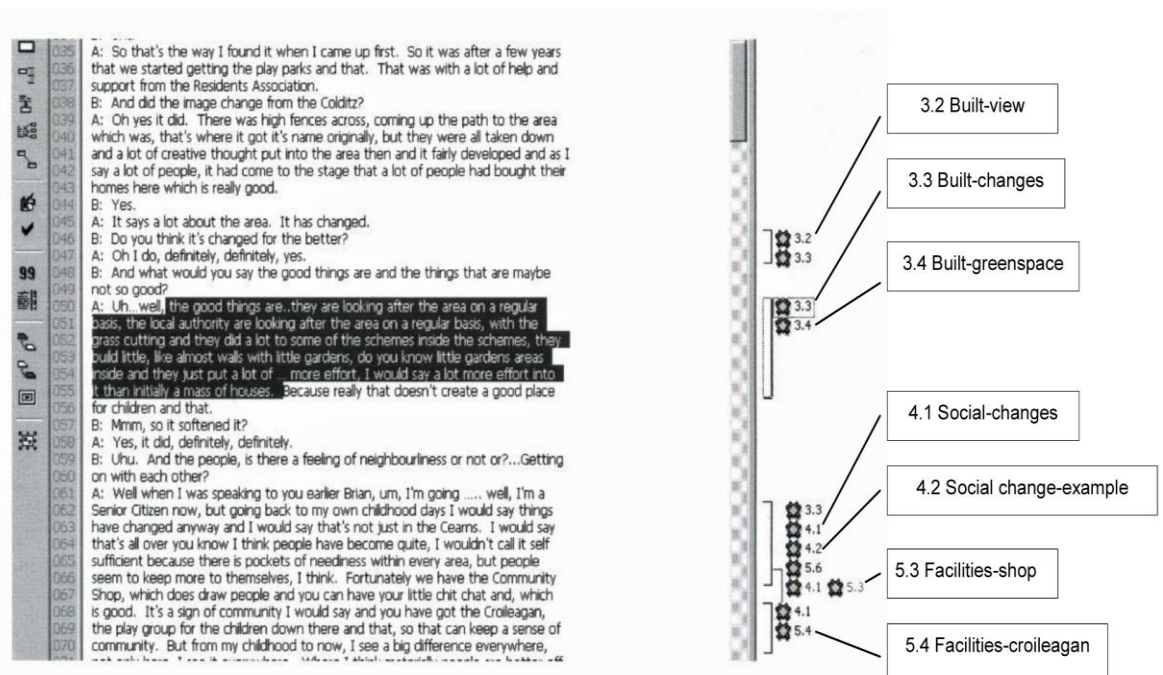


Figure 10: Example of coded text

The fourth stage of the Framework process, as developed by Ritchie and Spencer (1994), refers to charting, whereby each new theme with its constituent parts is considered and patterns identified across the data set. For example, under the code relating to *the nature of the Hebridean identity*, different ways of conceptualising the concept were identified by collating the relevant data across all respondents with reference being made to *remoteness, the Gaelic language, religion, rural origins, connectedness, history and geography*. The charting of themes is a process that involves the summarising of the key points of each piece of data, retaining its context and language and locating it within appropriate parts of the thematic framework. As Ritchie and Lewis (2003) point out, enough data and context should be included without having to go back to the transcribed data to understand the point being made - but not include so much undigested material that the whole process becomes unwieldy. Emphasis is on appropriate synthesis, without losing content or context.

The final stage of the Framework process, known as mapping and interpretation, is designed to pull together the key characteristics of the data thereby allowing interpretation of the components of the dataset as a whole. This stage allows

concepts to be defined, associations found, explanations provided, and the range and nature of phenomena mapped (Ritchie and Spencer 1994). The research questions posed in a specific study together with the themes that emerged from the data influence the parameters chosen as a pattern is sought from a plethora of data. For example, within this study a discussion of the nature of the Hebridean emerged. From the data themes that related to a number of *concepts* emerged: for example, extent of family support or degree of involvement in community activities. The *mapping of phenomena* yielded contextual material relevant at neighbourhood level, such as the meaning of religiosity or the significance of rural attitudes. *Explanations* for the use of the term 'Hebridean' by residents involved, for example, an exploration of the meaning of home and 'other', and of separateness. Findings are then related to the theory of in-group/out-group dynamics.

Framework provides one technique for the management of the analytic process; it has an advantage in that it allows movement between stages as data and theory emerge and interact. It is an example of non-linear process, a 'conceptual scaffold', each level of which comprises different analytical tasks (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). Such a hierarchy, whilst flexible and iterative, tends to start with data familiarisation and end with the development of explanations and generation of theory. Alternatively, and as demonstrated to some degree within this study, theory, data generation and data analysis were developing simultaneously as part of a dialectic process of inquiry. Theory developed in this way involves moving back and forth between data analysis and the processes of explanation and it involves moving between everyday concepts and meanings, lay accounts and explanations from social science (Mason 2002).

5.9 Conclusion

A case study approach was chosen as a useful framework for gaining an in-depth understanding of both the historical and contemporary contexts of the social phenomena at work within the Cearnas. Within this spatial framework an interpretivist epistemological position was taken whereby the research questions

were answered by asking residents for their perspectives on a range of issues affecting their lives.

Stage 1 scoped the main issues, using a mixed-methods approach involving routine data collection and convenience sampling around aspects of the urban nature of the area with its levels of deprivation, as well as identifying major elements of the social environment. From this stage 2 evolved with its more in-depth interviews, focused on first the influence of rurality, operating through upbringing and identity and secondly religion, seen to be apparent at both individual and community levels.

Interview data were sorted and analysed, using ATLAS.ti software and the approach described as 'Framework' (Ritchie and Spencer 1994) adopted, with its stages of data familiarisation, framework identification, data coding, mapping and interpretation.

Throughout the chapter the nature of decisions that have to be taken by researchers in pursuit of answers to research questions has been outlined and decision trails for the analysis of the findings has been presented in chapters 6 and 7 (stage 1 findings) and chapters 8 and 9 (stage 2 findings). The strengths and weaknesses of the approach taken to this research have been outlined in chapter 10.

CHAPTER 6: THE CEARNS: ITS SINGULAR POSITION WITHIN THE WESTERN ISLES

6.1 Introduction

The Cearn is geographically, administratively, socially and economically part of the Western Isles; and this chapter places the Cearn within a broader Western Isles framework. Within this framework the Cearn occupies a distinctively urban position located, as it is, within a distinctly rural regional context. In reality, qualities associated with rurality became acted out within an urban context.

A mixed-methods approach was used in stage 1 of the research process, including both the gathering of routine numerical data presented in this chapter followed by data gained qualitatively from residents themselves. The qualitative findings from residents are presented in chapter 7 and relate to perceptions of the nature and changes within the built and social environment.

The first section of this chapter examines the routine data available for the Western Isles at regional level, through a discussion of its demographic and socio-economic profile. This is followed by a section that specifically focuses on the Cearn, placing it within its regional context and showing that it presents a striking contrast to other Western Isles communities.

The third and final section of chapter 6 focuses on routine numerical data that specifically relate to the health status of the population of the Western Isles and, wherever possible, the Cearn itself.

6.2 The Western Isles: a demographic and socio-economic overview

The Western Isles or Outer Hebrides extends some 200km (160 miles) from the Butt of Lewis in the north to Barra Head in the south, with a land area of over 3,000sq.km. The Outer Hebrides Fact Card (Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership 2008) described the archipelago with its 119 islands, 11 of which are

inhabited with Lewis and Harris being joined by a narrow isthmus. The rural nature of the archipelago is illustrated by the fact that 70% of the land area is occupied by some 6,000 family crofts. The population of the various island areas is shown in table 13.

Island areas	Census 1991	Census 2001
Lewis	20,159	18,489
Harris	2,222	1,984
North Uist	1,815	1,657
Benbecula	1,803	1,249
South Uist	2,432	1,951
Barra & Vatersay	1,371	1,172
Total	29,600	26,502

Table 13: Population summary table, by island area (adapted from Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership 2008)

The table showed over a ten-year census period, from 1991 to 2001, that there has been a decrease in population level across all island areas. At the last census in 2001, the resident population was recorded at 26,502, representing a decline of around 10% (3,098 people) since 1991 and taken over the century 1901 to 2001 this decline was acute, with a population decline of over 43%, from approximately 46,000 in 1901 to 26,502 in 2001.

When the mid-year population estimates for 2006 were examined, a further decrease was noted. The mid-year estimates for 2006 showed a population of 26,350, a decrease of 0.1% (-20 persons) since the mid-2005 estimates (General Register Office for Scotland 2007). This decrease has been attributed to the negative 'natural change' (-130) being greater than positive 'net civilian migration' (+110). Deaths (375) continued to exceed births (245) over the period; although the number of births was up by 11% on the previous year. The 'average age' in the islands was estimated to be 41 years for males (Scottish

average = 38 yrs) and 44 years for females (Scottish average = 41 yrs) in June 2006.

The decline in population of -7.9% over the ten year period 1996 to 2006 was the highest of any local authority area in Scotland. Over the same period, Shetland saw a fall of - 4.3%, Orkney an increase of 0.2% whilst Scotland overall saw an increase of 0.5%.

It is relevant at this early stage in the chapter to point out that the data included are attributable to a variety of sources. Data pertaining to the local authority, known as the Western Isles or Outer Hebrides local are routinely designated in the Gaelic form, 'Comhairle nan Eilean Siar', shortened often to 'Eilean Siar'. In contrast, routine data from NHS sources are presented as using the English, either 'Western Isles', 'Western Isles Health Board' or 'NHS Western Isles'.

The mid-2007 population estimates showed a further decline, as illustrated in table 14.

	Estimated population June 2006	Births	Deaths	Natural change	Estimated net civilian migration	Estimated population June 2007	Population change
<u>Eilean Siar</u>	26,350	279	368	-89	39	26,300	-50 (0.2%)

Table 14: Components of population change by administrative area (General Register Office for Scotland 2008)

Demographically, the population of the Western Isles is ageing, as illustrated in table 15, with an increasing proportion being over 65 years old.

2006 (Numbers)					2006 (%)		
	All ages	<16	16 - 64	65+	<16	16-64	65+
Scotland	5,116,900	921,833	3,357,099	837,968	18.0	65.6	16.4
Eilean Siar	26,350	4,666	16,274	5,410	17.7	61.8	20.5

Table 15: Age structure, June 2006, showing numbers and percentages under 16, 16 - 64 and over 65 years (General Register Office for Scotland 2007)

Using the 2006 population estimate (26,350) as a base and taking into account predictions of future trends around mortality, fertility and migration, the total population is projected to fall to 24,892 by 2031. This represents a fall of 5.5%, or a loss of 1,458 people, the equivalent figure for Scotland over the same period is a decline of 5% (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar 2008b). Projections suggest an increased proportion of elderly, with a corresponding reduction in younger age groups. Between 2006 and 2031, the Western Isles is projected to see a large decline in the key age groups of 0-15 years (-25%) and those of working age, 16-64yrs (-11%) with an increase of approximately 33% of those in the population aged 65+. The Western Isles is projected to see a large percentage decline in annual births between 2006 and 2031, some -38%, with births falling from 250 in 2006/07 to 154 in 2030/31. In Scotland, the percentage decline in annual births is projected to be -11%.

The Director of Public Health for NHS Western Isles, in her Annual Report, has highlighted other points of interest in relation to demographics. She cites four distinct population trends: a shift in population towards larger settlements, notably Stornoway; an upturn in people choosing to live in the Outer Hebrides for quality of life reasons; employers increasingly turning to overseas migrant workers to address labour shortages, and more short-stay and 'commuting' workers who leave partners or spouses on the mainland (NHS Western Isles 2006). The author of the current thesis would add a further dimension, unspecified hitherto; that of young male off-shore oil workers in increasing numbers leaving families behind who, to reduce their perceived levels of social isolation, move from remote locations towards Stornoway and its environs. This

is based on anecdotal evidence relating to the numbers of new houses being built and occupied by local families within the Stornoway area and its environs, in contrast to their former dwellings that are being purchased by incomers often through the internet, in some cases without a personal visit.

Throughout this thesis the rural nature of the Western Isles has been stressed and the relationship between land area and population density is shown in table 16. In this table, a range of other rural and island Scottish administrative areas has been included.

	Estimated population 30 June 2007	Area (sq km)	Persons (per sq km)
Scotland	5,144,200	77,925	66
Eilean Siar	26,300	3,071	9
Dumfries & Galloway	148,300	6,426	23
Highland	217,440	25,659	8
Moray	86,870	2,238	39
Scottish Borders	111,430	4,732	24
Orkney Islands	19,860	990	20
Shetland Islands	21,950	1,466	15
Glasgow	581,940	175	3,316

Table 16: Land area and population density, by administrative area:
30 June 2007 (adapted from General Register Office for Scotland 2008)

The table strikingly outlines the sparsity of the population across the Western Isles, in comparison with both other island areas, such as Orkney and Shetland and most other Scottish rural areas. The contrast with urban Glasgow is especially stark.

NHS Western Isles has made reference to the challenges associated with an ageing population and goes on to comment on some challenges specifically associated with geography (NHS Western Isles 2007). The Director of Public

Health has identified that 78.9% of the Western Isles population live in areas classified as very-remote rural compared to 6.0% in Scotland as a whole, which is the largest proportion of any health board area. The information below was taken from the Scottish Executive Urban Rural Classification, 2005-2006. Table 17 highlights the remote and rural nature of Western Isles communities in comparison with other island and mainland rural health board areas.

Six-Fold Urban Rural Classification						
Health Board	Large urban areas	Other urban areas	Accessible small towns	Remote small towns	Accessible rural	Remote rural
Ayrshire & Arran	0	58.6	18.5	2.8	15.1	5.0
Borders	0	26.8	19.9	4.9	37.5	10.8
Dumfries & Galloway	0	28.4	15.4	7.2	26.4	22.6
Fife	0	65.7	16.4	0	17.9	0
Forth Valley	0	70.2	10.6	0	17.0	2.2
Grampian	37.5	15.5	8.3	7.2	22.1	9.3
Greater Glasgow & Clyde	79.6	13.9	3.9	0	2.6	0
Highland	0	20.2	2.6	26.1	10.3	40.8
Lanarkshire	39.6	40.1	9.6	0	10.2	0.6
Lothian	58.1	21.3	10.7	1.6	6.9	1.4
Orkney	0	0	0	32.2	0	67.8
Shetland	0	0	0	30.6	0	69.4
Tayside	39.8	26.2	6.7	3.7	19.0	4.5
Western Isles	0	0	0	21.1	0	78.9
Scotland	39.0	29.8	9.1	3.7	12.0	6.4

Table 17: Urban Rural Classification by health board, 2005-2006 (Scottish Executive 2006b)

The classification is the one used by the Scottish Household Survey (SHS), which designates ‘settlements’ with a population of greater than 3,000 as urban. This allows Scottish communities to be viewed, albeit arbitrarily, on an urban-rural scale. An accessible-remote dimension is also included, one that relates to proximity of a settlement to a larger settlement in terms of ‘drivetimes’. Table 18 outlines the SHS Urban Rural Classification criteria.

Scottish Household Survey Urban Rural Classification	
Large Urban Areas	Settlements of over 125,000 people.
Other Urban Areas	Settlements of 10,000 to 125,000 people.
Accessible Small Towns	Settlements of between 3,000 and 10,000 and within 30 minute drive of a settlement of 10,000 or more.
Remote Small Towns	Settlements of between 3,000 and 10,000 and with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 or more.
Accessible Rural	Settlements of less than 3,000 people and within 30 minutes drive of a settlement of 10,000 or more.
Remote Rural	Settlements of less than 3,000 people and with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 or more.

Table 18: Scottish Household Survey Urban Rural Classification (Scottish Executive 2006b)

The essentially rural nature of the Western Isles is illustrated in figures 11 - 15.



Figure 11: A typical flat Lewis moorland landscape with nearby coastline Wide open spaces are in evidence, with few trees and houses scattered in crofting townships; this view is looking south from the Point peninsula towards Stornoway and Harris.



Figure 12: Beaches and rocky promontories; typical features of the Western Isles coastline Many coastal areas have high cliffs, expansive beaches and little habitation; as demonstrated by this view of Traighe Mhor, near North Tolsta.



Figure 13: The crofting township of North Tolsta with scattered housing
 A domestic peat stack can be seen in the foreground and rectangular strips of crofting land in the mid-distance.



Figure 14: Stornoway town centre
 A wide range of shops and facilities is in evidence.



Figure 15: Ferry vessel 'Isle of Lewis' sets sail for Ullapool

The ship is reversing from the pier and will head out to the Minch, keeping to the left of the lighthouse in the distance. The remoteness of the area is highlighted by the 2¾ hour journey time.

The next subsection outlines a range of economic activity data which serve as a demonstration of island material poverty, with low wage levels and high costs. This is presented first at the regional level, and then at household level. Regional prosperity, as measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) places the Western Isles in a position well down the league table. The most current estimate of GDP specific to the Western Isles was that produced in The Western Isles Regional Accounts, 2003, compiled by Aberdeen University, in which the estimated Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) per head of population was said to be 66% of the UK average and 78% of the average EU25 GDP per capita. In comparison, the Highlands and Islands region was 69% and Scotland was 96% of the UK average (Roberts 2005). The 'Wealth of the Nation 2003' report suggested that the Western Isles average household income was £23,400 in 2003, and that the Western Isles ranked 3rd equal lowest out of 121 UK Postcode Areas, with only Dumfries and Truro being lower (CACI 2003).

Highlands and Islands Enterprise (2003) have produced a number of Rural Scotland Price Surveys, the last being for 2003. As part of this survey, the price of various goods and services at locations throughout the Western Isles was included. The overall price of the selected goods and services considered by the survey in 2003 was 3.7% higher in the Western Isles than the survey average and this was the second highest in Scotland, Shetland being the highest. The cost of food was, on average, 15.2% higher and fuel 13% higher than in mainland urban areas. Western Isles households spend more on necessities, in particular food, drink, fuel and light when compared with their Scottish or UK counterparts (Roberts 2005). At the level of the household, the Western Isles has a relatively high incidence of fuel poverty in comparison with other areas of Scotland. Poorer climatic conditions, a high proportion of Below Tolerable Standard housing (in excess of 10%) and the high use of solid fuel fires contributed to the high cost of heating homes throughout the islands. The results of the Scottish House Conditions Survey 2002, released in 2004, stated that the Western Isles had the highest level of fuel poverty across all of Scotland, with 34% of households spending more than 10% of their household income on fuel costs while the Scottish average was 14% (Scottish Executive 2004b).

The economy is distorted to some degree by both a higher than average level of seasonal and part-time work and a higher proportion of public sector employment (Hall Aitken 2007). In May 2008, the unemployment rate quoted by the Office of National Statistics in the Western Isles was 2.1%, the lowest since records began (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar 2008b). This has fallen from a high of 9.3% in 1996, to a low of 2.1% in May 2008. In Scotland overall, the rate in May 2008 was 2.3%. Although better than the national average, the trend in the Western Isles is erratic with temporary, casual employment being common.

An examination of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2006 (Scottish Executive 2006a) showed that in 2005 neither the Western Isles, Orkney nor Shetland had data zones within the worst 15% of deprived areas. It was data zones within the urban areas of Scotland that exhibited concentrations of deprivation within the 15% category, notably Glasgow (48%), followed by Inverclyde (38%), Dundee (30%), West Dunbartonshire (28%), Clackmannanshire

(23%) and North Lanarkshire (20%). However, the data demonstrated that within the three main island areas the Western Isles had the highest percentage (14.3%) of total population who are income-deprived in comparison with Shetland (8.8%) and Orkney (7.8%). Further elements of deprivation are outlined in a later section of this chapter, where the nature of the Cearn housing area becomes the primary focus.

In summarising this section, it is apparent that the Western Isles faces many challenges relating to population decline, demographic balance, in-migration, and movement into the more urban locations. Income levels are relatively low and employment can be erratic, with a larger proportion of public sector positions than in most parts of the country. Distances are great for inter-island travel and travel to the mainland is costly both in terms of time and expense. Yet, the Western Isles has its attractions, outlined albeit subjectively in the Single Outcome Agreement, 2008-2011 signed off by the Scottish Government. For example:

“Low crime rates and a high standard of public services infrastructure make the area an attractive place to live and work. The islands have a strong cultural identity, which is expressed through the Gaelic language, a dynamic creative industries sector and traditional values.”

(Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, 2008c: unpagged)

Similarly, in a view that relates to the nature of the landscape:

“The Outer Hebrides are an isolated peaceful and unspoilt chain of islands, with a wide variety of interesting species and habitats and beautiful landscapes in a relatively compact area. The environment is recognised internationally as being of global importance.”

(Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, 2008c: unpagged)

6.3 The Cearn: a Stornoway housing scheme

The next section examines the Cearn, its location, history and physical layout before moving on to discuss its demographics and socio-economic

characteristics. These data have been compiled in order to illustrate those features of urbanity and multiple deprivation apparent within this scheme. Analysis of this data presented a stark contrast with the regional data presented in the previous section, data that was associated with rurality, sparseness of population and wide-open spaces.

The only town of any size in the Western Isles is Stornoway (Steornabhagh) with approximately 5,600 persons. Almost 30% of the total population of the Western Isles, some 8,000 people, live within the town or within a 3-mile radius of the town centre and 11,600 people, almost 44% of the total Western Isles population, reside within a 12-mile radius of the town. The Cearns is a public housing scheme located in northwest Stornoway, 1.5km (1 mile) from the town centre, as seen in figure 16.



Figure 16: Map of Stornoway showing the position of the Cearns Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (2009a)
(Ordnance Survey licence number: MSA 10000229965)

The Cearns, historically speaking, began its development in the 1960s. Ross and Cromarty County Council, the administrative authority for the Isle of Lewis until 1974 proposed to provide land in the north west of Stornoway for the construction of approximately 620 new dwellings to cater for the estimated population increase as well as being replacements for properties in poor condition. Some houses were to be privately owned and others for rental (County of Ross and Cromarty 1968). Sites were chosen because of easy access to the town, with airport and services available; also the land in that location was

stable having only a shallow layer of peat. The development was to be jointly administered by the county council and Stornoway Burgh Council, with the Cearnas council housing scheme being one plank in the overall development, the scheme being built west of the A857, the main road that runs to the northwest of Lewis. The Cearnas was built in phases starting in mid-1970s with the building of 193 units, with a further 26 units in the 1980s, giving a total stock at the time of writing, of 223. A further 20 units were built for rental east of the A857 and, whilst separated from the major development, are seen by residents as being part of the Cearnas. The layout of the courts has been shown in Figure 17.



Figure 17: Map showing the layout of the courts, or cearn (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar 2009b)

The Western Isles hospital is at the bottom right with the Cearn located above it and across Macaulay Road. The private housing below the scheme can be clearly seen, with widely spaced housing and extensive gardens.

A detailed map of the Cearn has been enclosed at the back of the thesis.

The units vary in size, each grouping of houses, each Cearn, having a mixture of 2, 3 and 4-bedroomed units, with a block construction and grey rendered finish. Most are terraced houses, some are semi-detached and one Cearn, Cearn Tharasaigh is composed of 2-bedroomed, 2-storey flats. There are 12 Cearn,

each being composed of between 4 and 20 units grouped around its own central open grassed area. The Cearnns were named after Hebridean islands, and street names are in Gaelic as well as English, reflecting local authority bilingual policy. Table 19 shows the number of units within each Cearn and the year of building, running from west to east.

Name of Cearn	Number of units	Year of construction
Cearn Shiaraim	20	1978
Cearn Chilleagraidh	15	1979
Cearn Shulasgeir	20	1979
Cearn Sheileidh	11	1978-1979
Cearn Tharasaidh	24	1982
Cearn Easaidh	16	1979
Cearn Phabaidh	24	1975-1976
Cearn Bhoraraidh	16	1978
Cearnan Hiort	13	1975
Cearn Ronaidh	16	1977
Cearn Fhlodaidh	23	1977 and 1981
Cearn Shodaidh	21	1975
Grant Square	15	1982
Braes Road	4	1987
Murdoch Place	21	1987
Napierhill	21	1982

Table 19: The number of units (flats or houses), within each Cearn and year of construction (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar 2004)

The scheme has small general stores, a hairdressing salon, a large community centre, a tìghe ceilidh (a small meeting room with kitchen and toilets) and an office that houses the Cearnns Community Development Project, an initiative established and funded through NHS Western Isles and now funded mainly through the Big Lottery, although some funding comes from other sources.

Figures 18 to 23 show the Cearnns, with its courts and green space.



Figure 18: Cearn Fhlodaidh showing the arrangement of houses around a square



Figure 19: Cearn Tharasaigh showing the grey roughcast buildings



Figure 20: Cearn Sheileidh with its pedestrian walkway to Cearn Tharasaidh



Figure 21: The Cearns Community Development Project office and adjoining shop

The scheme has an urban ambience yet, as this photo shows, has many glimpses of the nearby countryside as well as having for its size, a good range of facilities.

In each court the houses are closely packed around a central open grassed area and figures 22 and 23 show the density of housing



Figure 22: Cearn Bhoraraidh with houses and central green space



Figure 23: Cearn Easaidh, a very compact development

The next subsection focuses on the demographics and socio-economic features of the Cearn, using the appropriate Census Output Areas (COA) from the 2001 census. Each Census Output Area represents data gained from between 20 and 50 residential households and Scotland has a total of 42,604 Census Output Areas. The information presented in this subsection relates to the five relevant COAs and is based, unless stated otherwise, on information gained from the 2001 census. Data sourced from the Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics using data zones and information from the mid-2006 population estimates are also presented in this section. It was felt by the author that COA offered a ‘better fit’ of information than data zones, as data zone population estimates are aggregations that have been compiled by combining COAs; also the Cearn area is divided between three larger data zone areas, each extending into adjoining private housing with markedly different socio-economic profiles. Table 20 relates COAs and data zones to both postcode sectors and Cearn addresses and has been compiled from the thematic maps of the 2001 census (General Register Office for Scotland 2003a) and relevant datasets from the Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics (Scottish Government 2007b).

Name of Cearn	Eilean Siar postcodes	Census Output Areas	Data zone
Shiaraim Includes adjoining housing, outwith the scheme	HS1 2TY, HS1 2TZ, HS1 2UA, HS1 2UB, HS1 2UH	60RJ000156	SO1002363
Chilleagraidh, Shulasgeir, Sheileidh	HS1 2UJ, HS1 2YL, HS1 2YN, HS1 2YW	60RJ000155	SO1002364
Bhoraraidh, Easaidh	HS1 2YG, HS1 2YJ	60RJ000135	SO1002364
Shodaidh, Phabaidh, Tharasaidh, Hiort	HS1 2YD, HS1 2YE, HS1 2YF, HS1 2YP	60RJ000134	SO1002364
Fhlodaidh, Ronaidh, Napierhill, Grant Sq, Murdoch Place, Braes Rd	HS1 2TT, HS1 2YH, HS1 2YS.	60RJ000133	SO1002361

Table 20: The relationship between address, postcode, Census Output Area and data zone

Cearn Shiaraim shares both a postcode address and a Census Output Area designation with adjoining private housing. It was decided to keep this Cearn included in this study whilst bearing in mind that data that uses this COA will include data that might legitimately be described as being outwith the study area.

The Cearns area population in 2001 was 666, accounting for 2.5% of the overall Western Isles population of 26,502. Less than 7% of Cearns residents was aged 65 or over, compared with almost 20% of the Western Isles population as a whole. Conversely almost one third, 31%, are aged 20 or under, compared with around one fifth, 23%, of the Western Isles total population. The Cearns has a larger proportion of lone parent families than the Western Isles as a whole, as shown in table 21.

Census Output Areas	% lone parent households with dependent children
60RJ000156	8.33
60RJ000155	11.48
60RJ000135	25.81
60RJ000134	13.75
60RJ000133	10.87
Eilean Siar, total	4.45
Scotland	6.90

Table 21: The proportion of lone parent households with dependent children, Cearns Census Output Areas, 2001 (General Register Office for Scotland 2003a)

Table 22 shows the population of the Cearns and the total population of the Western Isles by age band.

	Total	0-15	16-19	20-34	35-49	50-59	60-64	65-74	75+
Cearns residents	666	164	42	167	143	85	22	32	11
Cearns %		24.6	6.3	25.0	21.5	12.8	3.3	4.8	1.7
Western Isles residents	26,502	5,003	1,094	4,261	5,566	3,700	1,633	2,695	2,550
Western Isles %		18.8	4.1	16.1	21.0	14.0	6.2	10.2	9.6

Table 22: The population of the Cearns and the total population of the Western Isles, by age band, census 2001 (General Register Office for Scotland 2003a)

In terms of population density, the Cearns is densely populated, especially when taken in the context of the low levels found in other parts of the Western Isles. A relevant comparison in terms of both the scale of a housing development and a geographical location in the north of Scotland is offered by an examination of the Merkinch area of Inverness. Table 23 shows the population density of the Cearns area compared with the Western Isles, Inverness (Merkinch) and Scotland.

	Cearns	Western Isles	Inverness postcodes (See below)	Scotland
Area (hectares)	13.9	307,094	13.84	7,792,452
Population	666	26,502	587	5,062,011
Density (persons/hectare)	47.9	0.1	42.4	0.6

Table 23: Population densities, as persons per hectare, in the Cearns, Western Isles, Inverness (Merkinch) and Scotland, cited by NHS Western Isles (2004) and compiled using data from the census 2001 (General Register Office for Scotland 2003a)

The postcodes chosen were: IV3 8LG, IV3 8RU, IV3 8NJ, IV3 8LH, IV3 8NQ and IV3 8PS.

Car ownership/access levels tend to be high in rural areas, yet access to a car for Cearns households where at least one person works or studies was low, as shown in table 24.

	Cearns	Western Isles	Cearns %	Western Isles %
No car/van	86	1,232	41.7	16.5
1 car/van	91	3,755	44.2	50.2
2 or more cars/vans	29	2,486	14.1	33.3

Table 24: Car ownership/access levels in the Cearns and Western Isles population areas, census 2001 (General Register Office for Scotland 2003a)

There was a considerable difference in car ownership/access levels when the Cearns levels were compared with those in the wider Western Isles. It is relevant to observe that the Cearns area is close to the town of Stornoway with its full range of services and also the area has a regular bus service and, as a result, access to a car may be viewed to be less essential than would be the case in a housing scheme in a rural location.

The Cearn's exhibits a range of distinctive socio-economic characteristics that form a contrast with the Western Isles population as a whole. More residents were economically active when compared with the Western Isles population as a whole, and this is related to the age profile of the area with its greater than expected proportion of working age adults. The nature of the age profile also helped to explain the fact that, when compared to the Western Isles population as a whole, more are unemployed and fewer are retired or self-employed. Table 25 sets out levels of economic activity both within the Cearn's and the Western Isles.

	Cearn's	Western Isles	Cearn's, %	Western Isles %
Population	666	26,502	100	100
Economically active:	335	12,500	50.3	47.2
• Employee, part-time	72	2,471	10.8	9.3
• Employee, full-time	192	6,898	28.8	26.0
• Self-employed	22	1,829	3.3	6.9
• Unemployed	43	956	6.5	3.6
• Full-time student	6	346	0.9	1.3
Economically inactive:	156	6,449	23.4	24.3
• Retired	33	2,941	5.0	11.1
• Student	27	594	4.1	2.2
• Looking after home/family	33	1,033	5.0	3.9
• Permanently sick/disabled	37	1,147	5.6	4.3
• Other	26	734	3.9	2.8
Not aged 16-74	175	7,553	26.3	28.5

Table 25: Economic activity in the Cearn's and the Western Isles, by activity category, cited by NHS Western Isles 2004, and compiled using data from the census 2001 (General Register Office for Scotland 2003a)

Use of Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics provided more recent economic activity data: the four central Cearn, including Cearn Tharasaigh, Cearn Bhoraraidh, Cearn Easaigh and Cearn Phabaidh, with 10 postcodes comprising part of data zone SO1002364 contained the most economically inactive residents within the scheme. The remaining Cearn, representing the eastern and western sides of the housing area, appeared less deprived, and these areas are located in two other data zones which contained a larger proportion of semi-detached privately owned housing that, whilst adjoining the scheme, is not a part of it. Table 26 shows the variation across data zones of a range of income and employment activity criteria, highlighting the most disadvantaged data zone.

Data zone					
	SO 1002364	SO 1002361	SO 1002363	Eilean Siar	Scotland
% of total population who are income deprived: 2005	15.5	11.3	10.3	14.3	13.9
% of working age population who are employment deprived: 2005	16.7	11.8	10.1	11.9	12.9
% of population aged 60 and over claiming guaranteed pension credits: 2005Q04	23.4	19.8	18.4	29.9	19.8
% of population aged 20-24 in workless client group: 2005Q03	16.1	0	11.1	9.7	13.1
% of population aged 25-49 in workless client group: 2005Q03	17.4	10.2	10.5	10.8	14.2
Total Income Support Claimants: 2007Q04	45	20	25	670	214,140

Table 26: Income and employment deprivation criteria in the data zones that include the Cearn (Scottish Government 2007b)

The above table is illustrative of the relative income and employment deprivation levels within parts of the Cearn. Income deprivation referred to the

percentage of the working population who were in receipt of means-tested benefits and Employment deprivation identified those percentages that were on the Unemployment claimant count, or were in receipt of Incapacity Benefit or a similar allowance. Some data zones, for example SO1002361 and SO1002363 included adjoining housing areas and differences were apparent. The nature of the housing stock, as reflected by Council Tax banding and type of tenure is illustrated in Table 27.

Data zone					
	SO 1002364	SO 1002361	SO 1002363	Eilean Siar	Scotland
Total number of households, 2001	322	249	387	11,275	2,192,246
% households owned, 2001	34.78	61.45	74.94	71.88	62.59
% households social rented, 2001	60.25	23.69	11.63	18.98	29.41
% dwellings in Council Tax band A, 2007	68.90	17.10	20.04	34.73	23.09
% dwellings in Council Tax bands A to C, 2007	78.35	74.72	63.19	80.92	62.79
% dwellings in Council Tax bands, F to H, 2007	1.83	3.35	2.25	1.24	11.82
House sales, median price: 2007	£55,725	£92,000	£103,250	£80,000	£118,000

Table 27: Housing stock in the Cearns data zones: tenure and Council Tax banding (Scottish Government 2007b)

Data zone SO1002364, representing individuals living in the central part of the scheme, showed the highest proportion of social renting, lowest house sale value, largest proportion on Council Tax band A, and highest levels of income deprivation and unemployment. Furthermore, in terms of educational attainment levels, the Cearns has a lower percentage of people with degrees but a higher percentage of people with qualifications at a lower level, for example GSVQ/SVQ vocational qualifications that can be gained in the workplace or at Lews Castle College (General Register Office for Scotland 2003a).

The Cearn is the most disadvantaged housing area within the Western Isles, economically and in terms of employment and educational qualifications. In the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2003, based on local authority electoral wards (where the most deprived ward in Scotland was scored as 1 and the most affluent at 1,222), the range of scores across the Western Isles wards fell between 179 and 768, reflecting the relatively poor socio-economic status of the area in general. The construction of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), 2003, comprised a range of indicators reflecting domains of deprivation and a score for each was compiled, known as a Domain Index. The Domain Indices were combined to give an overall SIMD score for the electoral ward area. The Cearn was, at that time, located within the Coulegrein Ward which was the ward with the lowest overall SIMD score. Table 28 shows the values of each Domain Index for the Coulegrein ward.

Domain of Deprivation	Rank of Domain Index (ranked out of 1,222)
Income	141
Employment	172
Education	137
Health	376
Geographical access to services	671
Overall SIMD score	179

Table 28: Deprivation Domain and Rank of Domain Indices, Coulegrein Ward (Scottish Executive 2004a)

Of the 122 wards in the most deprived 10% of wards in Scotland, none was in the Western Isles but, within the Western Isles, the area represented by the Coulegrein ward was the most deprived (Scottish Executive 2004a). To summarise, it might be concluded that on the data from the Scottish Index of Deprivation, 2003, the Cearn represented the most deprived area within a wider deprived island area, whose level of deprivation was less than that evident within the large urban areas of Scotland. It is significant that the domains of Income, Employment and Education contributed particularly to the low ranking position, whereas Geographical Access to Services and Health domains scored more highly, the former being related to the closeness of the Cearn to facilities in Stornoway. Later Indices of Multiple Deprivation compiled in 2006 (Scottish

Executive 2006a) using 6,505 data zones aggregated from Census Output Areas, showed that the share of national data zones in the most deprived 5%, 10% or 15% included none from the Western Isles. The lack of data zones in the most 15% of deprived data zones, based on the overall SIMD, does not, however, mean that there is no deprivation within the Western Isles local authority area - but that where it exists it is not concentrated in small areas and the ecological effect can be seen in Table 29 where the ranking of the Cearnas area data zones has been compiled, using 2006 data.

Data zones			
	SO1002364	SO1002361	SO1002363
Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation Rank: 2006	1,752	3,044	3,081

Table 29: Ranking of Cearnas area data zones; taken from the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2006 (Scottish Executive 2006a)

The 6,505 data zones were ranked by degree of deprivation, with 1 being the most deprived. In the above table it is apparent that data zone SO1002364, containing the majority of postcode numbers, showed the greatest level of deprivation. The other data zones contain a mixture of housing, some within the Cearnas area and others, mostly semi-detached private dwellings, that adjoin the scheme, make the drawing of deprivation conclusions more problematic.

This section has discussed the Cearnas using data from the 2001 census and other sources and comparisons with regional data have been highlighted. The contrast between urban Cearnas-based data and rural regional data is clear, especially around housing layout, population density and socio-economic profile.

The next section moves on to look at health-related data from a number of sources: public health data, census information and material from small-scale evaluations.

6.4 Health and wellbeing profiles: the Western Isles and the Cearnas

The data presented in this section illustrates features of the health and wellbeing of the population of the Western Isles and was taken from the Western Isles Community Health Partnership (CHP) area profile, 2008 (Scottish Public Health Observatory 2008), and this is followed by a discussion of the health status of the residents within the Cearnas area, compiled from census and other sources. It needs to be borne in mind that neighbourhoods are often defined using criteria developed for administrative purposes and that small area statistics do not necessarily overlap with the neighbourhood boundaries as perceived by the residents themselves (Siegrist and Marmot 2006).

Male life expectancy, compiled by using a five-year average annual measure, was 72 years and was worse than expected (Scottish average was 73.9 years) whereas female life expectancy was not significantly different at 79.9 years (Scottish average was 79.1). Relatively speaking, both levels approximated to the average, especially as within many urban areas of central Scotland life expectancy levels were significantly worse. For example in East Glasgow men's life expectancy, at 68 years, was five years less than the Scottish average and women's life expectancy at 76 years, was three years less (Glasgow Centre for Population Health 2008). In general, all-cause mortality (all ages) and mortality rates from heart disease, cancer and stroke (under 75 years) were not significantly different to the Scottish average (Scottish Public Health Observatory 2008). For only two clinical situations, emergency admission of patients with heart disease and road traffic accident casualties, were the proportion of the population hospitalised significantly worse (higher) than the Scottish average. For road traffic accident casualties the area ranked fifth worst of all 40 CHP areas, and for coronary heart disease patients it ranked third worst.

Other areas of mortality and morbidity where the Western Isles was worse than the Scottish average revolved around use of alcohol. There have been 59 alcohol related deaths in the last five years, a death rate significantly worse than the Scottish average. This number represents a five-year average between 2002 and

2006 reflecting an age-sex standardised rate of 38 deaths per 100,000, whereas the Scottish average is 27.4 per 100,000. Similarly, the proportion of the population hospitalised for alcohol related and attributable causes was the second highest of any CHP at 1,449.5 per 100,000, this being a three-year averaged age-sex standardised rate per 100,000 population taken over the period 1997-99 to 2004-06 (Scottish average was 859.7 per 100,000). The average number hospitalised per year for alcohol-related causes was 1,229, over a three-year time period. NHS Western Isles has recently completed an epidemiological review of routine data for trends in alcohol-related mortality and morbidity (NHS Western Isles 2008). It appears that alcohol-related hospitalisations are consistently above the Scottish rate (see table 31), both for directly alcohol-related conditions and for alcohol-attributable conditions, for example, CHD where alcohol forms a causal factor. Alcohol hospitalisation figures in the Western Isles appeared to arise disproportionately from mental and behavioural disorders with alcohol dependence accounting for the largest proportion at 32% of all alcohol-related admissions (11% in Scotland). In A&E, 50% of all alcohol-related activity resulted in a hospital admission. The largest concentration of alcohol hospitalisations was amongst older men, 45-49 and 65-69, with rates amongst women increasing faster than males in recent years. In terms of geographical variation, almost all areas were above the national average. Multiple admissions of patients with alcohol-related conditions was a significant factor, but multiple admissions, as a proportion of the total alcohol-related admissions, was comparable with that occurring nationally. Alcohol is perceived as an 'island problem', and was often referred to by residents. In a close-knit area, residents are aware of the behaviour of their neighbours and relatives with drinking patterns being both obvious at the level of street behaviour, and secretive within the home.

Some health-related data presented a brighter picture. Adult smoking levels, at 25.7%, were lower than the Scottish average of 27.3%, and hospitalisation for drug-related conditions was low. The incidence of cancer was not significantly different from Scotland as a whole, and the area was not significantly different from the Scottish average for all mental health and function indicators. The teenage pregnancy numbers were low at 24 births over a three-year period, a

crude rate per 1000 of 15.6 (Scottish average was 41.0). Similarly, the percentage of mothers smoking during pregnancy was significantly better than average (16.0%, compared with 24.3%) and childhood home accidents were lower than average. Expected years of life in good health, derived from a five-year average annual measure, were 66.7 for males and 73.4 for females (Scotland 66.3 and 70.2 respectively).

Data for sub-areas within the Community Health Partnership area are currently unavailable (Scottish Public Health Observatory 2008), but a limited amount of information was available at Census Output Area (COA), or data zone level. In common with demographic and socio-economic data, health data, when gathered at data zone level, followed a similar pattern of distribution within the Cearnas area. For example, data on child and maternal health and addictive behaviours revealed a greater level of morbidity and of negative health-related behaviours in data zone SO1002364, than in SO1002361 or SO1002363, and these two data zones contained data often worse than the Eilean Siar average. Table 30 shows a health profile for the three data zones, together with the averages for Eilean Siar and Scotland, taken from the Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics.

Data zones					
	SO 1002364	SO 1002361	SO 1002363	Eilean Siar	Scotland
Maternal and Child Health: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low weight live singleton birth rate per 1000 live singleton births: 2003-2005 • % of children breastfeeding at the 6 to 8 week review: 2007 • Percentage of women smoking at booking: 2003-2005 	55.56	0	33.33	23.40	25.11
	0	55.56	50.00	38.04	36.03
	40.00	16.7	18.8	15.4	23.2
Substance Use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospital admissions for alcohol misuse, rate per 100,000 population: 2001-2004 • Hospital admissions for drugs misuse, rate per 100,000 population: 2001-2004 	4,145.24	1,345.15	1,463.02	1,654.13	722.66
	64.27	43.33	54.19	38.09	127.46

Table 30: Selected maternal and child health and substance misuse data by data zone (Scottish Government 2007b)

Caution must be exercised when attempting to draw conclusions from data arising from small population areas, yet the evidence presented from both socio-economic and health-related data suggests that the Cearns demonstrates a level of disadvantage in both of these domains, when compared with the Eilean Siar and Scottish averages and that alcohol morbidity issues are highly significant.

6.5 Conclusion

The chapter has demonstrated that the Cearns has a range of demographic, socio-economic and health-related characteristics that are reminiscent of a

mainland Scottish urban housing area; yet it is located within a rural area having one of the lowest population density levels in the country, whose residents overall had better health status and who tended to be materially better off.

However, the extent and severity of deprivation, morbidity and mortality were less than those found in a large built-up urban area. Admittedly, income levels were low, unemployment levels were high, there were high levels of alcohol consumption and there were some problems with litter and noise, yet crime levels were extremely low. These issues, amongst others, were explored as a second component of stage 1 of the research process, using qualitative methodology. The qualitative element of stage 1 was viewed as exploratory, but informed by some of the literature presented in chapter 2 with many of the issues above being formulated in the mind of the author during the routine data collection stage. Stage 1 has broad boundaries and pre-figured the author's interest in the effects of rurality and religion on health and wellbeing and as stage 1 continued, through interviews with residents, to explore relevant aspects of the built and social environment a number of themes began to emerge for further investigation in stage 2. The qualitative data relating to stage 1 are presented in the next chapter of the thesis.

CHAPTER 7: THE CEARNS: STARTING TO EXPLORE THE RESIDENTS' VIEWS OF THEIR HEALTH, BUILT AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

7.1 Introduction

The first part of stage 1 of the research process used routine data to describe a picture consistent with urban deprivation in the scheme. Stage 1 now moves on to complement these data by an exploration of residents' understandings of health and wellbeing and their views of local health service provision. The chapter also presents findings that relate to the Cearnas as a place to live, including changes over time and anticipates changes in the future; both in terms of its physical environment and its social infrastructure. These views were looked at from the perspective of respondents' length of tenure in the scheme, their age, their gender and their place of birth and were sought as a means of identifying themes worthy of more in-depth investigation. The chapter highlights dominant themes in the narratives of respondents in relation to rurality and religion as influences on social networks and community cohesion. These are summarised briefly and explored in more detail in later chapters.

The final section of the chapter presents respondents' assessment of the Cearnas demonstrating the ways in which it is perceived by them to differ from mainland urban housing areas, in terms of safety, crime, reputation, built environment and social infrastructure.

7.2 Starting to explore the residents' perceptions of health and wellbeing

The initial exploration sought to gain an understanding of people's commonsense understandings of good health and illness and ways in which these understandings were rooted in everyday experience and in social relations. It used a theoretical framework which articulated the notions of health as a commodity, health as an absence of illness, health as physical and mental fitness

and health as a basis for personal potential (Aggleton 1990). Residents' interpretations of the concepts within this framework were consistent across gender and age and respondents made a range of comments, for example 'leading a happy, healthy, active life' (10F.25years old) or 'feeling good about yourself and a positive attitude' (8F.35years old).

Many respondents related health to personal finance and feelings of safety, citing good health as a resource upon which to draw in day-to-day life, respondents using such phrases as 'able to carry out as near a normal life as possible and sufficient funds to do so' (1F.50years old), in some cases making a link with good housing, for example, 'to be fed properly, clothed decently and have a sound roof over your head' (2F.60years old). Other responses related to lifestyle, such as 'keeping fit', 'eating well' or 'not smoking and drinking' and people were aware of the behaviours necessary to maintain good health, as one young resident commented 'making sure all my family eat well, telling my children the risks of smoking, drinking and taking drugs' (10F.25years old).

For most people being healthy meant being able to get on with day-to-day living, with health and happiness being deemed inseparable. Good health implied for many an absence of acute illness and, if disabilities or chronic conditions were in evidence, having a degree of independence underpinned by stoicism and fortitude. The findings showed little that was new in terms of lay perspectives that related to the meaning of the term 'health' and the views of residents on the concept mirrored those described by other researchers, for example Blaxter (1990), or in relation to the associated concept of wellbeing by Carlisle and Hanlon (2008).

One health-related issue was clearly important to residents of the Cearnas, mirroring wider concern within other Western Isles communities - that of alcohol abuse. The inter-relationship between alcohol consumption and island culture was referred to in terms of widespread acceptance, and as a displacement activity in an area where there are few leisure opportunities:

"I think it's throughout the island.....there's always been a social acceptance of alcohol and a sort of feeling sorry for the alcoholic. It's

because we know them and so much about them and I don't think they are excluded....like the 'dawn patrol' in town [men queueing outside the supermarket before opening to buy alcohol]...they are just regarded as the characters of the town."

(1F.50years old)

"In Stornoway there's a kind of binge drinking culture, there's not much else for young people to do. I mean, Sundays for example, all that's open is the pub or the church."

(7F.35years old)

There was a perception that levels of alcohol consumption were high, with occasional alcohol-related disturbances being reported. Within the scheme, and Lewis in general, the effects of alcohol consumption were clearly visible and public displays of drunkenness were tolerated:

"About one-third of the people coming into the shop have a problem with alcohol."

(4F.45years old)

"The other side of me, X, he works offshore.....he's onshore now and he's on the drink. His house and mine are stuck together and every night it's music blaring, shouting and swearing. Further down the scheme there's more boozers."

(3F.70years old)

The relative affordability of alcohol was mentioned, within the context of a perceived heavy drinking culture:

"Alcohol was always on the island for me growing up, but nothing to the extent it is today. People have more money, which they didn't have then...they couldn't really afford it, although for some it was a pastime."

(4F.45years old)

Over-consumption of alcohol was given high priority as a major public health concern, with public perception echoing the routine data on hospital alcohol-related admissions described in chapter 6.

Research undertaken by Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Valentine *et al.* 2007) on drinking patterns suggested that drinking cultures are not uniform across the country and in some rural areas there may be a culture of surveillance and

judgement which limits public displays of drunkenness, especially amongst the young. However, whilst a level of judgement and surveillance was in evidence in relation to alcohol consumption in Western Isles communities, there was a widespread level of acceptance. Drinking cultures are embedded within a wider historical, socio-economic and cultural context, one that is related historically to men's physical, co-operative and socially interactive work on the land as well as socially in terms of the lack of alternative leisure opportunities.

Whilst alcohol-related issues are visible and are routinely discussed, the same could not be said for issues around mental health, especially depression. Rural communities often show fortitude and, due to problems of access to specialist services, rely on a culture of self-help (Heenan 2006) and respondents in the Cearnas commented on depression in terms of embarrassment and fortitude:

“I would say people up here are more embarrassed about depression [than alcohol abuse]. It's the silent attitude of you always have to be on the go and you always have to be above it.... 'it's a nonsense that, it's in your head' [being a common view]. There's a stigma still....although it's an illness.”

(2F.60years old)

Traditional rural lifestyles are heavily structured by religion and family, with an 'over-dependency' on routine and discipline that makes it particularly hard for Hebridean women to cope with deaths or imminent deaths of loved ones (Prudo *et al.* 1981). Such events are highly disruptive to the lives and roles of the womenfolk, leaving them especially vulnerable to the onset of depressive illnesses and such a relationship between fortitude, embarrassment, coping and the Hebridean rural way of life may be posited to exist within the Cearnas.

Illegal drugs, as a health-related issue were rarely mentioned by respondents. When asked, residents perceived that illegal drugs 'were available' on the Cearnas, yet had no first-hand knowledge of prevalence at neighbourhood level, nor did they volunteer to know any individual drug users. Respondents' understanding of drugs issues centred on hearsay and rumour, as opposed to either direct contact through family drug use or personal experience of witnessing drug transactions at street level. The Cearnas makes a contrast in this

respect with other urban areas where knowledge about drug use was gained at first hand through family use and transactions were often highly visible (Forrest and Kearns 1999; Lupton 2003).

7.3 The built and outdoor environment

Urban areas are divided into neighbourhoods which have different qualities and Stornoway with its range of housing areas is no exception. The location of residents within housing areas is related to broader social and economic conditions that result in a degree of differentiation within the urban space, operating both at the town or city level and within any particular scheme. Spatial segregation implies that different social or cultural groups are separated in space and have settled in different parts of the town or city and, as the routine data in chapter 6 demonstrated, this analysis is applicable both at regional level within the Western Isles and at area level within the Cearns, where some differentiation between parts of the scheme occurred. Some aspects of segregation are linked to both the local provision of housing stock and the administration of the local authority housing allocation policy, whereby vacant dwellings become allocated to applicants, for example lone parents, resulting in a high concentration of specific needs within a small area.

Sometimes this differentiation of urban space can be problematic and conditions become unacceptable in certain parts of the town or city (Andersen 2003) and problem areas - called slums, deprived areas or areas of urban decay - emerge. The neighbourhoods in question are characterised by widespread physical deterioration and lack of investment in buildings and services, together with a high concentration of visible and invisible social problems amongst residents. The Cearns demonstrated spatial separation from other Stornoway housing areas, and a degree of internal differentiation, with its top (western), middle and bottom (eastern) courts, yet it did not show at any level characteristics of a slum area, nor one where physical decay was in evidence. The opposite perspective prevailed with residents volunteering positive views when asked about their home area, even though in terms of routine data the area can have

the label 'deprived' applied to it. Respondents did not see the Cearns as a caricature of a 'sink estate', nor was it seen as suburban, as defined by Bell and Newby (1974), or as a community comprising a repetitive style of house building in which residents lived for often only short periods of time.

Respondents were asked how they perceived their local area, starting with general questions about life in the scheme followed by specific questions about housing quality and layout, crime and safety and the wider Cearns outdoor environment. The presentation of the residents' views has been informed by the framework devised by Ellaway, Macintyre and Kearns (2001); perceptions of the built environment being related to duration of residency, gender and place of birth. However, in the convenience sample generated for this stage one research more women were interviewed than men, in a proportion of 4:1 and the majority of respondents were born locally.

The views of well-established tenants are outlined first, followed by comments from those holding more recent tenancies. When asked to outline their overall perception of the Cearns over recent years, well-established residents (those with tenancies of at least 10 years' duration) regardless of gender, consistently referred to the Cearns of the late 1970s and 1980s in a negative way; commenting repeatedly about concrete, featureless housing, courts with little open space and high fencing. Frequent use of the term 'Colditz' was made, because of the general appearance and layout of the scheme plus its high level of housing density. For example, one respondent said:

"It got called Colditz because of the fence. It was a 10 foot fence that surrounded the area; I remember that it was horrible."
(1F.50years old)

Reference was made to the early stigma associated with the possession of a Cearns address, with some residents feeling that there was still a perception of stigma associated with the area by friends and others that lived elsewhere:

"I was a teacher at X school and [heard] some very derogatory remarks about the children living in the Cearns, which I took offence

at. You know they just used the Cearns as just some bad wordwhen the pupils discovered that I came from the Cearns I ended up with the same abuse.”

(12F.60years old)

“What really annoys me about the Cearns is not the Cearns; it’s the people outwith the Cearns, this attitude to the Cearns. When we moved here [husband’s] family weren’t too happy about it, they wanted us to move to a different area.....they never liked coming here...it’s a kind of snobbishness. No, I don’t think it’s changed. I think people still look down on the Cearns.”

(7F.35years old)

Well-established residents of different ages went on to remark that physical improvements and improvements in service provision had enhanced the area:

“There’s nothing wrong in the area, it’s good. It’s been upgraded a lot in 20 years. We’ve got new street lighting and even inside the courts....that’s been done up.... It’s got a good bus service, it’s near to town and you can walk if it’s a lovely day.”

(3F.70years old)

Respondents felt a degree of attachment to the area, in spite of earlier problems with labelling or physical layout. A sense of loyalty to the scheme had evolved and a sense of attachment to the area was apparent from both tenants with long term roots in the area and those holding more recent tenancies. Evidence of positive attachment to an area by older tenants has been discussed by several researchers, for example Cattell (2004), and the views of older residents in the Cearns chimed with such findings, with an important qualification that many younger residents with shorter tenancies held similar views.

Different groups coexist happily in the area where the design and layout of the houses has encouraged a degree of neighbourly interaction, as houses within a Cearn, or court, overlook each other. In the wider context residents of the scheme, with its urban characteristics in terms of housing layout and density, rarely commented on the raft of many urban ‘problems’, as defined by such workers as Savage and his colleagues, for example congestion, vagrancy, street violence or pollution (Savage, Warde and Ward (2003). In these respects the

Cearns may be regarded as an atypical urban scheme, with perceptions of high levels of safety and low levels of crime:

“I’ve been round here for 22 years and it is a safe environment for kids and I like it... I wouldn’t move from here, I feel safe, this is the only place I’ll walk at night.”

(10F.25years old)

“In all the years I’ve lived here I’ve never had any trouble. The car used to sit out in the driveway and nobody ever touched it. Nobody ever bothered. I must say I’ve enjoyed my time here.”

(2F.60years old)

The high density of housing and the layout of the courts came in for comment in relation to the activities of some young people:

“The way the Cearns is built left itself open to a lot of mischief.....they’d disappear into a court and you could never find them. It’s like a maze. Instead of having straight streets you can jump from court to court. You would never find the children if they were up to mischief.”

(5M.55years old)

Long established residents had seen improvements to the housing stock, new windows, central heating and new roofs:

“Definitely new windows in all the houses, as well as central heating, so there is a programme of work going on.”

(2F.60years old)

Respondents in possession of recent tenancies were also well aware of the earlier labelling associated with the Cearns:

“....when we mention to people or they ask where you’re living and you say ‘the Cearns’, you can see by their reaction they are like ‘oh you live in the Cearns’, so it has stuck, the bad reputation has stuck.”

(10F.25years old)

A respondent with a recent tenancy (1.5yrs), stated:

“I didn’t ask specifically not to be put in the Cearns. I’ve been pleasantly surprised, you know. I kept myself to myself for the first year or so because I’d heard so many bad things about it.”

(9M.30years old)

These views resonated with findings from studies of other schemes which suggests that a negative image of an area results in labelling and stigma, attributed to aspects of housing design, layout of courts, and the presence of walls and fences (Hastings 2004). In addition, as Cole and Smith (1996) pointed out in their review of estate regeneration programmes, problem reputations also have a social dimension and that can be reinforced by high levels of household turnover and neighbourhood rivalries. The stigma that emanates from a housing area with a poor image is often proved to be an enduring and intractable problem (Hastings 2004) and this was evidenced in the Cearns where the former reputation was still referred to by respondents with both long-term and recent tenancies. Residents testified to the fact that the estate's earlier problem reputation did have an effect on their lives, socially and emotionally, if not economically. Such findings were in contrast to those of Dean and Hastings, where the tenacity of a problem reputation was found to have an economic impact leading to possible discrimination in the employment market (Dean and Hastings 2000). However, when asked, the majority of respondents commented that the area was shedding much of its earlier stigmatisation.

For those holding recent tenancies housing repairs could be problematic, a point not made by those holding longer tenancies presumably because earlier housing problems had been resolved:

“I was phoning for 16 months to get someone to look at the walls because there are cracks and holes from whoever was in the house before. Now it's changed to the Housing Association it's worse - it's hard to get someone to come out at all, no interest whatever, and the house is damp.”

(10F.25years old)

New tenants, in common with those holding longer tenancies, felt positive about the physical environment and the image of the area, yet expressed anxiety about consequences of the 'Buy to Let' movement if residents moved in with little command of English:

“Another big change is that those who are renting out their houses.....to people from overseas. They don't tend to speak fluent

English...I've tried going over to the house and saying 'hello'...but they don't or can't respond in very friendly terms."

(12F.60years old)

The residents felt overall that the quality of the built environment was good and had improved over recent years, confirming the view taken by Dalgard and Tambs (1997) that the physical environment can be assessed through perceptions of residents when asked to focus on the quality of their built environment. The physical appearance of the scheme was found to matter (Andersen, 2003) with both the visual quality, and type of building being of importance to respondents. Too many small dwellings reduce the attractiveness of an area, and comments relating to housing size, court layout and a feeling of being cramped were expressed.

Comment by both established and recent tenants concerning the use of open spaces was generally critical. The open spaces are planted with grass, regularly maintained, but many residents felt the Housing Association could be more imaginative in green space improvements. It was felt that creative use of public space was a positive feature indicating a degree of pride in the area. Several respondents would like to see more variety of planting and more maintenance around communal washing line areas:

"We would like flowers and tubs....you go to any other place and you see lovely flowers. We could do with a 'Welcome to the Cearns' in flowers at the entrance."

(3F.70years old)

"The washing lines are a problem. Ours is on grass, it's a bugbear in winter when it gets muddy. The ones across the road are on concrete."

(9M.30years old)

The role of the employed handyman was recognised, yet approval was qualified, as a reduction in the level of service has led to the accumulation of windblown litter and broken glass in some courts. During recent months the handyman has no longer been employed solely in the Cearns and the amount of incidental litter

and tenant-generated rubbish thrown from flats that is left uncollected has increased, to the concern of respondents.

This subsection has presented findings that relate perceptions of the built environment to length of tenure. Respondents holding long-term or short-term tenancies, irrespective of age or gender, shared an essentially positive view about their homes and the area, believing a sense of belonging to be apparent, attributable to some degree to the improvements in the built environment over recent years. In addition it was apparent that neighbourhood design was important in reinforcing a sense of belonging, facilitated by pedestrianisation and easy access to facilities including play parks, shops and public transport. In this respect the Cearns mirrored the 'traditional' or 'complete' neighbourhood, as described by Leyden (2003), in which pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use neighbourhoods enhance both a sense of belonging and levels of social capital because they allowed residents to interact, either intentionally or accidentally. Such neighbourhoods, Leyden believed, are to be found in older cities and older rural towns, and it is in the latter category that Stornoway could be positioned.

This section moves on to discuss perceptions of social functioning within the Cearns, including social cohesion and participation.

7.4 The close-knit nature of the community

Whether the Cearns is perceived as close-knit was examined firstly through the prism of tenure, age and gender of the respondents, and then whether they were born locally. Respondents perceived the community to be close-knit, having strengths and weaknesses with many well-established older female individuals in particular referring to of a sense of community, with residents looking out for one another:

"I find it quite a close-knit community. Now that can be a good thing and a bad thing. It can be good in that everyone knows your business....but it can be bad for the same reason....there is a sense of

community there, plus you have a cross-section of the island living there and I like that.”

(1F.50years old)

Younger female residents also felt the Cearns to be close-knit:

“We’ve got the shop and like I said everybody knows everybody else....you can always go next door for a cup of sugar. I wouldn’t move anywhere else....it’s so friendly everyone knows everyone.”

(11F.25years old)

Respondents from the western courts thought that their part of the Cearns was friendlier and more settled than other parts and a degree of social segregation was felt to be in evidence. The western part of the scheme (Shiaraih, Shulaisgeir and Chilleagraidh) comprised older, more settled residents with larger properties many of whom had bought their houses through the ‘Right to Buy’ initiative. The middle of the scheme (Tharasaidh, Sheilidh, Easaidh, Ronaidh and Bhoraraidh) and the Eastern area (Phabaidh, Hiort, Shodhaidh and Fhlodaidh) contained smaller housing units with a greater turnover of tenants. Increasing length of residency appeared to be associated with denser, more spatially constrained social networks (Laumann 1973), a finding mirrored by one respondent:

“It’s very friendly up here [the western side].....there is a big difference between top and bottom.”

(6F.40years old)

Residents of the western courts perceived themselves to be more settled, when compared with other parts of the scheme. However, some younger tenants in the middle and eastern areas disagreed, finding their close an attractive one in which to live, yet there did appear to be outbreaks of disorderly behaviour perceived to be exacerbated by friends coming into the scheme from elsewhere:

“Our court is very settled; we are in the middle, the settled area. The next court to us is Cearn Easaidh that gets a bit boisterous at weekends. The police are never far away from there.”

(11F.25years old)

At the time of writing around three-quarters of Cearns' residents were social renters and the remainder were home-owners, with a small private rented sector (Hebridean Housing Partnership 2009). Respondents from both social renting and owner occupying groups were in agreement when asked about the close-knit nature of the scheme, in contrast to mixed-housing tenure research in other areas that suggests that mixing is not good for social wellbeing (Graham *et al.* 2009). Graham and colleagues commented that the issue revolves around the proportion of social renters; the higher the proportion of renters the lower was the level of perceived social wellbeing, with an optimum social renting level of about 30%. In the Cearns, the level of renters is high, yet the area was felt to be close-knit *by respondents from both groups*, suggesting that other influences may be at work, for example commonality of place of birth and rural background of residents, or size of the scheme. These findings contrasted with those of Graham and colleagues that have looked at social wellbeing issues in larger urban schemes.

Place of birth was important and seemed to be related to the degree to which a resident settled, with the majority of respondents being either raised in the housing area as children or having moved in later from other parts of Stornoway or rural Lewis, with family, friends or acquaintances in the area. For some respondents born outwith the Western Isles, adjustment to aspects of life in the scheme could be difficult with evident feelings of fear and isolation. One resident of Cearn Easaidh, originally from England and having moved to Lewis with her partner, a local man, felt the area was an unattractive one in which to live:

“It’s the adults out at night shouting and yelling as loud as they can. I’ve had stones thrown at my car....it’s a nightmare, there is nothing you can do....I really hate it so much I want out of here.”

(8F.35years old)

The image of the area has improved, with local residents especially expressing a high level of satisfaction. Communities with an appealing physical environment and low tenant turnover tended to possess high levels of bonding social capital, where support networks and informal control mechanisms have evolved through relationships built up over time (Cropper 2002), and these aspects were in

evidence within the Cearn area, resulting in a feeling of being close-knit. By way of a contrast, low levels of bonding social capital were found in communities distinguished by high tenant turnover, an unappealing physical environment, a stigmatising image, high levels of social isolation and poor facilities (Cattell 2004); features that had little resonance with most residents within this area.

Perceptions of being a close-knit community, one in which trust and reciprocity underpin social networks and support, are typical of the *traditional* pattern of social infrastructure, as defined by Cattell (2004). The *traditional* pattern of local social networks reflected the Cearn traditional characteristics, with its socio-economic profile of low income, high unemployment and poor health. Using this typology, it has much in common with many older urban working-class areas, close-knit communities based around a single industry, for example mining (Bott 1957; Dodd 2006). Such communities are typified by low population turnover, continuity of relationships, high degree of connectedness and little opportunity locally for social mobility. The Cearn shared many aspects of this analysis, with connectedness arising through familial links that have originated in rural Lewis. The continuity of relationships was further reinforced as the opportunities for social mobility are greatly reduced by distance and long travel times to the Scottish mainland.

A smaller number of respondents who had purchased their homes and admitted to having a wide social network outwith the scheme, still described the Cearn as close-knit and friendly. They would be illustrative of Cattell's *solidaristic* network pattern, having strong ties and looser contacts. The *socially excluded* network was also evident, where social networks were more limited in size and even members of this group, when asked, felt the scheme to be close-knit.

Traditional communities imply homogeneity, of birth and upbringing, health and socio-economic status and the Cearn exhibited features common to this model. In contrast, urban areas are seldom dominated by a single large homogeneous group with deprived estates in particular being inhabited by a great variety of

different marginalised ethnic and social groups that have very little in common (Friedrichs 1997).

Residents in the Cearnas reported a low incidence level of nuisances from neighbours and few instances of conflict with others, an atypical finding from within an urban scheme (Modig 1985 cited in Andersen 2003). Any neighbourhood problems associated with noise or drunkenness were identified by respondents from the central area of the Cearnas, where more recently placed residents live, with such problems being attributed more to the activities of adults than young people, in marked contrast to findings in other urban areas (Hudson *et al.* 2007).

It was found that most residents have developed a sense of belonging to the local neighbourhood, resulting from a complex mix of emotional and material factors, reinforced by a strong sense of being of local origin. In addition, many of the personal and social skills and traditions associated with living and working in a remote, rural area were brought with them to the scheme, for example, getting on with neighbours, being polite to other residents, especially the elderly, and looking out for one another - these are able to be viewed as effective coping strategies. However, the data provide only a limited insight into the sense of belonging experienced by both locals and incomers and this is explored further in stage 2. The chapter now moves on to look at social networks and patterns of social support.

7.5 Social networks and social support

Social networks can be seen as a vital component in defining the nature of a neighbourhood from which a range of common assumptions emerges. The neighbourhood fosters the development of social networks through repeated interaction in the local public space (Bridge 2002). For the Cearnas resident this was the street or court, the play park or the shop; these were places of residence and not work and the types of relationship that had developed reflected this fact. It was through these 'neighbourly', non-intimate and convivial relations between people who know each other to nod or wave to, or

to engage in limited conversation with, that a broad pattern of social infrastructure evolved (Bridge 2002). As respondents suggested, this was the case within the Cearn, with the additional dimension that those living in the scheme may be related to neighbours, or know them (or know of them) through childhood upbringing, school, or work, thereby adding to the notion of the Cearn as distinctive. The relatively small size of the scheme together with its compactness in terms of layout facilitated contact between residents, with all parts of the scheme being easily accessible.

Most residents felt settled in the Cearn, seeing it as their 'home area', a concept defined by Kearns and others as an area of 5-10 minutes' walk from a resident's home - in the context of the housing density within the Cearn this encompassed almost the whole scheme. This 'home area', the smallest unit of neighbourhood in which a sense of belonging was in evidence, reinforced a sense of identity with the home becoming a haven, offered a place to feel safe and one from which networks and support systems can be developed. Contact with others in the street, opportunistically at the shop or bus stop, occurred regularly with scope for a high level of social interaction including the recognition of familiar faces, exchange of news and gossip together with occasional offers of help and support. This feeling of being protected and part of something greater fostered the development of self, allowing a person to exercise autonomy and to elaborate his/her identity. Self then becomes viewed in relation to others, conferring a sense of status. In health terms, this sense of belonging to a neighbourhood offers a range of psychosocial benefits to the individual (Kearns *et al.* 2000). For example, stress and stress-related illnesses were found to be associated with insecure home ownership (Nettleton and Burrows 1998).

This section examines the pattern of social networks and the extent of social support systems from three perspectives: duration of residency, gender and age, as well as briefly examining the effects of rurality and possible religious observance.

Female respondents who had lived in the area for many years referred to the importance of 'looking out for each other', although several commented that

over recent years co-operation and reciprocity had declined, a view echoed by Cooper *et al.* (1999) in their review of social support systems and health. Neighbours played a key role in the day-to-day lives of residents, particularly older ones, a finding consistent with research in other communities (Walker and Hiller 2007). Women, particularly older women, emerged as the main players in creating the social fabric of the community, building over time on existing relationships:

“People do look out for each other. Like when we lived in the country every house had a pair of binoculars and people thought people were nosey. But quite often people were able to see if there were lights on in houses....it was caring you know, making sure that everyone was alright.”

(2F.60years old)

“The neighbours were a lot friendlier then....we popped in and out of each other’s homes then. I don’t think I’d do that now, but is still friendly.”

(4F.45 years old)

However, when asked for views on present neighbours in terms of possible help and support, the same respondent qualified her comments:

“I think you could [ask] today too, but you would stop and think who you would go to, which of your neighbours would you go to now?”

(4F.45years old)

Some elderly residents with long tenancies had brought-up children in the Cearns and now had grandchildren also residing in the scheme. In such circumstances ‘looking out’ for each other, co-operation around practical issues and emotional support was passed from one generation to the next, and as Elias and Scotson (1974) suggested, such inter-generational intimacy creates a distinctive tradition of belonging to a locality, articulated with pride. In their study of Winston Parva they found that the tradition of belonging occurred both as an attribute of individual families and as a social formation where networks of families felt that they belonged to the village. The strong sense of support and goodwill between neighbours extended to helping individuals held to be less fortunate:

“I remember a particular man up there, who really had nothing [having just been re-housed after completion of a prison sentence]. A few of us started digging at home for curtains and bedding.....a guy did painting in the house and we put up new shelves and curtains.”

(1F.50years old)

A smaller number of residents had more deeply entrenched connections with neighbours, characterised by frequent interactions and a higher level of trust and support, yet it was felt important that neighbours ‘knew the boundaries’:

“We don’t live in each other’s pockets. We’re not in and out of each others’ houses. But if you were in need of something or you did need help, then you know that they are there for you. And that’s just one street, I can’t speak for the rest.”

(1F.50years old)

Studies of other areas, for example Dingle and Speke in Liverpool (Anderson and Munck 1999), outlined the role of women in the maintenance of social networks, commenting on the central position held by women in the day-to-day running of voluntary and community organisations. Respondents in the Cearns reflected these findings with a number of older residents having established a group that meets for social, leisure and support:

“We’ve got our own group here that we are involved in [known as ‘Spring Chickens’ and meets fortnightly]....it is very positive for an area as big as this. I think we could still draw in more people, so they feel that sense of community.”

(3F.70years old)

Well-established female residents developed networks over a period of time through opportunistic contact or membership of group activities in contrast with some young female lone parents who had recently acquired tenancies and missed their friends:

“I hardly see anyone at the moment, especially with my youngest just now....I didn’t realise how hard it was keeping in touch with people after you’ve had children.....[however]..... I have my mother next door and a friend across the road. A few doors down is a lady who came from down south with kids....she was quite shy, but I got chatting to her one day and her kids play with mine....I don’t know what she does in the daytime. Most of the younger friends I used to have are away at the college, they live closer to town or to the college.”

(10F.25years old)

Comments such as these demonstrate that younger residents experience social isolation, especially young women with children. High density housing encourages street-life and extensive contact with neighbours and near-neighbours, with the development of informal networks (Silburn *et al.* 1999). However, as Silburn and colleagues pointed out, social interactions take time to evolve and mature and, for younger or more recent tenants, this can be a slow process, resulting in an experience of loneliness or isolation.

Women in the Cearnas mirrored this experience to some degree, yet the coping strategies associated with Hebridean rural life, for example neighbourly co-operation, politeness and friendliness, were in evidence lessening the impact of social isolation and helping to speed up the process of social integration. Research on coping strategies conducted in rural areas (Heenan 2006; Highlands and Islands Enterprise 2005) demonstrated that historically, villagers and crofters worked together on seasonal tasks on the land for the benefit of all and that this collaborative tradition continues in modern times, for example with parents relying on neighbours for help with childcare. Relations in crofting rely on kinship rather than class, in contrast to the lowland areas where capitalist farming and not family farming was the norm (Bell and Newby 1974).

Women's networks in the Cearnas have been shown to be diverse and often close a finding in keeping with other studies where women's network characteristics have been contrasted with those of men. Women's network relationships have been found to be more extensive in terms of network size and more intensive in terms of the perceived quality of support than those of men (Belle 1987) with older women often having especially wide social networks and close support systems (Wenger 1991). Women's experiences suggested that they maintain more emotionally intimate relationships than men, that confiding relationships seem to endure through life and that they show a greater readiness to seek out and give support in times of stress (Belle 1987). The dominance of private, personal and community concerns was noticeably stronger in the lives of women than in the lives of men and this was evident within the Cearnas. Women were found to be more likely to become involved in networks of personal relationships with emotive undercurrents of liking and disliking, with sympathies and

antipathies, all significant layers of human interdependence. In this respect, female respondents were no different to those studied in other rural areas (Elias 1974). Observed gender differences in networks have been attributed to the fact that women are more disposed to maintaining close ties with family and friends whereas men tended to develop networks through work or leisure (Moore 1990). Within the Cearns those women who were at home with children or who had retired tended to have a close network of local friends and family. Male respondents, on the other hand, whether long established in the area or holding more recent tenancies appeared to have their close networks in other geographical areas or through work:

“I’m a single guy with no kids.....I’m rarely in during the day but am in at night. I try to keep myself busy cos I’m not working at the moment. Most of the boys I know are on their own so we meet up in town....I don’t notice who goes in and out of houses. I know which ones I go and see and who comes and sees me, that’s about it really.”

(9M.30years old)

The chapter so far has looked at aspects of the built environment and social infrastructure through the lens of a number of *structural* features, notably length of tenure, age, gender and place of birth, and the author was keen to avoid assuming that social characteristics that related to a specific spatial context would have generalised local applicability. However, reference to network typologies is helpful in attempting to place residents’ narratives that define experiences into a context that relates to the significance of various membership groups, for example, family, neighbours, school friends or workmates. In chapter 2, a *structural analytical framework* or typology was introduced, devised by Cattell (2001), based on the relationship between respondents’ experiences, their membership groups, attitudes, values and identity. Cattell’s networks correspond to five models: *socially excluded*; *parochial*; *traditional*; *pluralistic* and *solidaristic*.

Traditional patterns of social networks reflected the Cearns’ traditional characteristics of a network made up of family, neighbours and workmates that has a tight knit structure with examples of this network being found amongst the long term residents of the scheme. Evidence was also present of residents having

a smaller number of membership groups, but an extensive set of contacts within these groups. Some single parents, unemployed people and young men with alcohol dependency issues illustrated this *parochial* pattern. For some residents interviewed at the more settled, western side of the scheme more open, wider loose-knit networks were in evidence, with a larger number of membership groups made up of both similar and dissimilar people, so called *pluralistic* and *solidaristic* networks. Only one respondent, originating from England, appeared to have a network that was reminiscent of the *socially excluded* model and here personal circumstances were a contributory factor, where crime, safety and lack of trust deterred her from making contacts. People with the more restricted models, the *socially excluded* or some within the *parochial* group, often find it difficult to cope, and interviewees mirrored this finding. The Cearns, with its *traditional* pattern, demonstrated the important role of families as sources of support but also suggested that many are able to cope successfully with life due to the existence of other membership groups that offered a balance to their lives. In this context it is postulated that the contacts made in the neighbourhood or through school or work reinforced self-esteem as well as facilitating the learning of social skills, all of which sustained an individual through the life course (Cattell 2001). In addition, membership of local groups or societies contributed to this process, found by Cattell to be broadly health protecting, where those with wider networks were described as being more optimistic, more in control and in possession of a higher level of self-esteem.

Within stage 1 it emerged as a recurrent theme that neighbourhood networks could be purposeful, offering *emotional and practical support*, underpinned by *trust and reciprocity*; ingredients of a life familiar to residents as young children brought up in the rural areas. Stage 2 of the research, using the above headings as examples of a *functional analytical framework*, looked in greater depth at the effect of rurality on the *extent* and *purpose* of social networks and support systems and how they related to a sense of identity. The second theme to emerge was that of religion and the next subsection takes a preliminary look at the role of religion in the maintenance of social infrastructure as it emerged in stage 1.

Church attendance appeared to give many residents friendship and support, offering a distinctive set of relational, emotional and spatial characteristics, whereby friendship and support was available in an environment other than their home environment. There are no churches on the estate, although the community centre is used as an outreach meeting house on Sundays by churchgoers, most of whom drive from other parts of Lewis. For some, church membership met a variety of emotional needs, as understood by Kearns, reflecting the many positive psychosocial benefits of living in close-knit communities (Kearns *et al.* 2000). To some degree the positive benefits may be derived from membership of other close-knit groups away from the neighbourhood, such groups uniting around a common purpose, in this case spiritual worship:

“I would go to church people rather than neighbours because....the neighbours we had when we came here at first are largely gone, either dead or moved to other areas.”

(7F.35years old)

“The good thing about being a Christian in this area is the amount of people outwith the scheme who you know and they accept you the way you are and you’ll accept them. It’s a great link between us and them.”

(12F.60years old)

Church membership was illustrative of the homogeneous network defined by Cattell in her typology of Community Networks (Cattell 2001). In such a network ties between individuals are strong, around a common set of values or purpose. This contrasts with Cattell’s Traditional Network, evidenced by membership of activity groups that have a locus on the estate, for example the group known as the ‘Spring Chickens’, facilitated by older residents that have known each other for many years. A third group exists, identified by Cattell as the Socially Excluded or Truncated Network, where individuals have only a small number of membership groups. This group may include lone parents without local families, refugees and the unemployed, and some incomers in the Cearn exhibited features of membership of this network.

Some residents viewed church membership as a positive supportive structure, whereas others viewed the churches as structures that wielded power and influence in a negative sense:

“[Churches have] too much power and that has dictated the way of life for generations. And a lot of people still go along with it. It can be intimidating, this spiritual fear.....there is a goldfish bowl, everyone knows everyone, so there’s not much tolerance.”

(1F.50years old)

Traditions originating through religious doctrine or practice have become habituated and reinforced, becoming accepted island traditions and a feature of local culture - followed by believers and non-believers alike. The habit of family visiting on a Sunday was mentioned, as was the value of a quiet day:

“I like Sundays cos I have my nephews on a Sunday plus Sundays are days when all the family gets together.”

(11F.25years old)

“I think its fine the way it is, I like a quiet Sunday.”

(5M.55years old)

Views on the hanging out of washing and the possible opening of shops on Sundays took on a symbolism that reflected a desire to respect the views and culture of others:

“I would go shopping on a Sunday when I was away but I wouldn’t here.....I wouldn’t hang out my washing on a Sunday. Nobody in our scheme does. Across the road they do because their washing lines are on the other side and ours are on the road [and can be seen].”

(6F.40years old)

Some incomers and some younger, locally born respondents were in favour of a change of culture:

“That’s what I don’t get.....the pubs can be open for alcohol and if they can why can’t a shop be open. Sunday sailings would be good as well.”

(10F.25years old)

“I once turned round and said this [the Sports Centre] should be open on Sundays. I know people don’t like things being open, but what can kids do, they don’t understand that you have to sit in the house and do nothing.”

(8F.35years old)

Some generational differences were apparent, with older residents expressing concern over change and many younger respondents actively wanting change or feeling indifferent:

“Sunday is noisier than it used to be, with children outside and people working in their gardens and on their cars....that’s one big change, it’s not like it used to be here.”

(6F.40years old)

“It doesn’t bother me on Sundays, doesn’t bother me at all..... they can do what they want. I’m not caring.....if people want to be religious, it’s up to them, each to his own. I don’t care either way.”

(9M.30years old)

For a significant number of people in the Cearnas religion has a positive impact on their lives, a finding mirrored by research in America (Marks 2005). For other respondents there was a degree of resentment and anger in relation to the effects of social control and judgementalism that could be associated with the religious adherence of friends, family, work colleagues or neighbours. Many respondents particularly resented the restrictions associated with Sabbath observance. It was difficult to dissect influences that could be attributed with certainty to religion as there are aspects of cultural life that have little to do with religion, for example the hanging out of washing on Sundays. Such traditions, whilst having an origin in Sabbath resting and relaxation, are often practised by those with no religious interest and have therefore become explicit and visible features of a broader, distinctive Lewis culture, one which for many helps to define a specific identity, that of being a ‘Hebridean’. Within stage 2 these views are explored in more detail.

7.6 The Cearns: areas of similarity and difference when compared with mainland schemes

Respondents were asked how they viewed the built and social environment of the Cearns in relation to mainland urban schemes and the findings are presented in the next section.

A number of respondents had experiences of living in mainland schemes before returning to Lewis where they had been brought up. They viewed the Cearns positively in comparison with their previous address, essentially around perceptions of crime and friendliness:

“Even when X [partner] moved up here he was saying he really liked it and he would never move. He is from Leeds and he lived in X [country area] for 10years but he said the difference coming up here was unbelievable, the amount of friendly people.”

(10F.25years old)

“It’s not an area for crime, it’s not like Glasgow estates, I mean fair enough the police are around....and they do checks but that’s about it.[in Glasgow], bins were set on fire and somebody got mugged and I said I wanted to go home, I can’t handle this anymore. I just don’t like Glasgow and want to go home.”

(11F.25years old)

This section moves on to identify the ways in which the Cearns is similar to urban schemes by relating findings to literature, firstly by looking at image, stigma and the physical environment and then by examining features relating to social infrastructure.

In a number of urban studies, for example, Cattell (2004); Ellaway, Macintyre and Kearns (2001); Forrest and Kearns (1999); Forrest and Kearns (2001), reference was made to the importance of a range of physical features, plus image and stigma as well as to a number of social issues. For example neighbourly interactions may be sacrificed through suspicion and fear of trouble, with residents ‘keeping themselves to themselves’ and such features as high population turnover, poorly designed housing and local crime and noise can exacerbate this. The Cearns residents provided no evidence of feeling that such

a situation applied to them. Housing estates, whether urban or rural, develop an image over time, an image held alike by residents and those living outwith the scheme. The Cearn is no exception, although as this scoping exercise demonstrated, the negative image held by residents has decreased over time, yet there remains a residue of stigma when the Cearn is mentioned by residents in wider conversations with representatives of the wider population. Many urban schemes are particularly stigmatised and may have a local infamy or indeed, a nationally problematic reputation. Ellaway and colleagues (2001), in their study of Glasgow neighbourhoods identified that social renters reported a higher incidence of antisocial and environmental problems than those living in areas where owner-occupiers inhabited the houses, a finding not mirrored so sharply in the Cearn where overall levels of crime and disturbance were low.

Moving away from the built environment and considering the social infrastructure, Ellaway and her colleagues reported greater social cohesion in owner-occupied areas. In contrast to such findings, levels of social cohesion in the Cearn were felt to be high, amongst both tenants and those that own their homes; residents tended to know each other, this being a feature of island life that makes a sharp contrast to life in most urban locations. Gender perceptions of community show that women tended to stress the social quality of their local community whereas the men stress physical dimensions of their area (Molinari 1998). Male and female respondents in the Cearn held less polarised views. The importance of social networks was stressed by both - linked, it is suggested, to the character of the islander, as a friendly and sociable being. Damer (1989) in his study of a housing scheme in Govan, Glasgow referred to the sense of loneliness that residents felt, leading to isolation, passivity, self-centredness, and an increased dependence on external forces of control. Residents within the Cearn, with the exception of one respondent who was a lone parent who had two children with long-term health problems, made no mention of isolation or feelings associated with hopelessness.

There was little evidence to support the notion that, from a respondent's perspective, the area is in decline, that serious physical decay is apparent and that middle-class families are moving out, being replaced by low income and

excluded groups. This contrasts with the Andersen's studies in a variety of deprived neighbourhoods, where the social composition of the area changed, buildings deteriorated, open space was lost and property prices fell (Andersen 2003). In reality, the physical environment is improving with more green space development, housing stock is gradually improving year-on-year, and social fragmentation is not a phenomenon described by residents. The author of this thesis posits that this establishes the Cearn, yet again, as an atypical urban deprived area.

At the level of the neighbourhood, certain findings did emerge that resonated with the findings from other urban studies. First, attitudes to incomers. Research in four urban locations (summarised by Forrest and Kearns 1999), showed that there were tensions between different groups of resident: particularly between newcomers and established residents but also between older people and teenagers. Respondents within the Cearn reflected that incomers from England were often viewed with suspicion, though it evaporated if the incoming resident embraced the local culture by, for example, being friendly, respecting the traditions of the Sabbath or learning Gaelic. A second similarity revolved around a broader societal raft of changes that related to contemporary culture evident within the broader UK. Cattell's work in east London reported that residents of housing areas referred to a perceived increase in materialism or selfishness, as the history of work-based collective activity declined, being replaced by an atomised and more individualistic outlook on life (Cattell 2004).

Residents in the Cearn, who felt that the old crofting ways were disappearing and that television, amongst other influences, was diluting the basic ingredients of the local culture, mirrored this view. However, respondents did make it clear that the culture was still strongly owned and would be proudly defended; also that the Cearn was a very real community, even though it was only 2 miles from Stornoway. At a national level, Hanlon and Carlisle (2007), have posited that modern society attaches too much value to materialism, consumerism and individualism, within an increasingly commercialised world where we are bombarded with messages extolling the virtues of material objects, leading to

self-centred and shallow lives. Work by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, based on a web survey of 3,500 people, produced broadly similar findings with participants highlighting a range of concerns around the perceived decline of community, a rise in individualism, consumerism and greed, and a decline in values (Watts 2008). Cearn's residents' views resonated with the views of both the urban Londoner as discussed by Cattell and the bigger societal perspective outlined by both Hanlon and Carlisle (2007) and Watts (2008). A point of distinction emerged however, with most residents articulating strongly that a sense of community did exist within the Cearn's, seen in turn as part of identification with a broader island culture. The section concludes that, whilst the Cearn's is in possession of a range of distinctive features, it did share with other parts of Scotland many of the issues and problems that are associated with modern lifestyles and has to respond to the widespread challenges associated with health and social inequality.

7.7 Conclusion

The chapter has presented respondents' views of their health as well as their views on the built and social environment of the Cearn's, and formed the second part of stage 1 of the research. It gave a flavour of the residents' perceptions of themselves and their neighbourhood, including glimpses of its social infrastructure. The image of the area appears to have improved, although some residual stigma remains. The housing stock has been renovated, hand-in-hand with green space improvements. The scheme was regarded as being close-knit by both home-owners and tenants and friendly, with a social infrastructure reminiscent of a more rural environment; the author positing that since most of the residents of the Cearn's were brought up in the country areas of Lewis, the social skills and attitudes associated with rural living have been brought with them upon their moving into the scheme. The Cearn's, whilst being urban in housing design and layout, population density and deprivation, has a social quality that mirrors qualities found in scattered rural locations, and respondents clearly demonstrated that they were not immune either to the influences of globalisation or to the influences of national or regional social welfare or

economic policies. Within the context of the globalised world, a strong sense of attachment to the Cearn was evident, proudly articulated by those with long-term roots in the area, whose extended families live nearby and who had local friendship networks. Surprisingly, younger residents who had grown up in the area felt the same way. Involvement in local organisations strengthened this sense of attachment, as did friendliness and good humour.

The data from the scoping exercise were limited, the numbers interviewed were small and, and due to convenience sampling, most respondents were female. Stage 1 of the research identified clearly that within this urban housing area many clearly defined characteristics of rural living were still in evidence and that these contributed to the development and mode of functioning of the local social infrastructure. The nuanced pattern of the resulting infrastructure is further mediated and influenced by religiosity, operating both at the level of the individual and at the wider level of the neighbourhood. The findings from stage 1, informed by literature from chapters 3 and 4, enabled the author to develop a second stage of fieldwork that would more systematically explore rurality and religiosity. The findings from this more in-depth investigation are presented in chapters 8 and 9.

CHAPTER 8: STAGE 2, FINDINGS 1: THE IMPACT OF RURALITY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE, COMMUNITY COHESION AND IDENTITY

8.1 Introduction

Stage 2 of the fieldwork, building on stage 1 aimed to develop a more in-depth and purposive exploration of the impact of rurality and religion on the purpose, development and maintenance of social networks. This chapter presents findings in relation to rurality. Specifically findings are presented on the extent and purpose of social networks and how these link to issues of rurality and remoteness within the context of a network typology of tight knit *traditional groups* and looser *solidaristic groups* (Cattell 2004). The links between rurality and social capital are explored, using findings that relate to the extent of community involvement shown by residents. The final section draws on Social Identity Theory to demonstrate that, at population level, having an identity defined as 'Hebridean' presents a unique lens through which both social interactions and community dynamics are viewed.

The reader should be reminded at this point that the profile of respondents for both stages of the fieldwork is summarised in chapter 5.

8.2 The social neighbourhood: its extent, function and links to aspects of rurality

The local neighbourhood was seen as a central element in the lives of many residents, especially women, and the existence of an *extensive* social network of friends in the scheme was commonly found, with positive perceptions of fellow residents being regarded as a major source of commitment and stability. The importance of strong ties, individual actions and their relation to social capital has been well documented (Cattell and Herring 2002); yet looser and weaker ties were also important contributing to neighbourhood cooperation and trust in

both vibrant urban communities as well as in rural villages (Jacobs 1961). Several respondents commented that, whilst they had a close network of friends on the scheme, they had other friends elsewhere - in town or through church or work:

“I’ve got friends everywhere really, but there are some really close ones just in the Cearn. It’s quite nice being able to.....you know, pop down and have a glass of wine with them in the evening.”

(32F.35years old)

The *extent* of networks was felt to vary, with some parts of the scheme having closer networks than others. Closer networks were apparent in those parts of the Cearn that had long established residents who had put down roots in the area, many of whom were pensioners maintaining close involvement in local organisations and groups. These residents were reflecting features associated with the *traditional group* of Cattell’s urban typology of networks, as outlined in chapters 3 and 7. The *traditional group* is believed to be diminishing in extent across the UK, being replaced instead by a social infrastructure of looser ties with contacts that are outwith the area of residency (Cattell 2004). Respondents identifying most closely with the values of a *traditional group* rated highly their historical relationship with the scheme with negative views on tenant movement levels and the effects of house purchase through the ‘Right to Buy’ initiative. Older members of this group, especially women felt that networks were less *extensive*, with fewer close neighbours:

“I think a lot of them are still original tenants up there. I mean we still see them when we’re out and about and maybe the odd person from the next Cearn...but this one has changed completely....tenants moving regularly.”

(35F.60years old)

“In the beginning it was a very friendly Cearn, people used to pop in and out and have a cup of tea and a blether.....that has changed completely. It’s very quiet.”

(35F.60years old)

Older people, particularly women, placed value on friendships sustained over many years and, within the neighbourhood, many supportive friendships were of at least 20 years’ duration, being made through work, community involvement,

mutual childcare arrangements or with close neighbours. Mothers often made friends through their children's school or playgroup, with neighbours or friends meeting each other's children from school or sharing transport for evening activities. Many female residents declared that a close-knit and dense pattern revolving around reciprocal arrangements and underpinned by trust was important for them. Such a high-density network, where all members know each other, has been shown to provide strong emotional support, as the son of a long established resident commented:

“The neighbours we had years ago aren't there anymore....see my mother had a good neighbour next door, X, and she died years ago. She'd do anything for you, there used to be quite a close bond there.”
(25M.30years old)

Male respondents cited the workplace rather than the neighbourhood as the arena in which friendships develop; friendships that were often looser and less extensive. The men interviewed declared that they did not have an extensive social network on the scheme, nor was the network that they had an intensive one in terms of perceived quality of support. These differences in terms of the relative extent and strength of gender-related social infrastructure mirrored the findings outlined by Belle (1987).

The density of support has been found to be less in urban locations in comparison with rural areas (Wenger 1995) and yet within the urban Cearnas a rural pattern of networking emerged, often originating in childhood:

“I'm very happy here; I live alone and wouldn't want to move. My neighbour, I knew her since I was young, she's also from Lochs. It is good to have a house right beside someone I know in such a huge housing scheme. X comes here whenever she likes, at least once each week and I do have lots of friends.”
(16F.55years old)

Another older resident, on moving from the country to the Cearnas as a young married woman over 25 years ago, made many friends with others of the same age and this network has continued to the present:

“I’ve lots of neighbours and friends going back years on the scheme and we are all in Spring Chickens and Apples and Pears. I’m not a church-goer so I’ve no friends there.”

(17F.65years old)

Within the Cearnas the close and dense networks between the older residents appeared to be reinforced by regular membership of community groups, an aspect discussed in the next section of this chapter. For elderly people networks are distinctive, involving a core of highly complex relationships and a periphery of less multiple relationships (Mugford and Kendig 1986); the networks of long-established residents within the Cearnas echoed this pattern. The core of highly complex relationships appeared to be reinforced through a combination of prior childhood acquaintance, shared experiences linked to parenthood activities many years ago or through membership of community groups, such as the Spring Chickens. Such network linkages can be classified as uniplex or multiplex (Mugford and Kendig 1986). A uniplex network involves one kind of contact, for example family only, whereas the multiplex network involves more than one kind of contact, for example, friends and neighbours as well as family. The older respondents within the Cearnas appeared to have within their dense network a range of linkages that included many contacts, a social infrastructure that echoed the multiplex structure as defined by Mugford and Kendig (1986).

A further dimension was apparent from these findings. Network formation appeared largely outside the control of any one individual, essentially dependent on the experiences and actions of others for example, the availability of local close kin or the level of involvement of family, friends and neighbours. Most residents interviewed had a close supportive relationship with friends and neighbours, with family nearby, often on the Cearnas; therefore network formation was readily facilitated. Many neighbours were seen as friends, based on long-term residency and active community or voluntary group involvement in the present or recent past and this pattern of social infrastructure resonated with that described in rural north Wales communities by Wenger (1995); a pattern of relationships described as a Locally Integrated Social Network. A challenge that emerged from this analysis revolved around the fact that the Cearnas, with its housing design, layout and aspects of housing allocation policy, could best be described as following an urban pattern, yet elderly respondents

exhibited a network typology that reflected a rural background and one where the social skills associated with rural living were employed within the urban context. A Locally Integrated Social Network existed, in an urban area comprising rural residents whose historical background and values echoed the *traditional group*, as outlined by Cattell (2004).

The findings from stage 2 of this research demonstrated that, this pattern was intergenerational, with many young respondents bringing experiences from their own upbringing plus a range of personal social competencies into the scheme; with two groups of young people becoming apparent. One group spent little time in the area, studying and working outwith the scheme, with few local friends and looser ties with local people of the same age, as X comments, ‘I work in town and most of my friends are up town’ (25M.30years old).

The other group spent more time on the scheme with local friends and more limited horizons and tended to comprise lone parents and those unemployed:

“Most of the younger friends I used to have if they are away at college then they’re living closer to town now. But there’s a couple of young mothers around here, we meet and there’s plenty of kids to play with.”

(30F.25years old)

This distinction mirrored that found in east London by Cattell and Herring (2002) where two similar groups were identified; a ‘cosmopolitan’ group that studied, worked and socialised outside the area and a ‘parochial’ group who led largely local lives. The ‘cosmopolitan’ group had a network outwith the estate, comprising strong as well as looser and weaker ties and this was important in the linking of individuals into new networks, especially ones relating to employment, education or leisure. Young people from this group were in evidence, but locally-based social networks in the Cearn were of particular importance for the ‘parochial’ group, represented by lone mothers with young children and the unemployed together with well established young women, born in the Cearn who led largely local lives, working and socialising within the scheme. This group had a small number of different membership groups and was mirrored by the *parochial network* of Cattell’s typology (Cattell 2004). There was little evidence

that residents in this category were unable to cope with daily living, a point of distinction between Cearns members of this group and those from east London. Through mutual aid and the norms of 'bounded reciprocity' (Cattell 2004), the members of the Cearns parochial group had their needs met and, within this group, the importance of having a social network that offered *emotional support*, with *depth* and *trust* was evident:

"Definitely neighbours [for support], 'cos I don't actually have any direct family in Lewis, 'cos my mum's from Harris. So technically I don't have any like cousins or anything.....in Lewis it's just friends I have. And they're more like a family to me since I've grown up. I know a lot of people [neighbours] that I would class as family 'cos I've known them since I was growing up. And they are, a lot of them are based in the Cearns and they have been here forever."

(41F.20years old)

A single mother with 10 years residency presented a similar view:

"I've got a friend across the road and the woman next door is really nice. I'm really close to X right across from us. I didn't realise how difficult it was to keep in touch with people [living outwith the Cearns] after you've had kids."

(32F.35years old)

It was found that for a large number of the respondents, networks of friends, neighbours and family provided practical and emotional support forming a basis for continued cooperation. During the course of the research many day-to-day examples of *reciprocity* of practical and emotional support were witnessed, not always between older residents. A female lone parent having a full-time job and two teenage children demonstrated the giving of *emotional support* through the *reciprocity of practical actions*. Such reciprocity is indicative of a member of the *solidaristic group* (Cattell 2004) where an individual has a wide range of membership groups to balance their lives, such groups being both dense and loose, with strong local ties plus looser contacts. Work contacts, as well as social skills learned and experience gained of organising at the workplace appeared to sustain the individual across the life course:

"My immediate neighbour for instance [having mental health issues], she lives on her own and usually on a Sunday I do a big Sunday roast.

Always cook too much and there was one day I said to her “I’ll put a plate over to you, you know, because when you’re on your own you don’t want to cook or get a roast for yourself.....so it’s become a habit now. Every Sunday she gets her dinner sent over.”

(33F.40years old)

Reciprocal behaviour was evidenced and formed a basis for cooperation, the continuity of friendship being recognised and appreciated by both parties; in the example above the neighbour would occasionally repay the behaviour on a weekday evening. *Reciprocal behaviour* was described clearly by a young female respondent in citing her father’s behaviour:

“My dad will do a job for some man and then they will come and do something for him.....they are always fixing each others’ cars.....there’s always a mechanic or builder or plumber or electrician that you know and you never have to pay.”

(46F.20years old)

In contrast to the views of some older residents, younger residents do cooperate with one another and strong ties were in evidence:

“You see them every day and I’ll get to know them. But definitely the one on our right, we got to know her really well. She’s been in at us saying “oh, I’m sorry to bother you, can I get a cup of sugar?” We’ll say “no bother”, so it’s like that.”

(45F.25years old)

The majority of respondents had family nearby, either on the scheme or further afield in Stornoway or other parts of Lewis and for many younger residents families were an important resource of practical help, encouragement and broader emotional support. These young local women illustrated clearly the central role that many *families* played in the provision of specifically *emotional* support:

“It’s definitely the family for me. I could never leave [Lewis] knowing that they’re still here. We’re just really close and I would go to them for help, for anything, rather than neighbours.”

[where help of a *practical* kind might be sought]

(45F.25years old)

“There’s a couple [of neighbours] I would maybe go in and visit, but I can’t say we’ve become very good friends. I would say we’re more acquaintances than actual friends....I’ve got a wide family circuit that I call on and I’ve got friends at work and people that I’m friendly with out of work that I could call on.”

(27F.45years old)

The closeness of family and the extent of meaningful social networks and support systems was a distinctive feature of rural communities that are geographically remote, in contrast to that found in those rural communities where social mobility and commuting have brought newcomers into the area (McIntosh, Sim and Robertson 2004). An additional feature of life in remote rural areas with relatively little geographical movement was the level of negative emotion associated with being known by neighbours:

“At the time you think it. You think “can’t do anything, everyone’s going to tell my mum”. There’s always going to be someone that knows you.....there’s no denying it [that] you think that you’ve no privacy here and with living in such a small community.”

(41F.20years old)

However, a balanced perspective that reflected the good and bad aspects of being known was outlined by some respondents:

“That’s a downside. It’s like everyone knows that you’re drunk before you even do it, kind of thing. It’s like “oh my goodness, how do you know?” In a way it’s a bad thing, it’s like you hear people talking: “I heard so and so was doing this, what was she thinking”? And it’s annoying it does get to you a bit, but in the same way everything can be good and everyone knows each other.....you get that kind of togetherness, so it’s good.”

(42F.20years old)

Many respondents noted with evident pleasure the contribution many incomers made to the social infrastructure, made easier if the family has children. Traditional communities elsewhere, whilst rich in social capital, were frequently distrustful of outsiders and were perceived as somewhat exclusive (Cattell and Herring 2002). To some degree the Cearns, whilst viewed as a ‘traditional’ community with its established residents, sets up a challenge to this perspective. Incomers were made welcome as one resident commented ‘if they’re willing to fit in’, meaning letting children play together, being friendly

and offering mutual aid. In addition, a prerequisite appeared to be that incomers should demonstrate respect for the local culture:

“My next door neighbour for years and years, they weren’t from here, they were from down south I think it was. But I got on absolutely perfect with them. You know, they were very into them [the children] learning Gaelic.....they wanted to become part of the culture. They wanted to get involved as much as they could to show they weren’t incomers, they wanted to get on and be part of the Hebridean culture, which is really good, you know, really good.”

(41F.20years old)

However, a minority of well-established residents held negative perspectives in relation to incomers, with views that mirrored attitudes prevalent in traditional or working class communities of the past. Incomers were seen as ‘strangers’ and therefore not to be immediately trusted. To some, incomers were seen to pose a threat to both local culture and to social cohesion:

“You’ve got more and more coming from the mainland.....they move a family up to here to take them away from a situation, but the situation follows them. Because they’ve already lived in an aggressive neighbourhood they take that aggression up with you. They’re only interested in doing things in a chaotic way....I think in general that Lewis will change because there’s, and I don’t mean this in a bad way, such an influx of people coming onto the island....because the property is relatively cheap.”

(43F.50years old)

“English incomers, I have to say, are cold and no, they won’t pop into the neighbour’s house. I think the most powerful reason [why the English move to Lewis] is that they are frightened. The way things are on the mainland they don’t want to be living next to Eastern Europeans or Muslims or anything like that.”

(44M.40years old)

Such comments need to be set within the wider context of mainland in-migration, perceived by residents to be increasing in prevalence:

“I worked in Woolworths until I retired five years ago and I used to know everybody that came into the shop. In the last few years I was there, there were new faces, new people nearly every week. I would ask “have you come to live, or are you on holiday?” That’s how I found out most were coming here to live.”

(40F.60years old)

At the level of the individual, incomers were usually made to feel welcome, as one respondent from England commented:

“Very friendly, I mean coming from London. When I first came here I’d heard so many stories about how, oh incomers aren’t accepted and you know, especially English people and all this and I’ve not had any problems whatsoever.....there’s not that many incomers here really.”

(23M.45years old)

Many residents of local origin celebrated the racial and cultural diversity associated with the in-migration that has become apparent in recent years, although the numbers of incomers are small. These residents were not typical members of the *traditional network*; instead they appreciated sharing interests with unlike groups:

“Well, I think the Cearn embraces whoever, I would hope that’s the way it is.....there’s a Polish family in my close and they fit in well. Given the state of the whole world you would sincerely hope that people become more tolerant. I don’t think [prejudice] is an issue in a scheme like this.”

(41F.20years old)

The notion of ‘density of acquaintanceship’ is of relevance, and helps to illuminate the nature of rural communities (Freudenberg 1986). Rural communities are believed to have a higher ‘density of acquaintanceship’ than urban ones, so that within a given rural community a larger number of individuals are, at the very least, familiar or are known well, and this was evidenced within the Cearn. High density networks initiated both practical and emotional support and help for those in need, aspects of Freudenberg’s analysis that resonated with the views of most Cearn residents. At the level of the neighbourhood, knowledge of neighbours and others in the immediate area facilitated the development of social infrastructure; which Freudenberg believed, created a norm for controlling deviant behaviour as well as providing a socialising influence on young people as everyone was known by everyone else.

The knowing of one’s neighbour and the recognition of the familiar face both lead to trust and reciprocity (Crow 2002) from which strong ties develop, all

characteristics of rural communities (Granovetter 1973), and replicated within the Cearn. Face-to face intimacy is evident in rural communities, with many inter-linkages and connections through others in the social network (Frankenberg 1966), and this degree of intimacy was evident in the Cearn. Frankenberg historically relates the origins of this intimacy of contact to co-operation around agricultural matters with, in many farming communities, a degree of blurring of class and status differentials. In more recent times, however, a combination of changes in agricultural practices, absentee landlords and commuting to nearby towns has sharpened social boundaries, resulting in a greater level of social stratification (Shucksmith 2000). The author of this thesis suggests that a significant level of blurring of social boundaries still exists within crofting areas, and is still to be found in the country areas of Lewis. The solicitor and the postman may be neighbours, be tenants of adjoining crofts and be mutually dependent upon one another at key times in the crofting calendar, for example sheep-dipping time. Within this rural intimacy strong emotional support may arise as an outcome when ties become deep-rooted or when a high density network begins to emerge, particularly noticeable within the lives of the elderly (Wenger 1991). In addition, family relationships figure prominently in rural social networks (Cheal 2002) and this was apparent in this case study where close family and extended family lived nearby or within easy travelling distance.

Crow and Allan (1994), summarising aspects of community life from across the UK, including Corby, Glasgow, Cornwall and east Wales found consistently that in 'traditional' working class communities and in migrant communities, family and kinship networks were extensive and close. The relationship of the majority of Cearn residents to their families was both prominent and positive, yet trust of neighbours and reciprocity of contact and support was high, a point of contrast to the findings of Cheal (2002), where family relationships tended to exclude close relationships with others. To some degree the centrality of family and kinship reflected the findings of Crow and Allan (1994) perhaps because the options open to the residents of the Cearn are limited, living in an island context where travel is expensive and infrequent and where geographical mobility levels are low. However, many respondents valued greatly the

proximity of family, but most had wider networks and gained support equally from neighbours or workmates, that is sources outwith the family.

A number of studies have found that rural areas are viewed positively by those that live in them - they are good places to bring up children, crime levels are usually low and people tend to know one another (Glendinning *et al.* 2003; Shucksmith, Chapman and Clark 1994) and the findings within the urban Cearns resonated with such views. Living in a rural area appeared to confer on the resident a perspective that values neighbourliness, yet there are negative emotions associated with labelling and feeling trapped with everyone knowing one's business. Some young adult respondents, reflecting on their teenage years, made reference to being in a 'goldfish bowl' where behaviours were observed and commented upon by others, often resulting in parents being informed. However, these same respondents felt that it was a small price to pay for neighbourly closeness and a society where the lives of others was important, summarised often as 'looking out for others'. (It is appropriate at this point to reiterate that this thesis focused on the views of adults over 18 years and the views of young people under 18 years were not sought). Evidence that seeks to inform the broader context suggested that many young people found rural life too quiet and boring, perhaps experiencing feelings of oppression because they were so well known. There was 'freedom to' roam safely far and wide unsupervised, but no 'freedom from' the critical eye of neighbours, relatives or acquaintances (Glendinning *et al.* 2003).

The effect of incomers moving into rural areas has been discussed in several studies (for example by Cloke, Milbourne and Thomas 1997 and Fuguitt 2004) arguing that the dynamics change, first because residents may not know their neighbours and, secondly, because incomers may have difficulty fitting into local culture. These incomers may lack easy access to the support offered by family members who may live many miles distant (Cheal 2002). In addition, incomers may hold different value systems and come from different cultural backgrounds, leading to cultural dissonance, isolation, indifference or antagonism. Population changes in a rural area that result in the appearance of incomers or migrants affect the 'density of acquaintanceship' (Freudenberg 1986) and both stages of

the fieldwork produced only limited evidence of local concern around this issue within the Cearns. However, many respondents when asked to speculate on future developments anticipated that changes in local culture might occur, and that this would be dependent on the extent of in-migration.

The Cearns, from the findings presented may be regarded as an area with a high level of '*perceived community cohesion*', as defined by Lev-Wiesel (2003), where a number of indicators have been identified as being in evidence. These included a sense of *belonging*, *perceived social support*, *solidarity*, *rootedness* and *social ties*. Lev-Wiesel found these indicators of a psychological sense of community were more in evidence in rural than in urban settings, and the results from the Cearns chimed with her findings. The Cearns has many qualities reminiscent of an urban scheme, yet in terms of '*perceived community cohesion*', the effects of rurality were apparent.

8.3 Social networks and community involvement

Social networks and social support mechanisms can be reinforced or undermined by participation in activities or groups at neighbourhood level. In the Cearns, older and middle-aged people have a long history of informal community action as well as participation and involvement in formally constituted groups, for example the fortnightly 'Spring Chickens' group for elderly residents has some 20 members. This group is an important source of support, enjoyment and positive wellbeing, and operates as a source of social capital for those who are experiencing isolation or who have recently been widowed. Day outings are organised through the Cearns Community Development Project and a week's holiday to the mainland has been a feature of this group for many years. At the level of community action, a Community Association has been in existence since the early 1980s and, as many respondents have suggested, it has been active in successful campaigning for improvements such as internal and external housing modernisation, expansion of children's play areas and green space development. More recently campaigns have been fought around improvements to the shop

and the provision of a building for meetings and activities, known as the 'Ceilidh Hoose'.

Residents have devoted considerable time to these projects and it was the older and middle-aged residents who tended to be involved, such involvement being rooted in experience of collective action, coupled with long-term residency and mutuality. These individuals reflected the norms of the *solidaristic group* (Cattell 2004); they were born locally, and have experience of coping with life effectively by accessing a range of resources, on and off the scheme when necessary. They also believed that their activities improved neighbourhood life and, like the looser-knit *pluralistic group*, they derived personal satisfaction from involvement in local activities, having the additional advantage of close support from others including family. Past involvement operated as an influential motivator for continued involvement giving older people a sense of 'having a stake in the neighbourhood', yet at the same time feelings of being overloaded were expressed:

"At the start of the scheme there wasn't one play area built into the scheme. That came from us; we set up the Residents' Association and got money through Children in Need as well as lots of fund-raising. We are still active, but it's the same people all the time."

(17F.65years old)

Others have contributed to the level of social capital in the area by involvement in recreational groups either formally or opportunistically and however it is expressed residents with *solidaristic* networks are committed to their community:

"A, my friend, and I and B across here we started the line dancing class on a Friday night for the young ones. We did it for a couple of years then the parents started fading away and the kids grew up."

(36F.60years old)

"I'll come down and waitress for the old folks when they are having their Christmas dinner, and do the dishes and things. They have a youth club on a Wednesday night and sometimes I help out."

(33F.40years old)

Research findings from urban environments have suggested that younger residents were less likely to share in these experiences and were less likely to feel a sense of belonging to an area (Cattell and Herring 2002). The findings of this case study appeared to challenge the findings from some other urban areas, with many young Cearn residents admitting that they felt a sense of belonging to the area; but, in line with the work of Cattell and Herring, they felt disinclined to get involved in formal community activities. Younger residents appeared to perceive involvement in local organisations as something exclusive and unwelcoming and little effort was perceived to have been made by the Cearn Community Development Project or the Community Association to engage with younger residents *on their terms*. Older residents complained that it is difficult to get 'new blood', citing several reasons - including lack of time, apathy and a perception that we live in a society of individualism. Significantly, when dances or bingo nights are held, albeit infrequently, then a large number of younger residents emerged to take advantage of this type of community activity. Involvement of young people of school age in youth activities was variable, hampered by a lack of dedicated youth worker provision, being reliant on staff members from the Cearn Community Development Project, who have no formal training in the needs of young people. Outdoor facilities were reasonable with an enclosed games/football area, known as the 'cage', an area well used by young people, either formally through the youth club or informally and opportunistically. This facility was closed on Sundays.

Local resources in terms of organisations and groups were seen as contextual factors and are influences on the neighbourhood's store of social capital. They can help in the development of supportive networks and relationships of trust as well as encouraging participation and developing tolerance, however, participation may encourage self-interest and parochialism (Cattell and Evans 1999). An additional and very important local resource exists within the Cearn - the local shop centrally located within the scheme and staffed by assistants who are community activists. This resource contributed to a sense of wellbeing for those that visited it regularly by providing a centrally located facility in which looser and weaker ties between residents could be developed, often through casual encounters and conversations.

8.4 Identity and belonging: the ‘Hebridean’

Living in the Hebrides conferred a sense of belonging, a ‘rootedness’ and a shared identity that some researchers, for example Lev-Wiesel, (2003) have described in relation to other rural areas where possession of shared values contributed positively to emotional health and self-esteem. A sharing of common values emerged in stage 1 of the fieldwork as a meaningful dynamic of life within the Cearnas and its interface with the notion of uniqueness and pride at being able to be identified as something special and different, something encapsulated in the term ‘Hebridean’ became an emerging theme to be investigated further in stage 2. This section of the chapter presents respondents’ perceptions when asked first, what the term ‘Hebridean’ meant to them and, secondly, to identify how the notion of being ‘ a Hebridean’ determined and maintained individual social networks at the same time as, at the level of the neighbourhood, maintaining social cohesion.

The term ‘Hebridean’ appears extensively in the geographical literature, but not in sociological or anthropological literatures where no broad analysis of the meaning of the term could be found. Geographers, (for example Boyd and Boyd 1990; Murray 1973) defined the term ‘Hebrides’ topographically and in terms of its location, and commented on its Norse origin. The term has been defined as ‘Isles on the Edge of the Sea’ (Murray, 1973: 143), a Hebridean being a resident of one such island. A sense of difference, proudly felt and articulated was underpinned by a very real sense of identity, a sense of being part of something perceived as special and that this difference had historic roots:

“We’re proud. We’re proud of it [being Hebridean]. It’s a bit like the Irish. They started to realise that they are different, not worse. We’re actually quite unique and I think that’s good to see.....I think Scotland in itself is starting to go through a pride, an identity and I don’t think the SNP have done that...Scots are just becoming clearer on their identity.”

(29M.55years old)

“When I was coming back on the plane from Inverness last Sunday I said to my mother “when you see the island [from the air] it brings a lump to my throat.....I’m homesick, almost in tears when I see the island. You know, you do feel part of it, absolutely part of it.”

(34F.35years old)

Linguistic and cultural distinctions, associated with the Gaelic language were articulated and felt to be crucial to a sense of identity, often being coupled with an awareness of island history. The language was seen as having something of an emotional quality and worthy of preservation:

“I think you’re unique if you are from an island. It has a different culture, your accent, like stands out. I’m different and proud to be different.....each island has its own history, it gives it a different perspective, you see this with the statues in town, the herring women and their barrels outside An Lanntair [local gallery]. We’ve got the Callanish stones, the Broch and Lews Castle, all features that you won’t find anywhere else. I think it makes us who we are, so yeah, we need to know where we came from to know who we are.”

(42F.20years old)

The Gaelic language was understood by most respondents even if they were unable to read it or write it fluently. It was regarded as a positive part of Hebridean identity, something tangible that marked out the distinctiveness of the Western Isles, with some residents being fluent at all levels linguistically as well as being members of competitive Gaelic choirs whose aim would be success in national competitions, such as the Mod. The last twenty years has seen a resurgence of Gaelic as a language, with the development of the Gaelic play-group (Croileagean) movement, school-based Gaelic medium education and a dedicated Gaelic television channel, and most respondents spoke enthusiastically about these initiatives. Attitudes to Gaelic have changed over the last two decades; it is no longer seen as a dead language and a barrier to success (Macleod 2008), and many residents described how their parents and grandparents were fluent in Gaelic, but they were discouraged from speaking it:

“My mother could speak Gaelic and my father could speak some Gaelic and I can understand every word of it, but we were never encouraged to speak it at home.....nor at school. That’s all changing now.”

(47F.50years old)

Hebridean identity included a spatial geographical focus, a focus that involved an appreciation of the natural environment, coupled with an understanding of the effects of isolation and distance from mainland services:

“There’s something about it isn’t there, it’s a magical place....they are all lovely islands. You know Skye, Lewis, Uist, they are all different, I’ve been on all of them because I worked on the ferries. I loved it.”

(35F.60years old)

Notions of ‘otherness’ and difference can be applied using facilities and services as a vehicle, a phenomenon described by Rutherford (1990). Rutherford believed that ‘otherness’ may be sought after for the ‘pleasures, thrills and adventures’ it may offer the narrator in dialogue with friends or colleagues unfamiliar with the context. This was evidenced by some respondents:

[It’s unique because] “you have to get a ferry [and mainland student friends say] “Oh, a ferry, that sounds rough.” I tell them everything has to come from the mainland and they are like “what shops do you have, you don’t even have a Tesco, or an Asda”? I’m like, no but we have a Co-op’. I’d go to camps a few years ago and they would ask “do you have electricity, do you have computers”? I’d say “Oh, my God I cannot believe you just asked that! They came from small towns or cities, just a drive away. Ok we’re also just miles away from a city but we are also a whole sea away!”

(42F.20years old)

Comparisons were made between ‘us’ and ‘them’, terms used as proxy measures for the real distinction which was between ‘home’ or ‘here’ (*a bhos* - over here) and ‘away’ (*air falbh*). The ‘home’ and ‘away’ contrast is widely used throughout the islands (Macdonald 1997), and was evidenced from the narratives of Cearns respondents.

Safety was stressed, being associated with lack of crime and personal freedom to roam unsupervised, regarded as of great importance by respondents with children. This was often coupled with comparisons of island life and city life especially in terms of frenetic lifestyles, leaving little time for reflection:

“I’d let my granny walk through Stornoway at 3 o’clock in the morning you know. I don’t have to worry about that [safety].”

(44M.40years old)

“Well no, there’s not a lot for them to do but at least they’ve got the freedom of being able to go out and play. I mean my sister [on the mainland] never lets hers go out because she was always terrified that they wouldn’t come back.”

(23M.45years old)

The way that individuals connected with each other, through family links and friendship patterns was a valued feature of Hebridean life, echoing the social order found in rural communities, where a common group shares common values, described as *gemeinschaft* by Tonnies (1960). This pattern, whilst still essentially intact, was perceived to be changing to a looser structure as the older generation died off and their houses were sold or left to mainland relatives who visited infrequently:

“Relation culture you know, it’s if you talk to people; “oh, it’s a relative of mine you know or a relative of my husband’s”. There’s all interconnections, and it generally helps, it’s a good side to the island, there’s no doubt about it. And it’s in the scheme.”

(32F.35years old)

Respondents commented on the perceived value of such a culture both to themselves as individuals and also in terms of benefits to the wider population, often making comparisons with experiences gained whilst living on the mainland:

“There is a certain aspect of island life that I like, everybody knows one another and if it was Saturday night’s action it was Monday morning’s gossip and everybody got it through the grapevine.....yes it’s gossip but there is a certain good aspect to a community when everybody knows who this person is and what happened.”

(14F.35years old)

“There’s no other place like Lewis.....I loved living in Glasgow for three years and that was a big shock for me to go down there. But home will always be Lewis. It’s ‘cause it’s so small and you know everybody and everybody knows you and there’s always someone to help, with no matter what. There is always someone you can go to. On the mainland you can be close to other people but never know them [unlike Lewis]. It’s just that there’s nice people in Lewis, not that I’m

saying there's not nice people anywhere else....some call it nosiness, I call it closeness."

(41F.20years old)

Working or studying on the mainland presented challenges, especially for individuals with low levels of confidence, as one young woman, a former student at Inverness College evidenced as she demonstrated behaviour that reinforced her sense of connectedness with home and familiarity:

"The girls in my class were really nice, but they were different to everybody else I knew.....their accent was different, but I was really lucky I had another Stornoway girl in my class. It's funny, but if you are away anywhere, say Inverness or Glasgow and you bump into a Stornoway person you'll stop and talk even if you hardly know them. If you saw them in Stornoway you wouldn't bother."

(46F.20years old)

The notion of 'looking out for each other' was strongly felt, with a sense that this was inculcated whilst at school:

"Everybody goes to the Nicolson Institute [the only S1 to S6 school in Lewis] and a long time ago [about 10 years ago] kids from Uists and Barra as well as them from Ness and Harris came and stayed in the hostels so you had that sort of, um, community mix. I mean they had to leave home very early [in their secondary school careers].....so they had to rely on a lot more, like, they had to rely on their peers."

(43F.50years old)

When asked to comment on Hebridean cultural values, many respondents admitted to a rural background and commented on the way of life of previous generations where hard physical outdoor work was the norm and, because many men left the islands for work, women were left at home to organise the family and tend the croft. Women occupied a central position in Hebridean life and were duly respected by younger relatives and neighbours:

"I think it was much harder work [then]. Another thing, you respected your elders, and looked after them. We were taught to respect our elders as they had a lot more wisdom than us."

(32F.35years old)

"We were based over in Shader and my granny got the water from the well. We had running water but she used to actually walk to the well

and carry buckets of water and I used to think that this was fabulous. We were laying peat fires and, em, cutting the peat, doing the hay, the animals, it was such a contrast from city life....they had a brilliant outlook on life and seemed really happy as long as their croft was ok. I've just got brilliant memories. They had ambition, purely and simply because there was no work on the island...my father left to go into the Merchant Navy, like a lot of Lewis men."

(33F.40years old)

Modern society with its emphasis on technology and individualistic patterns of leisure activity was often wistfully contrasted with the communal leisure pursuits, the 'ceilidhing', of earlier decades, with its story-telling, gossiping and live music. Television was a contextual change to life in the home, bringing English into what formerly was a Gaelic domain:

"When we were kids growing up we didn't have TV so it was card games and board games. It was back and forth to each others' houses but now, you know, it's "don't speak, Eastenders is on". [Television] has killed gossiping....everybody's got their own wee agenda and it's usually centred round the box."

(36F.60years old)

Other affective Hebridean traits were felt by residents interviewed to include: suppression of feelings, a disinclination to show emotions and a reluctance to talk about personal situations, especially if family members were involved. Respondents cited the importance of 'saving face' and were often concerned about what the neighbours might think, although this aspect of rural life was perceived to be less important in the Cearns where more casual attitudes were apparent. It was also felt that younger people felt this less, having more confidence to 'do their own thing':

"There is definitely an island mentality of saving face and keeping it [feelings] enclosed. You don't talk about things. Even now, my mother is like that.....watch what the neighbours think. I'm totally, totally different."

(33F.40years old)

This apparent reticence contrasts to the outgoing, socially adept, lively Hebridean whose perceived reputation revolves around the use of humour and practical jokes, the so-called Hebridean banter, a characteristic believed to be exaggerated by the over-consumption of alcohol:

“The Stornoway life....you can’t find it anywhere else. I mean there’s nowhere else that I’ve ever been to that you can go out during the day or a night or whatever and bump into ten people that you know...and the banter, that’s part of everyday life.”

(41F.20years old)

“If X[son] stays on the island he’ll get into this culture, he’ll be drinking over the weekend and that would be his life. And then he would get into that kind of spiral like so many people my age from school did. Males especially are like that. I don’t know but I want him to get away and experience other things, other sides of life than just island life.”

(33F.40years old)

The data demonstrated that respondents view their social infrastructure through the lens of being ‘Hebridean’, a view that reflected an interrelationship between self and structure, whereby each individual is the synthesis, not only of existing relations but of the history of these relations. The inter-relationship between people and place, as evidenced by small size, remoteness and familiarity was articulated clearly by one respondent who, whilst being an incomer from mainland Scotland many years ago, had travelled all over the island through his work:

“The place is unique.....but I suppose being in small, compressed area you tend to live more intensely with others. On the mainland you could live next door to someone for ten years and not know their name. It’s not like that here. Because of isolation it’s been untouched and untainted [by perceived mainland influences] for so long.”

(44M.40years old)

The data can be related to the literature around the epistemology associated with a study of ‘identity’. Essentialists understand identity to be a quality or sum of qualities fastened to the individual, whereas constructivists stress the social nature of identity as the outcome of interaction and positioning within a particular socio-cultural context (Papadopoulos 2008). Constructivists suggest that each subject interprets and makes sense of meaning in his/her context, with an indeterminate relationship being apparent between self and the meanings or artefacts surrounding that person.

Identity is the outcome of interaction and positioning in different socio-cultural contexts and Rutherford, by elaborating the constructivist viewpoint, suggested that 'identity marks the conjuncture of our past with the social, cultural and economic relations we live within' (Rutherford, 1990: 19-20). He goes on to suggest that lacking an identity with place resulted in 'not belonging' and, within a postmodern context, our bodies become bereft of those spatial and temporal coordinates that are essential for historicity, for a consciousness of our own collective or personal past. Within this postmodern analysis of identity, more democratic relationships and new subjectivities emerge resulting in a definition of 'home' that is more fluid, with different values, ones that relate 'home' to a culture that values individual difference and one that thrives on its own diversity. The findings of this study suggested that whilst respondents are fully aware of modern technology, of globalisation and of societal trends, they did not subscribe to the postmodernists' analysis of 'home', place and identity, retaining a perspective rooted in collectivist and community values. Describing oneself as 'Hebridean' appeared to include a raft of attributes, perceptions and social and health-related behaviours; these being ingredients of the dynamic interpretive relationship between self and structure.

The author, informed by Rutherford's analysis of the ingredients that comprise identity in modern and postmodern societies, has identified from the findings presented in this chapter, six themes that taken together demonstrate the components of the relationship between self and structure thereby helping to capture the meaning of the being a 'Hebridean':

1. Geography: includes living on a remote island, with a high quality of scenery. Distances are great, both inter-island and between islands and the Scottish mainland. Population density is low and there is a sense of isolation. Crofting is a way of life in the rural areas and the area is peaceful and has a distinct sense of its own history. Population movement levels are low with relatively little in/out migration.
2. Social: includes a sense of belonging, being 'home' with its close-knit rootedness, its shared identity and values, social ties and often with

family members living nearby. A distinctive accent, banter and friendliness are evident. High density of acquaintanceship, lots of 'connections'. Includes pride, fortitude in adversity and self-help because service provision may be inadequate.

3. Gaelic language: part of the culture of the Hebridean, even if neither understood nor spoken. Strong tradition of Gaelic arts and music.
4. Crime and safety: low levels of crime, litter and noise. The area is perceived as safe, a good place to bring up children.
5. Religion: part of the Hebridean culture and especially influential in the lives of older residents. Religion still operates powerfully in terms of Sabbath observance and socially conservative attitudes.
6. Health: including both over-consumption of alcohol and abstinence, as well as clear expectations around the role of alcohol as a social prerequisite; a tolerance of the alcoholic exists. A health-related symbolic attachment to certain social behaviours can be seen, for example, the 'roll-up' as the cigarette of choice, freely interchanged between smokers and believed to have originated in previous decades, when rural poverty was common.

The above can be displayed in the form of a diagram.

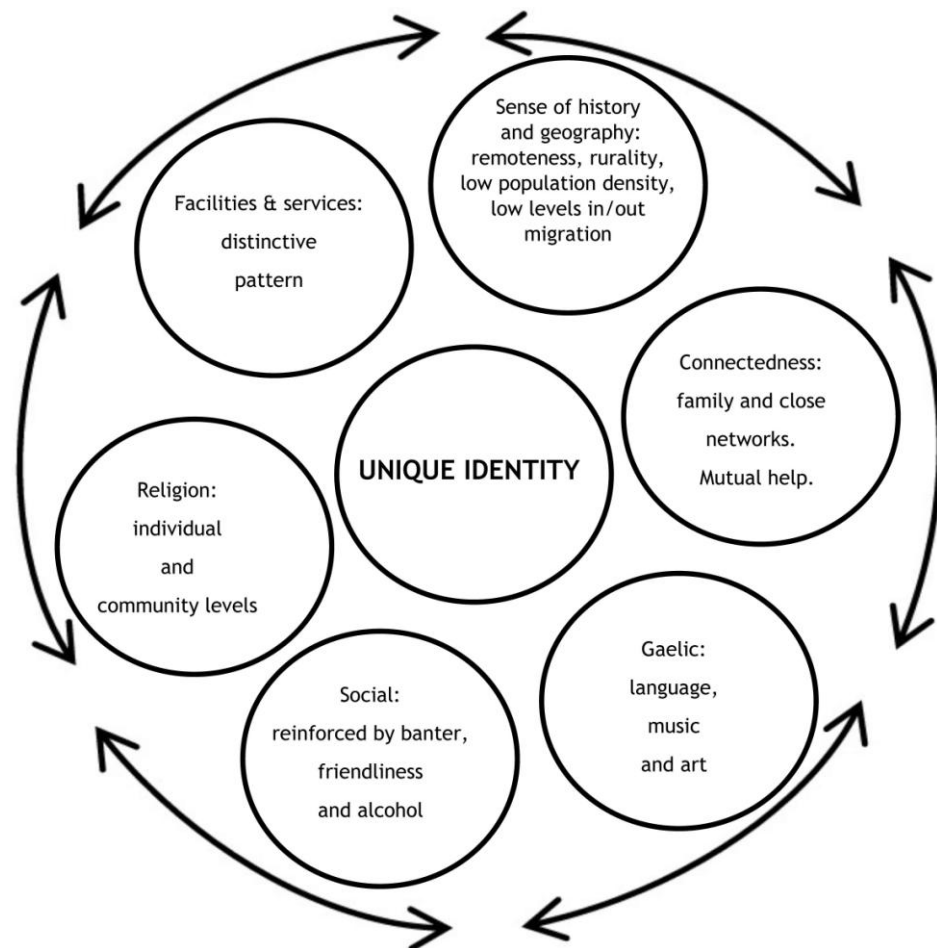


Figure 24: The relationship between self and structure with reference to the 'Hebridean' identity

The term 'Hebridean' is then not a sum of specific qualities, as the essentialist argued, but instead represents a dynamic relationship between the subject's understanding of the meaning and personal significance of the qualities listed above, and the ways that these are used in everyday discourse with others and then how they are subsequently used and reinforced in everyday life and behaviour. Meanings do not exist, the constructivist believes, unless they are used by the actors within a certain social system; they are not identical for everyone, as these findings showed, yet they are subjectively accepted and employed in everyday life. This author believes that a constructivist perspective was helpful in the interpretation of respondents' views; especially as such views represented a dynamic and evolving pattern of relationships. In addition, meanings evolve and change through discourse, leading through time to cultural and societal change.

The application of Social Identity Theory, developed from social psychology, takes further the notion of the 'Hebridean' as a group phenomenon. In Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979), a person is said to have not one 'personal self' but several selves that corresponded to an ever-widening circle of group members in different social contexts whose norms and values are reinforced by regular interactions. A social identity emerges and an individual-based perception of what defines the 'us' becomes associated with an internalised group membership, distinguished from features that mark out the rest, the 'them'. Self-esteem is enhanced by group membership of the in-group resulting in a display of mutual favouritism between members, thereby differentiating members from the others, those in the out-group. The characteristics evident within the in-group are valued and a quest for positive distinctiveness occurs, resulting in a person's sense of who they are is defined in terms of 'we' rather than 'I'. The 'Hebridean' can be viewed as an example of an in-group, a group identified by a raft of characteristics that follows a particular dynamic, one that receives wide consensus and membership. The lens through which Cearnas residents viewed their social infrastructure was informed by being a member, in the majority of cases, of this in-group. Incomers and others were welcomed into the group, provided they are prepared to accept the values of the group. Tajfel and Turner (1979) further believe that this range of social identities, associated with normative rights, obligations, sanctions and roles binds together both the individual and society.

Social identities evolve and change over time, leading to cultural and societal change within a specifically geographical context, for example the young locally-born resident with her fashion sense, university education and frenetic life-style chooses to live and work back home, enjoying Gaelic music and possibly attending a church. She successfully integrates her local world with her cosmopolitan world and the notion of 'heterogeneous modernity' is reinforced, with tensions and ambivalences, as outlined by Macdonald (1997). Any ambivalences relate to the various ways local people define their sense of belonging, and how this is expressed, through behaviour, attitude and within dialogue.

Such an integration of local with sophisticated and universal led this author to believe, based on an interpretation of the views of Cearn residents, that a description of the culture as 'authentic' rather than 'traditional' was more appropriate in terms of helping to further an understanding of the local social infrastructure. For some researchers, (for example, Macdonald 1997; Macleod 2008), Gaelic was paramount in the conferring of identity, with the Highlands and Western Isles being geographically identified as the *Gaidhealtacht*, translated as Gaeldom or the 'home of the Gael'. Within the Cearn, whilst Gaelic was seen as an ingredient of Hebridean culture, possession of the language went alongside other traits, for example hospitality, friendliness, a shared sense of history or an explicit connection with the land. The sociolinguistic model of identity, discussed more fully in chapter 3, with its notions of identity as a repertoire of alternatives and variations that constantly evolve, was a more useful framework than a simple application of its alternative, the romantic-nationalist model, with its cultural 'identikit' of music, language, festivals and literature (Macdonald 1997). To summarise, Cearn residents saw their culture as an evolving, changing dynamic process, with some clearly-defined ingredients rather than as a set of pieces that when put together make a static picture entitled 'the Hebridean', rather like a jigsaw.

8.5 Conclusion

Despite recent social and demographic changes, the Cearn housing area reflected an urban neighbourhood in which residents had strong community loyalties, a strong sense of place and a shared sense of history, the latter not being related to a previous shared history of common employment, as would be the case in a traditional working-class community. It may be posited that, whilst residents did not share a history of common employment, they shared a history of common experiences around crofting and agriculture, co-operative experiences sharpened by the effects of remoteness. In the old traditional working-class communities, the norms of reciprocity and the obligations of mutual aid which it engendered were distinctive; and these were apparent within the Cearn, although not as strongly as in the past. The Cearn

represented, within the Scottish context, a distinctively urban scheme in layout and socio-economic features, yet one that has many characteristics in common with older traditional working class areas, especially in relation to a sense of history, pride at being a resident of the Cearnas and a close-knit social infrastructure.

Residents clearly echoed many findings of other studies of rural communities (for example, Cloke and Little 1997; Walker and Hillier 2007), the Cearnas being seen as a good place to live, with close networks and a strong sense of support and goodwill, regularly reinforced by opportunistic street encounters. Kinship ties still provided a solid basis for neighbourhood life, including the strengthening of community structure and informal caring of children and others, as well as helping to curtail any anti-social behaviour. These are features of traditional working-class communities still in evidence within rural Hebridean villages and, as these findings suggest, the Cearnas residents provided evidence that this pattern of rural or traditional working-class social infrastructure was replicated. The findings demonstrated that, within this pattern of social infrastructure, looser and weaker social ties were to be found, especially among many younger residents, leading to a more *solidaristic* or *pluralistic* network structure (Cattell 2004).

The findings produced little evidence of an overall decline in social capital, a challenge to the view that in urban areas social capital is in decline (Putnam 2000). In the Cearnas, whilst there was some evidence of a deficit of community involvement by the young, mutuality and reciprocity of social support plus close networks that had strong and weak ties maintained a high level of social capital. Social capital levels are higher when people cooperate for mutual benefit and many residents had experience of mutuality through their early upbringing prior to moving to the Cearnas.

This scheme represents a ‘tale of two stories’ and this has been a recurrent theme, one that emanated from stage 1 of the research where the relevance and significance of the rural background and experience of the majority of residents first became apparent. The scheme represents a tightly defined spatial

and temporal urban environment, sociologically similar to a traditional working-class community, but one that is exposed to a set of rurally defined relationship patterns and values, related to a sense of Hebridean identity. The application of a constructivist approach to an analysis of the meaning of the term 'Hebridean' helps to ground the concept as a dynamic interplay between an individual and his/her social context, underpinned by a raft of shared values and perceptions on the nature of life. Respondents were proud to use the term with reference to themselves, with its spatial, temporal and cultural connotations and the use of the term helped to understand the nature of their social infrastructure. Use of Social Identity Theory provided a theoretical framework for interpretation of the Hebridean identity, within the context of in-group theory.

The next chapter looks at the relationship between the social infrastructure of the Cearns and the ways in which it is mediated through religious involvement.

CHAPTER 9: STAGE 2, FINDINGS 2: THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF RELIGION ON SOCIAL NETWORKS, SOCIAL SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY COHESION

9.1 Introduction

This thesis has demonstrated that five factors were operating as lenses through which residents viewed their networks and support systems. The first three related to the age and gender of respondents and the length of time they have lived in the area (for relevant literature see, for example Belle 1987; Cooper *et al.* 1999; Walker and Hiller 2007). In addition, earlier chapters of this thesis have made reference to the numerous community studies in the UK (for example, Ellaway, Macintyre and Kearns 2001; Forrest and Kearns 1999), in which the variables of age, gender and length of tenure and their effects on social infrastructure have been discussed. The distribution and the extensiveness of the social infrastructure together with the high level of social cohesion found within the Cearn, this author believed, was an atypical finding for an urban area, but within this particular scheme two additional cultural influences, rurality and religion, operated to mediate social networks and support systems. The focus of this chapter relates to the second of the two influences, religion, which exerts its influence at both the level of the individual and at the level of the neighbourhood.

It initially focuses on how individual social networks and social support structures are seen through the eyes of those with varying degrees of religious commitment, ranging from the very devout to others who would describe themselves as having little interest in religion. The chapter then examines the influence of religion at the level of the community, with particular reference to the Cearn. This section includes a discussion of the ways in which religion relates to community cohesion, for example, through the promotion of a particular morality or through symbolic secular manifestations of religion, such as Sabbath observance.

9.2 Social networks, social support and religious involvement: at the level of the individual

The first section of this chapter focuses on respondents' views of their social networks and how they are influenced by church attendance, religious commitment and by the denomination of church attended.

The *structure* of networks, (their size, density or the percentage of people who know each other) can be distinguished from both their *interactional* characteristics (such as frequency of interaction and degree of reciprocity) and also from their *functions* (such as provision of practical aid or emotional support) (Israel 1985). Networks have specific functions, for example: reducing social isolation and provision of information or practical aid, as well as the offering of emotional support and affirmation of worth. For many respondents who attended formal church events a strong network was in evidence, reinforced by the informal activities that follow a service or prayer meeting:

“There is the church group, we meet here [in the Cearns Community Centre] on a Saturday night for a prayer meeting....a lot of people come and we sit around and have a cup of tea afterwards and have an informal talk. That is good, really good.”

(13F.60years old, Free Church)

Allegiance to certain church groups, notably groups within the Free Church family, often led to a gradual and sometimes brutal severing of former friendship ties and movement from an open network of dissimilar people in terms of norms and values to a more closed group with a clear congruence of norms and values:

“She [daughter] still has friends outwith the church as well...but she stopped going out to things with them and started going to the church instead.”

(35F.60years old, Free Church)

This sort of network, focused around formal or informal church activity, reflected the *homogeneous* network pattern as described by Cattell (2001); one in which the network consisted of individuals that shared the same set of values

with social ties to people seen as similar to oneself. The network was dense, all members knew each other and there was extensive contact between members of the group. Individuals within a *homogeneous* network belong to only a small number of membership groups (Bott 1957), and they had minimal contact with others, for example neighbours or work colleagues. Individuals belonging to such a group adhered to the values and norms of that group, a positive reference group (Bott 1957), and often displayed unease at associating with others holding different views, especially those holding no religious affiliation or those that displayed a particular lifestyle, or sexual orientation of which the church disapproved. Within the Cearnas, positive reference groups around religion appeared to exist, essentially offering either support or friendship to others within the same denomination or coming together to undertake particular opportunistic or evangelical activities. In contrast to this *homogeneous* network based around religion, Cattell outlined the parameters of a looser structure, a *heterogeneous* network and this pattern of social infrastructure was demonstrated by respondents in the Cearnas with a lower level of church adherence, or where spiritual commitment was less or where religion was of little interest (Cattell 2001).

One of the weaknesses of the data presented is they give little sense of the relative strength of commitment associated with personal religiosity. However, the data did disclose that, even amongst those with a relatively low level of personal religiosity, individuals readily admitted to believing and attending church services. In this respect the study mirrored that of Brewer undertaken in the urban communities of Northern Ireland (Brewer 2004), where religion, when followed by a majority, resulted in the emergence of a group identity. Religion was seen as a resource by certain devout sections of Ulster Protestantism in their claims to be defined as special and somehow having connotations associated with national identity. In this respect church membership in the Cearnas offered group identity but there was little evidence that it was viewed in the context of national identity. In terms of group dynamics, use of Social Identity Theory helped to interpret respondents' perspectives, with categorisation of an in-group that favoured its members at the expense of the out-group, seen as comprising those with a less dogmatic adherence to the

Faith, members of other denominations, for example Roman Catholics, or those with no faith at all.

Church membership provided social support, with evidence that church networks were strong and exclusive, features of networks generally apparent in studies of the identity of in-groups (Tajfel and Turner 1979). In addition, in relation to social capital theory social relationships tended to be heavily interconnected and overlapping, reflecting the ‘bonding’ social capital found between members of well-established groups (Putnam 2000). Such relationships were often deep, implying a high degree of trust and sincerity:

“The church did help her [daughter] a lot...through difficult times. It did help her a lot and she never looked back.”

(35F.60years old, Free Church)

“The church and the people in it are genuine friends...I know they are genuine friends because of the help I had.”

(13F.60years old, Free Church)

The ties that make up the social network can be stronger or weaker in several different ways; in terms of the number of people involved, the extent of overlapping interconnection, the degree of geographical concentration or dispersal of the network and the degree of reciprocity and equality between members. The church-based social networks of the Cearn, whilst being extensive and strong, existed within the small geographical area that is bounded by the town of Stornoway. Protestant church-goers tended to show loyalty to one particular church, but would feel it to be acceptable to attend occasional services at another. In this context social ties, whilst still being church-based, followed the weaker model, as outlined by Granovetter (1973), where such weak ties acted as a bridge between different church-based groups. Weak ties, Granovetter believed, reflect the ‘bridging’ social capital as defined by Putnam (2000), and it is posited that within the various Cearn church networks the common values, norms and behaviours associated with Protestantism bound the members of the different churches together. The religious community of the Cearn may be said to display levels of both ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’ social capital in its social infrastructure. The resulting network map can be regarded as

having a strong core intra-group network based around one particular church, for example the Stornoway Free Church, surrounded by relatively weaker peripheral inter-group networks with members of other protestant churches, for example the three parishes of the Stornoway Church of Scotland.

Strong ties, with 'bonding' social capital were found to be in evidence when members sought support, either formally through Elders and Ministers, or more informally:

"I don't know that you would have to go looking for it [help].....my experience of the church up here is [although] it's not as close as it used to be there's still a close community feeling and I think it would get around....I don't know that you would have to ask for it, I think it would probably get to you, you know through word of mouth."

(27F.45years old, Church of Scotland)

"It's the nature of the culture to keep an eye...it may sound nosy but you make sure people are alright....there's a good support mechanism for church goers. I think the vast majority have got basic goodness in them; it's in their nature to look after everybody. I think they do practise Christianity."

(29M.55years old, Roman Catholic)

Some respondents strongly disagreed, feeling that the church would offer them little help, or that they would rather seek a personal solution through prayer:

"I wouldn't know how to go about accessing that support [from her church], if you know what I mean."

(27F.45years old, Church of Scotland)

"I mean if I had worries or anything, I pray about it and that does help. You feel you've talked your worries away and passed them on."

(18F.40years old, Free Church (Continuing))

The wife of an elder within the Church of Scotland offered a balanced perspective, reflecting that a church community mirrors the wider social context:

"Those that do attend church would probably come to us, but the church is made up of individuals and everybody's different.....some people you can talk to and others you can't. The church is the same as the community."

(22F.55 years old, Church of Scotland)

Some religious residents offered support at neighbourhood level, using an opportunistic, evangelical style that has its origins within the tenets of the Calvinistic church (MacRitchie 1994; Parman 1990):

“I had been delivering my [church] leaflets and I said to X [Christian friend] ‘let’s go and visit Y’ [a stranger with 2 small children, partner away]. We did and had a magnificent time with them....I met her a few weeks later and she said ‘you don’t know what that did for me’.”
(14F.35years old, Church of Scotland)

The notion of ‘social support’ and the premise that it is good or even necessary to have social support is not new and the literature that demonstrates the complexity of the field has been discussed in chapter 2 of this dissertation. However, the work of Williams and colleagues in their review of social support literature is of relevance in this section. They argued that social support can be short term or enduring, and that it required the existence of social relationships whose structure, strength, type and extent determined the type of support on offer. For social relationships to be supportive, reciprocity, accessibility and reliability were significant (Williams, Barclay and Schmied 2004). The typology developed by Williams and colleagues indicated that for social relationships to be supportive they must have the potential to fulfil a number of emotional requirements - sustaining of the individual, allowing the individual to master their emotional burdens leading to validation and finally, knowing that another individual believes in them. Two definitions of social support were used by Williams and her fellow researchers to build up a relevant typology of social support (Williams, Barclay and Schmied 2004). It is appropriate to cite the definitions at this stage as they demonstrate the distinction between social support and social networks. Lin suggested:

“Social support can be operationally defined as access to and use of strong and homophilious ties.”
(Lin, 1986: 30)

Similarly, in relation to the specific functions of social support, Thoits suggested:

“Social support most commonly refers to the functions performed for a distressed individual by significant others, such as family members, friends, co-workers, relatives and neighbours.”

(Thoits, 1982: 418)

The chapter so far has outlined residents’ views of social support and how it was affected by religious involvement, drawing on the typology of function outlined by Williams and colleagues, building on the definitions outlined by Lin (1986) and Thoits (1982). Strong, purposive and homophilous ties were evident in church-based support networks and the evidence from the religious respondents in the Cearns is that they would identify with Lin’s perspective (Lin 1986), within the context of the *homogeneous* network pattern defined by Cattell (2001).

Those who attend the Free Church family of churches can be categorised by a personal level of sacredness (Parman 1990), that ranges from ‘social attendance’ through *leantail* (following), a more serious commitment to regular attendance, to conversions and finally to being a communicant, the most sacred of categories. Historically, Presbyterian churches in Lewis have always regarded conversion, or ‘getting the *curam*’ as an event of enormous significance (Mewett 1983). The conversion takes the form of a personal, ascetic devotion to God, arising from a sense of ‘being called’, the calling being perceived as a reaction to elements of an earlier life, one possibly that is felt by the individual to be wayward and wild, with alcohol and attendance at dances or parties. Most of them contrast their present state of grace and their life in the company of ‘good living’ people with their terrible days of drinking and associating with ‘false friends’. Such ways are rejected and, voluntarily, the person turns to the church.

To receive communion, the worshipper is tested on biblical knowledge and then proceeds to give an oral testament in front of the Minister and elders proclaiming how belief in God has caused them to change their ways. Communicants perceive themselves as God’s elect and since it is impossible from Calvin’s theology to recognise the state of grace essential for the elect, the conduct of the individual is examined by elders, to establish whether the person measures up to behaviour that is seen to befit a Christian. Not all those who are *curamach* take communion, but everyone who does take communion must ‘have

the *curam*'. Men play a central role in the communion process, not because more men convert than women but because they represent the extreme states of profane and sacred in the possibilities of Highland life (Parman 1990). Within the Cearnas, several respondents who had experienced conversion went on to describe how their lives had been affected. For these individuals religion holds a central position in life, a psychological perspective outlined by Weber (1963) and discussed in chapter 4 and one in which it may be postulated that a further *homogeneous* network of shared values emerges:

"Since I was converted my outlook has changed...I've moved on and my, sort of priorities are different....the way I look at things is different...I don't seem to have the same sort of outlook that I used to have. My life changed so much when things went wrong...and I decided that the way for me was to be converted. It was kind of scary while I was going through this conversion, it meant a whole new lifestyle, not that I was one for wild parties. People at church would say things like "I knew you were paying more attention in church". It goes to show you're not on your own."

(13F.60years old, Free Church)

Conversion involves a rejection of earlier lifestyles, behaviours and networks and the adoption of a stricter pattern of living, for example forgoing alcohol and social entertainment such as dancing, as well as attendance at frequent mid-week prayer meetings. It is a deeply felt and fervent experience and conversion is necessary before the believer is allowed by the Kirk-session to take communion at the twice-yearly five-day long ceremony. Recent evidence focusing on the sociology of conversion is sparse, with the work of MacRitchie, discussed in chapter 4, being one of the few sources. Whilst his observations were documented in 1994, they were found within the Cearnas to be of contemporary relevance (MacRitchie 1994):

"Well the people who are unconverted, the church wouldn't really be able to point the finger but they [elders and members] would be able to point the finger at a converted person."

(13F.60years old, Free Church)

"I was 25 when I was converted to Christ and you know some of my friends were saying 'I bet you're glad you've lived your life a bit first'. I used to be heavily into drugs and drink and all sorts of things like

that. When I look back now, I feel ashamed. I know it's the path I had to take. It's the road for me."

(24M.35years old, Free Church (Continuing))

The membership of a positive reference group revolving around conversion initiated a feeling of higher self-worth and positive wellbeing for the individual. In addition, church membership or stricter religious adherence reinforced a number of personal health-related behaviours, for example, lower than average levels of alcohol consumption (Koenig, McCullough and Larson 2001), and adherence to this new lifestyle would be enforced by elders and others that have been converted (known as members).

The church was found to exert a particularly strong influence on the lives of those who had been converted:

"I don't think in the first place a converted person would want to sit in a pub.....the church would frown on that because there are strict guidelines, behavioural sorts of measures in place."

(13F.60years old, Free Church)

Preparation for conversion, even in worshippers of the Church of Scotland congregation led to changes in social networks:

"He's a really good boy [nephew, 18 years old], he doesn't mix with anyone in the Cearns and he doesn't go out at weekends. St Columba's are having their barbecue on the [date] and he is doing the games for them.....I think he might go for communion [conversion] in September."

(19F.60years old, Church of Scotland)

The converted (who see themselves as true 'Christians', at the expense of all others) may be said to belong to a particular reference group with its own norms and expectations, its own social infrastructure and, as residents themselves have expressed, a rejection of former social networks, support mechanisms and health-related behaviours. Respondents who were happy to describe themselves as believers, but had not experienced conversion, perceived that those converted belonged to a self-selecting distinctive group:

“They seem to change once they get religion and they are not so friendly towards you as they were. ‘We are better than you and we don’t want your company any more’. You feel that’s the way they’re looking at you”.

(47F.50years old, Church of Scotland)

It was felt appropriate to include a full range of respondents’ views in order to capture the richness of the data and application of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979), led to the conclusion that those converted form a further in-group with shared norms, values and behaviours. This author posited that this in-group exists within the context of a broader parish-based in-group. Self-Categorization Theory (SCT), derived from Social Identity Theory, provided a theoretical basis for further analysis. SCT can be applied where there are groups similar to the one in which a person has categorised himself, in this case a converted member, with SCT attesting that this new in-group will assert itself by attributing negative descriptors to the out-group (Turner *et al.* 1987). Social Identity Theory can be said to be preoccupied with inter-group relations whereas SCT implies that when a category becomes salient, people see themselves and other category members less as individuals but more as exemplars of a group prototype, underpinned by a range of group processes including conformity, social influence, leadership and power (Hornsey 2008).

Perspectives from residents during the course of this case study mirrored the analysis outlined by Hornsey (2008); men played a central role in the communion process, having, by virtue of their positions as Elders and Ministers, the power associated with admission to the exclusive group of converted.

Perspectives were polarised with others, non-believers in particular, seeing conversion and its symbolism as divisive; many commented negatively about Lewis religion and its relationship to power, control and gender:

“Lewis has a very black and white attitude to religion....it’s very much a social standing thing. If you are a Christian [converted] you’re superior. I’ve even found that, not so much now but even 10 years ago, Ministers would speak down to you if you weren’t a Christian. A lot of people in this island hold Christians up in such high esteem as if they were gods themselves which isn’t right.”

(33F.40years old, non church-goer)

This section suggested that, at the level of the individual, religion was of significance to very many respondents. It influenced their patterns of social infrastructure by determining their social networks and whom they might go to, or accept help from, in terms of social support. It can be, as Giddens (1997) suggested, a source of personal solace and support, with believers regarding those who follow alternative religions, or none, as outsiders. For those individuals within the strict Lewis Presbyterian denominations, for example the Free Church and Free Presbyterian families, it would be accepted that adherence to the faith in a literal fashion gives a blueprint for life, as well as a formula and structure to the regularity of worship. The findings within this section are able to be placed within the theoretical framework with its three components, practices, beliefs and community, as outlined by Marks (2005) and discussed in detail in chapter 4.

Marks conceptualised different aspects of religion and their relationship to health. The relationship he postulated between *practices* and *beliefs* is clear and within this study, church members in the Cearn spoke of practices of abstinence both from casual sexual encounters and alcohol as well as avoidance of drugs. Within the *beliefs and community* continuum, religious adherence ensured that a degree of support was available to church members in times of stress, crisis or bereavement. The final association outlined by Marks referred to the connection between *community* and *practices* and, within this construct, the rituals and practices associated with the communions' season and individual conversion are powerfully adhered to within Western Isles communities, including those believers residing within the Cearn. Such practices, as Marks suggested, would act as a unifying influence across the religious community and can be seen to be of mutual reinforcement value within the Cearn. The three dimensions of religion - practices, beliefs and community - are in this model associated with the nature of the individual as a bio-psycho-social being (Marks 2005).

Marks' contribution echoed that of Durkheim who, in his sociology of religion, suggested that ceremony, ritual and the adoption of a set of core values were essential in the binding together of members within a group. Durkheim argued that collective ceremonies reaffirmed group solidarity at a time when people

were forced to adjust to changes in the society around them, and that within small traditional communities all aspects of life were permeated by religion. From this perspective, Lewis may be viewed as a small traditional community where group solidarity around religion was evident, and the Cearn community followed this pattern. Durkheim, quoted in Giddens (1997) believed that religion was not just a series of sentiments or activities; it conditions the modes of thinking of individuals and the author of this study of life within the Cearn community has witnessed the above with every respondent, believer or not, having strong views on the importance of religion. This may be apparent as a personal view in terms of how religion has affected an individual's life; or the perception may be related to the effect of religion at community level. The next section unravels the perspectives held by residents in terms of the perceived effects of religion on the wider Cearn social infrastructure and seeks to relate the effect of religion to the wider notions of social cohesion and the distinctive Hebridean culture.

9.3 Social structure, social cohesion and religion: at the level of the community

This section of the chapter presents respondents' views on the effects of religion at neighbourhood level, tracking the ways in which its influence has changed over time, especially in relation to the development of social infrastructure and maintenance of social cohesion. Findings suggest that religion as a social phenomenon has dictated and determined certain of the cultural norms and expectations currently in evidence within the Cearn community, norms and expectations that in turn contribute to the identity of the 'Hebridean'.

Historically, churches have had a role in many strands of community development, including caring for their elderly members in care homes and denouncing social and global injustice, as well as setting moral standards (Flint, Atkinson and Kearns 2002). The authors in this review of the role of Church of Scotland congregations suggested, in addition, that involvement in agency or voluntary sector led community and social activities is encouraged, often in

conjunction with other denominations, with ecumenism being particularly celebrated. Local congregations in the study areas within mainland Scotland were encouraged to participate widely with other religious and non-religious groups, to develop a voice that was listened to and to become empowered through personal involvement in initiating change (Flint, Atkinson and Kearns 2002). Comparable research that focuses on reviewing the priorities and activities of the Free Church of Scotland is unavailable and the current study suggests that, whilst formal and informal networks and support mechanisms exist within a particular congregation, they may not be universally available to all, particularly those of other denominations. In Chapter 4 the literature around the influence of the strict protestant churches, including the major church, the Free Church was presented, and lack of involvement in broad community based activities was apparent, especially in conjunction with other denominations.

The Free Church family exerts a strong effect at the level of the community, nowhere more apparent than in attitudes to the Sabbath. Members and adherents are required by the Church to observe the Sabbath and, at an individual level, to be able to respond accurately to questions of the catechism as well as cultivating a life of personal righteousness and Christian devotion. Such social or community activities as sport and music are regarded as a diversion that could lead the believer astray from a godly life (Ansdell 1998), with communicants especially being expected to live out a total religious experience. Furthermore, it may be observed that on every Sunday religion becomes dominant on the island as a whole, affecting the behaviour of everyone, irrespective of their professed religiosity. This universality of expectation of Sabbath observance, described by Mewett as an example of the 'secular mode of religious behaviour' (Mewett 1983), moves into the community on Sundays, with in its extreme form, an active policing by church members. In some parts of rural Lewis the Sabbath may be said to be actively 'policed', with anything done outside the home being regarded as being in the public domain and therefore open to scrutiny and communal censure. Such 'policing' was not apparent in the Cearnas, but many respondents supported notions around Sabbath observance, often remembering how it was in earlier times, or how it currently practised in several of the country areas:

“Some people put their washing out here, but in Melbost [a village 3 miles from Stornoway], they don’t like anyone hanging their washing out. You just don’t do it....[and if you did]everybody would talk. The only people who would do it would be people who had just moved here.....probably people who don’t care.”

(46F.20 years old, non church-goer)

Religious residents ensured that their behaviour followed church dogma, but on Sundays even the less religious avoided conducting themselves in ways that would invite censure. The general rule is that the less-religious or non-religious continue to do as they wish inside their own homes, but ensured that they are not seen or heard conducting themselves inappropriately outwith the house (Mewett 1983). This strict adherence to the Sabbath, together with the priority given to the practices of evangelisation and the relatively low priority given to broader social issues, other than attacking them as ‘unworldly’, contrasted the practices of the Free Church with that found by Flint and his colleagues in relation to Church of Scotland congregations, although there was some evidence of community development by some Church of Scotland members in the Cearnas. Ansdell reinforced the distinction between the Church of Scotland and the Free Church family, commenting that the strict evangelical culture of the latter permeates communities and that the Free Church, with its expectation of literal and unquestioning adherence to the bible, remains in possession of the dominant religious ideology evident within Lewis, and that it affects all residents (Ansdell 1998). Ansdell concluded that this ideology dictates and determines the dominant social structure (and possibly the contemporary debate about Sunday ferry sailings to the mainland is a reflection of the power the Free Church still has).

Religion in Lewis presented a problem for Church of Scotland elders in that the other Presbyterian churches tended to perceive the Church of Scotland as liberal. Unwilling to appear morally lax in the face of these churches, pressure was placed on Church of Scotland Kirk sessions, especially in the rural areas, to be strict, a point of contrast with the mainland congregations described by Flint and colleagues (Flint, Atkinson and Kearns 2002). Church of Scotland Kirk sessions have been described as strict in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, substantiating the idea that these areas represented the ‘last bastion’ of true

Christianity as well as fostering the more general idea that the islands must resist the onslaught of the 'outside world' (Macdonald 1997). Evidence from this case study suggested that the Church of Scotland parishes within the town of Stornoway follow a doctrine and pattern of worship that was less strict than the Free Church but stricter than would be found in mainland parishes; in the rural Church of Scotland parishes the style of worship was reminiscent of the Free Church, with psalms and not hymns, with long sermons and a requirement for literal biblical adherence.

For many in the Cearn, religion was seen to impact at the level of the community, with respondents feeling that it gave a basis for children's upbringing, morally and socially. Community references tended to be broad and were not geared to specific distinct activities as identified by Flint and colleagues in their study of mainland congregations:

"Although I'm not religious myself, I think it was a good basis for community [living] on the island. It gives you a good sense of right and wrong, whether you are religious or not. I think it just creates a good sense of togetherness and community. I don't think it's a bad thing, a bit of respect for people."

(34F. 35years old, non church-goer)

"Going to church together, doing things together stems from the past. But I think it all stems from there. And the respect and all sorts of elements that go with that, all stems from the church."

(37M.55years old, non church-goer)

Respect for others, for example neighbours or older people was mentioned:

"To this day I'll put them [Sunday clothes wash] in my tumble drier. Nobody's seeing that. It's just I do have neighbours that are religious beside me and purely out of respect for them I won't hang the washing out."

(33F.40years old, non church-goer)

"My daughter brought him up [her son] the same way my mother brought us up, not to give cheek to nobody, and not to be going into anybody's house when they are having their dinner or their tea.....even my nephew's little children are not allowed to watch TV if they're going to hear swearing. I'll get 'thank you' and 'please' and all that."

(19F.60years old, Church of Scotland)

For many, membership of such a group operated negatively. Feelings of guilt or inadequacy were apparent, resulting in shame or anxiety and individuals, though still church members, perceived themselves judged negatively by others and felt under some degree of social discrimination. Pressure to conform by family, friends or colleagues may exist leading to reluctant acquiescence or eventual rebellion (Hassan and Warhurst 2002; MacRitchie 1994; Prudo *et al.* 1981). Several churchgoers made reference to this aspect of church life:

“I mean traditionally, from the island, people expect you to go dressed in your best Sunday outfit which is fine for some people, but for others who don’t feel comfortable dressed like that we want to go the way we are, nobody looks, nobody stares. It would be different in the Free Church, it is much stricter [than the Church of Scotland] and its older people...that’s the way they were brought up, they were trained to be like that and that’s the way it is. This pleasing other people is a big problem especially with the elders and members of the church.”

(14F.35years old, Church of Scotland)

Respondents commented on the approaches taken by different churches, with some preferring services that were doctrinally formal whilst others, usually from the Church of Scotland, preferred more informality:

“Having curry nights and social events....I’m not saying it’s bad, but when all the church is about is having social nights, it has lost its way somewhere. Too many people go to church out of habit, not because they are convinced. When the flights were starting on the Sunday we went down....to protest, to make our views known. I mean I would call myself a Christian fundamentalist because I believe the fundamentalism of the faith as taught in the bible.”

(24M.35years old, Free Church (Continuing))

“A young [Church of Scotland] Minister has drawn in a lot of young people. A lot of people come with children. And there are youth groups, they do a lot with the youth.....take them over to Valtos [Outdoor Centre], they’ve got a band and they are attracting the young people.”

(35F.60years old, Free Church)

Respondents perceived that those that have been converted see themselves as a separate group within the community and that conversion has both individual and community dimensions:

“I think some people find that when they find religion [become converted], when they get it or whatever happens, then they are looked at in a different light.”

(32F.35years old, non church-goer)

“I was overhearing a conversation about the last Communion and it was something like ‘how many [converted members] did you get this time?’ And they were saying ‘Oh about 6 but another 9 last night’. And it’s like, for what purpose, it shouldn’t be about that, comparing numbers. I don’t like hearing them talking like the church as a recruiting agent.”

(34F.35years old, non church-goer)

Another commented on the situation after marriage, where the wife is expected to follow the religion of the husband as men are seen to hold a central position in the church, relating back to the days where men were lay-preachers (Mewett 1983):

“[Church of Scotland] is a lot more liberal than the Free Church.....but you still get that mentality in the Church of Scotland because a lot of people brought up Free Church have married someone from the Church of Scotland and they’ve got to go to the husband’s church.”

(33F.40years old, non church-goer)

Conforming to particular morally conservative values as expressed publically through a dress code for Sunday church attendance validated membership of the positive reference group, for example, women in the stricter denominations will leave their hair uncut and will always wear long skirts and never trousers, even on weekdays. Sunday worship always has the congregation dressed in their ‘best’ clothes, with women wearing hats, these being symbolic and very public displays of devotion and adherence, relating to notions of *extrinsic* religiosity (Allport and Ross 1967).

Respondents in the Cairns commented on the strictness and severity of life in earlier times when there was often a fear of stepping out of line in case others should be upset. Upbringing had led to such behaviour becoming ingrained:

“You see the Free Church has kinda got a grip on this island. I don’t think it has the grip it once did.....I think the barriers are breaking

down, but the older generation have still got these strict values, from when they were growing up.”

(25M.30years old, non-church goer)

A view was promoted by many that the motivation behind church attendance is complex, with many attending worship for social reasons that related more to visibility or upbringing rather than personal commitment:

“People are maybe church-goers, getting there by default, because it’s a family thing, it’s what they’ve always done. It’s what they’ve been brought up to do, it’s not because of any conviction but just because it’s the thing they think they should do.”

(24M.35years old, Free Church (Continuing))

Allport and Ross used the term *extrinsic* religion to describe attendance at Church for social reasons or reasons associated with visibility or upbringing. Religion was seen as a means to an end that conferred both social acceptance and the reaping of possible social benefits. By contrast, *intrinsic* religion was equated with deep personal commitment. Respondents demonstrated examples of both *extrinsic* and *intrinsic* religious involvement.

The perception of social control and judgementalism and how this has changed over recent years was commented upon and for some it remained a distinct feature of island life:

“I was visiting an old lady in one of the nursing homes and struck up a conversation with the other residents and, um, it’s always ‘what religion are you, what does their [the children’s] Dad do?’ I don’t believe in God, and their Dad doesn’t do anything ‘cos he’s not around. The conversation always ends there.”

(30F.25years old, non church-goer)

“I mean everybody had a respect for the church. I don’t think there is that respect now. I think we are encouraged to air our views and we do air our views. Again, going back to culture, people didn’t do that [air their views]. People used to stay together for the sake of the children, today you don’t need to do that....there’s no stigma involved. I think many people are kicking against what was the religious face of the island. Out of the 18 houses in our court, 16 went to church [in the 1970s], now probably just six do.”

(26F.45years old, Associated Presbyterian Church)

“There wouldn’t be much washing out.....if the kids were out playing football my dad was out chasing them and they listened to him, they used to tell me about it in school.”

(18F.40years old, Free Church (Continuing))

Community activities, such as the local play-group became contexts for religious discussion; some respondents felt uneasy at this focus and perceived it in terms of domination:

“They need to be more open minded. You know, if they are that devout then they should be able to open their minds and ask questions, but they won’t if you try and suggest it to them. They have their own kinda support groups.....but if you’re not religious there’s nothing. They have a mother and toddlers group in the community centre, but it is dominated by religion. I could go there but it makes me feel uncomfortable, so we go into town.”

(30F.25years old, non church-goer)

Social control was exerted in a variety of ways, either by using fear arousal formally with sermons preaching hell and damnation if certain behaviours weren’t being followed, or informally at neighbourhood level through concerns about neighbours’ opinions. Evidence suggested people often kept problems to themselves to avoid being the focus for gossip or unwarranted attention:

“There is fear. I remember when I was at school, a couple of boys went down to the YM [YMCA] to listen to some guy and they were reading out from the Revelations and from Genesis and it was like they came to school next day and they were white as sheets.....it was all about: ‘do you realise what’s going to happen to you if you don’t do this [or] do that?’ It was all hell and damnation. They were terrified.”

(34F.35years old, non church-goer)

“You could be a religious person and you could have a problem with your husband, brother or child, but you would put on this front outside of the house that everything was ok. I think people think that if they’ve got a problem like that it makes them a lesser person in some kind of way. They’re maybe embarrassed or ashamed about it and don’t want other people to know.”

(33F.40years old, non church-goer)

Respondents demonstrated that family members, work colleagues or neighbours with no religious interest at all felt obliged to accept the social conventions of the religious in order to be accepted locally and to avoid being conspicuous or even ostracised, a finding referred to in the literature (Freudenberg 1986; Scottish Executive 2001). Sabbath observance is the notable symbol of a social convention upheld by religion, with those who are religious believing that the church conferred upon them a level of moral authority to chastise perceived wrongdoers (Mewett 1983).

All respondents revealed views about Sundays. Some saw the social expectation of peace and quiet on the Sabbath as a beneficial thing, whilst also seeing it as a day to relax, a day off work and a day where you didn't need an excuse to do nothing. The benefits associated with a day of rest were articulated by residents of both genders and by both young and old:

"I like the day off, I like the peace on Sunday, although I'm not a religious person.....I put my washing out on a Sunday but I wouldn't like the shop open. We grew up with peace on a Sunday and I think as you get older you like peace and quiet on a Sunday."
(27F.45years old, non church-goer)

"I don't do it [washing] on a Sunday, but I never did when I was on the mainland. I would go shopping on a Sunday when I was away. Sunday's a lazy day, I don't even get dressed. I think it's more casual now. Now, don't get me wrong, if I needed to go away I wouldn't think twice about using a Sunday flight.....on the second flight my sister was on it, she had gone into early labour.....although my mother is religious and was dead against Sunday flights, after that she never said a word against it. So I think when it hits yourself, you think again."
(26F.45years old, non church-goer)

"It doesn't bother me on Sundays, doesn't bother me at all. They can do what they want on a Sunday, if people want to be religious it's up to them, each to his own."
(28M.75years old, non church-goer)

The overall quiet environment didn't extend to all parts of the Cearns and for a minority it was like other days:

“Sundays are like any other day of the week, kids are screaming around, drunkards, taxis coming with carry-outs, kids flying all over the place, shouting....when I came here it was so quiet.”

(19F.60years old, Church of Scotland)

“But Sundays, that’s when you see a lot of the kids roaming around, everybody is like hanging out their washing, talking to you. Sundays are like any other day of the week, but a lot more activity. I like Sundays ‘cos I have my nephews...are days when all the family can get together and spend the day together.”

(15F.40years old, non church-goer)

Hostility to the quietness of Sundays with no facilities open was expressed by some with frequent comment that it was illogical that pubs were open but leisure facilities remained closed. It was non-working adults and young lone parents at home with small children that found Sundays problematic:

“I hate Sundays. I have to be out and about, I hate being stuck in the house with nothing to do. I’d like everything to be open. I’m not a religious person myself but I respect they want to keep things closed.....but it’s 2007 and we need to move with the times.”

(30F.25years old, non church-goer)

“What I can’t get my head round is people have such an opposition to sports centres and golf clubs opening. Yet it’s ok for pubs to open. It’s totally upside down to me. In a community like this I can’t understand why they wouldn’t want something that encourages families to be together.”

(34F.35years old, non church-goer)

Behaviours that relate to the individual consumption of alcohol formed a continuum, with some respondents practising abstinence, others being moderate drinkers and, a minority, heavy drinkers. The findings presented in this chapter demonstrated that religion relates to drinking habits at the level of the individual, but that there was also an influence at community level. For many drinking was seen as part of the culture associated with being a hospitable Hebridean (chapter 8), something to be undertaken within a controlled social context, for example, a celebratory event, or an evening out and not something that is uncontrolled and undertaken alone.

Others conceptualised Lewis life as one that presented a choice between alcohol or religion. As one young Free Church member pointed out ‘On these islands you get a choice between the Cross and the Bottle’ (Female, 29 years). Such a perspective represents a paraphrasing of the work of Parman (1990) who in her ethnographic study of a Hebridean community used the term ‘The Bible or the Bottle’ to illustrate the contradictory images of drunkenness and temperance that strike locals and outsiders alike. Residents within the Cearnas articulated clearly that heavy drinking should be perceived not as having a casual association with rejection of religion, but rather in the context of a local social life and part of the identity of the islander; it was also felt the churches rarely gave unconditional help to the drinker. Solitary heavy drinking was perceived as problematic yet even here the drinker is rarely shunned by neighbours, or even persuaded to sober up.

A further distinctive feature of Lewis life that is intertwined with religion relates to the practices associated with the funeral. Lewis funerals follow a certain format, even though there may be differences in the style of the services relating to the priorities of each denomination, and as such may be said to contribute to social cohesion. At funerals all-male mourners, in rotation, are involved in the carrying of the coffin along the streets from the church to the graveside, whilst the women look on. The services themselves vary, but Free Church services tend to be very impersonal where the deceased and his/her family are mentioned rarely, if at all, lest this is mistaken as proof of salvation by works. A Free Church funeral service would normally be solemn and possibly morbid; with a warning to the congregation that, in time, they will die and that they should prepare themselves by repentance and faith. This is in contrast to the more personal services offered by the Church of Scotland or the Roman Catholic Church. One respondent contrasts:

“It’s like when you go to a [Free Church] funeral on this island, there’s very few you can go to and really realise you are sitting in a funeral and not in a service where you are told you must do this, you must do that. I went to another funeral recently, thinking this is going to be another.....but no the [Church of Scotland] Minister kept talking about the deceased’s family, his ex-wife, his grandchildren. Him as a

person, his troubles and woes. It was a really nice service and it's the only one I've been to like that."

(34F.35years old, non church-goer)

Mitchell (2005), in her study of urban Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland understood religion as a dynamic of both personal and group identification. She argued that religious structures and religious ideas remained socially significant, offering support to some as well as exercising control on others and that this operated beyond the confines of the most devout; the author of this thesis would suggest that similar processes are at work in the Cearnas, with the additional perspective on group identity that is offered by membership of the group recognised as Hebridean. Membership of a particularly religious group, Mitchell argued, describes the social and psychological processes behind the construction of self-image and perceptions around group membership and that institutions strive to structure social life influencing as many people as possible (Mitchell 2005).

Group membership comes through social relationships and social structures as a result of which life is ordered into categories that become defined, and behaviours and norms evolve. These categories become internalised and relate to what Bourdieu, in Mitchell (2005), defined as 'habitus' - a culturally specific way of thinking and doing. Social identity theorists take group processes and intergroup relations and suggest it is possible to track the emergence of a specific identity, from which attitudes and behaviours may be predicted (Hornsey 2008). The views of the Cearnas respondents would posit that a religious in-group exists, with its own identity, nested within the broader Hebridean identity. For some the churches tapped into and reinforced a notion of a 'Highland' people culturally and morally different to those on the mainland, a view that underlined the notion that 'away' was different from 'here' (Macdonald 1997). The Church of Scotland was cast as having values closest to those of 'away' with the Free Presbyterian and the Free Church (Continuing) being the most uncompromising and therefore remaining the bastions of true Christianity in a morally beleaguered world.

At another level, within the range of Presbyterian strictness, the notion of community solidarity was disrupted by individual differences with each other and through the differences of horizontal social relations between Members (who have been saved), Adherents (other committed church-goers) and Worshippers (a broader group of less committed church-goers, in terms of involvement and level of attendance). The ecclesiastical hierarchical distinction between congregation, elders and ministers may be said to inhibit cohesion. All of these matters were contested and respondents' views demonstrated that within a small geographical area such as the Cearn, there was a good deal of ambivalence around religion and the perceived power of the churches.

Significantly, the effects of religious practices over the decades have led to habituated behaviour, with its attendant raft of attitudes, beliefs and social norms, operating at the level of both individual and community. For many residents, practices that were originally religious in origin are now seen as 'island' practices, none more so than the secular practice of Sabbath observance exhibited by non-believers, seeing Sunday as a day of rest and an ingredient of broader Hebridean culture, further marking this community out as somehow different from communities elsewhere.

9.4 Conclusion

The author of this thesis believes that the existence of such strong and enduring attitudes to Christianity has made the communities of Lewis and Harris distinctive and, coupled with their relative remoteness and rurality, has ensured that any study of social infrastructure will produce a distinctive set of findings when compared with those from other mainland communities. Strong evidence existed relating to the ways that religion influenced the social infrastructure within the Cearn, essentially through the establishment and maintenance of positive reference groups, through religious ceremony, ritual and sharing of values. In addition, the author believes that respondents clearly articulated the wider importance given to religion in the maintenance of social cohesion, the promotion of values, for example mutual respect of others, and the cultivation

of appropriate behaviour; and that some findings chimed with similar research from other communities, for example Mitchell (2005), although there are points of difference between urban Ulster and the Western Isles. However, a number of respondents did not see religion as a force for social cohesion or community development; rather it was viewed as a divisive and polarising influence in which religious traditionalists, both young and old, were locked into a resentful debate with more secular and liberal voices around a raft of issues, with Sabbath observance being the issue of symbolic significance. These findings offer a challenge, in that there have been few, if any sociological studies to date that have focused on the patterns of life within Western Isles communities, and none that have taken religion as a focus in which views have been gained from both worshippers and non-believers.

CHAPTER 10: DISCUSSION

This chapter examines the main findings of the thesis specifically in relation to its aims and objectives. It concludes by considering the strengths and limitations of the study.

10.1 Aim 1 findings

10.1.1 How did residents' perceptions of health relate to available routine data that demonstrated health and social inequality?

Routine data on health status demonstrated levels of morbidity and mortality in line with the socio-economic profile of the area, revealing no results that were unexpected. By way of confirmation, respondents' views of their own health status mirrored views from studies undertaken within other deprived urban areas, where health is seen either as an ability to cope with day to day living, an absence of illness, or, in terms that relate to particular lifestyles.

Routine datasets painted a picture of the Cearnas as a scheme that displays high levels of material and social deprivation distinguished by high levels of unemployment or low paid casual work. Income levels and educational attainment levels were low when compared with the Scottish and Western Isles average levels, and there were a larger number than expected of single parents and lone elderly. Housing was essentially urban in its design with groups of houses of plain appearance grouped closely together, not in streets but around a number of courts, each having a central grassed area. Population density levels were the highest within the Highlands and Islands and, in common with many urban schemes, most residents were social renters with only a small number of homeowners.

High satisfaction levels of local health service provision were uncovered, a finding echoing evidence from other rural areas. However, respondents with alcohol and mental health issues presented an alternative perception with

inadequacy of service provision and negative staff attitudes such as judgementalism being cited. Service provision issues were not a major topic of interest in this thesis, but the author felt it appropriate to posit that some staff have issues in the separation of the professional nursing values of non-judgementalism and equity from a personal strict and judgemental religious belief.

10.1.2 How were the main physical characteristics of the Cearn's environment perceived?

Literature describing urban life as a series of 'problems', abounds, for example Damer (1989); or in terms of a pathology where urban life is characterised by anonymity, congestion, poverty, bad housing, poor health, crime and violence (Savage, Warde and Ward 2003). There were familiar 'urban' issues apparent in the Cearn's, including litter, problems with over-consumption of alcohol and occasional rowdiness, yet when residents were asked about the importance of such issues the majority focused on the scheme being perceived as safe, crime-free and quiet. In relation to image, residents of urban schemes may be subjected to a degree of stigmatisation (Hastings 2004) and historically this had been apparent in the Cearn's. Evidence from this study suggested that the negative image had become less pronounced, although perceptions held by others from outwith the scheme remained negative. Significantly, it appeared not to have been internalised by present day tenants, a finding that contrasts with studies from other urban areas, (Cattell 2004; Robertson, Smyth and McIntosh 2008).

Housing improvements, play park upgrades and the planting of trees and shrubs over recent years demonstrated to residents that the local authority and housing association were prepared to invest in the area. Such visible expenditure contributed to the positive perception of the housing stock and green space, echoing the work of Andersen (2003) that demonstrated that the nature of the physical environment (both in terms of visual quality and type of building) was important to residents. The narratives of the Cearn's residents demonstrate that

perceptions of the built environment offered congruence with the findings of other studies. This study, therefore, offered little that is new, except that negative imagery of the scheme had not been internalised by those that live there. The distinctiveness of the scheme lay not in its houses but in the housing layout and its interface with the people who lived there; the scheme experienced low levels of crime and vandalism and high levels of opportunistic interactional opportunities between neighbours who met out of doors regularly, giving scope for exchange of news and occasional offers of help and support. In addition the Cearns had retained a number of community facilities, including the shop, the community centre and the 'ceilidh hoose', a small meeting venue that created opportunities for more organised interaction. Facilities of this nature are a dwindling resource on many urban schemes, yet in the Cearns these buildings were well maintained and had significance in that they were perceived to reinforce the ties necessary for vibrant community life.

10.1.3 How close-knit is the community and how did a feeling of being close knit relate to a typology of social networks?

A sense of belonging, together with a feeling of being close-knit, was evident within the scheme, facilitated by its compact nature, its relatively small size and a pedestrian-oriented layout of courts where residents interacted intentionally or accidentally on a regular basis. This phenomenon was noted by the author both in conducting this study and previously in his role as a health promotion worker involved with residents of the scheme. The author of the present thesis believes the Cearns to offer a modern *polis* in Simmel's sense, one in which communality and individuality interact positively on a day-by-day basis (Simmel in Levine, 1971). This led the author to reflect that the evident sense of belonging to the Cearns was facilitated by other factors, some of which emerged as the study progressed.

The current notion of being close-knit, when applied to an urban location, tends to describe *traditional* communities of older settled residents gathered around a single source of employment, for example a coalmine or steel plant (Cattell

2004; Dodd 2006). The Cearns is close-knit, but not due to the close proximity of common employment, in fact those who are employed work in many different sectors, including the off-shore oil industry with its distinctive two weeks on-shore and two weeks off-shore pattern of working. It was clear that respondents from all parts of the scheme saw themselves as being close-knit, some courts more than others, yet it was not only the more settled residents that described the area as close-knit, a number of younger residents with a shorter tenure of tenancy held similar views, thereby presenting a challenge to the *traditional* pattern of social infrastructure as defined by Cattell in her typology of networks. It became apparent that perceptions associated with being a close-knit community were related to other factors. The findings from this community suggested that the emerging factor of significance in facilitating the sense of being close-knit revolved around place of birth and upbringing with the majority of residents being local in origin. In addition, a sense of 'connectedness' was important with residents being able to articulate, from extensive personal knowledge, detailed descriptions of who is related to whom, or which village neighbours came from. Frisby (1985) related an understanding of life within a specific urban landscape to earlier individual experience and cultural traditions and values, using the notion of a 'prehistory of modernity' in which the past, possibly a rural past, can be brought into a current, urban context, manifesting itself through symbols and behaviours associated with learned behaviour through upbringing, or through the imbibing of traditions of the past.

The compact nature of the scheme encouraged most residents to feel settled as all parts of the scheme are within easy walking distance of each other. Kearns *et al.* (2000) posited that the concept of a 'home area' is bounded by the area reached within a 5 to 10 minutes walk from a resident's front door, and if this analysis is applied to the Cearns then the whole scheme may be viewed as representing a 'home area', a spatial analysis believed to facilitate belonging, attachment and a sense of identity. A number of younger respondents experienced belonging and attachment by describing themselves as 'real Cearnies', a term used with pride and without the gang connotation described in some mainland schemes. Social network patterns when analysed by duration of residency, gender and age revealed similarities to the work of other researchers,

for example Cooper *et al.* (1999) and Walker and Hiller (2007), in which older, female and long established residents tended to have the closest networks often originating through the workplace or informal contact at the school gate. Female respondents who have lived in the scheme for many years made reference to the importance of neighbours in their day to day lives, not just in terms of the reassurance associated with the familiar face, but in terms of a wider reassurance associated with mutual care, often expressed as ‘looking out for each other’. Silburn and colleagues (1999) suggest younger or newer residents feel a degree of social isolation and unfamiliarity as social interactions take time to build up, yet evidence from respondents in the Cearnns in their mid-twenties challenged this view with a number admitting to having close networks locally (reminiscent of the network typology of the older resident). This was facilitated, the author of this thesis posits, by upbringing as a number were children themselves on the scheme, or because they went to the same school and knew (or knew of) each other in that context. It was significant that there is only one secondary school for the young people of the Isle of Lewis and therefore knowledge of one’s peers is extensive. In conversation, if clarity is needed, it is permissible to ask another about their relatives and where they originate, usually in the form of ‘how are you connected to village X/ the Cearnns/ or to Lewis?’ Most male respondents exhibited a wider network of friends through the workplace; in common with female respondents they articulated vocally an interest in ‘connectivity’ and it was the implications associated with such concepts as ‘connectivity’ and ‘belonging’ that informed the author in the formulation of the research questions for stage 2 of the fieldwork.

Family, neighbours, friends and people in the wider community constituted membership groups (Bott 1957), and the findings from this study suggested that the earlier description of the Cearnns as a *traditional* community (Cattell 2004) was in need of some qualification. The Cearnns was not able to be perceived as a *traditional* community bound together by previous employment structures, nor was it a community in which only long-term residents had close networks; yet it had certain features in common with *traditional* communities in that a tight-knit structure was evident. Within this tight-knit structure a strong sense of place was apparent with residents sharing a strong sense of history, it being a history

defined through rural origin and upbringing. Rurality and remoteness encouraged values and norms that historically aided survival but residents still perceived them as valuable, resulting in a *rural traditional* community. A further modification of Cattell's typology may be suggested, one that results in a *young rural traditional* group centred on family and friends all of whom reside nearby; the existence of such a group further underlined the distinctiveness of the Cearn. Many respondents admitted to a sense of belonging to the scheme, declaring it to be close-knit, *whilst at the same time* describing their social networks outwith the scheme, perhaps through work or frequently through church attendance. The prevalence of church attendance and respondents' views concerning the wider impact of religion on the Cearn community reinforced the distinctiveness of the scheme and formed an area of further investigation in stage 2 of the fieldwork. It is the *combination* of rurality and religion operating within an urban and deprived context that marked the Cearn as distinctive.

As a research objective respondents were asked to compare the Cearn with mainland housing areas and the next section briefly discusses their perceptions.

10.1.4 What were the similarities and differences between the Cearn and mainland housing schemes?

Few residents had any first hand knowledge of living on the mainland and so perceptions were based on anecdote and rumour. Mostly respondents held negative views of mainland schemes and were quick to contrast the Cearn as crime free, friendly and safe and were ready to point out that the characteristics associated with the 'sink estate' did not apply. Image, however, featured in comments, notably around the use of the epithet 'Colditz', a term used negatively when the scheme was being built.

Housing estates develop an image over time, and the Cearn is no exception. However, early stigma and labelling associated with the application of the term 'Colditz' in the 1970s and 1980s had largely passed into history, with respondents being positive about the area and its image - in contrast to

descriptions of large mainland schemes populated by social renters. Several urban studies, for example those of Cattell (2004) and Ellaway, Macintyre and Kearns (2001) commented that neighbourly interactions may be sacrificed through suspicion and fear of trouble; in the Cearns a contrasting perception of neighbours was apparent. The scheme is urban in its pattern of housing design and layout, but its residents display qualities reminiscent of rural Lewis communities, from which the majority have originated.

The chapter moves on to discuss the findings from stage 2 of the research, where the emerging themes from stage 1 were unpacked and conceptualised as a second research aim. The findings are discussed, in turn, in relation to the detailed objectives that emanated from Aim 2.

10.2 Aim 2 findings

It became apparent from findings relating to Aim 1 of the research that rurality, language and religion mediated the nature of the social infrastructure. The next section of this discussion focuses on influences and attributes associated with the possession of a rural background and how they manifested themselves within an urban environment.

10.2.1 How did the singular characteristics of rurality influence the social environment?

In this thesis the concept of ‘density of acquaintanceship’ was felt to be of significance in an understanding of rurality (Freudenberg 1986). Rural communities have been found to have a higher ‘density of acquaintanceship’ than urban ones and, contrary to expectation from the literature, the Cearns represented an urban scheme with a ‘high density of acquaintanceship’; one in which knowledge of neighbours and others was extensive. Face-to-face intimacy

was evident in rural communities forty years ago, with many inter-linkages (Frankenberg 1966) and there is evidence that in recent years many rural communities have witnessed a decline, yet the evidence from the Cearn's respondents suggests face-to-face intimacy and close knowledge of others exists, partly related to the over-riding influence of remoteness of the Western Isles and partly related to local upbringing. As a consequence, isolated Hebridean rural communities reflect those described by Frankenberg and the findings of the current study demonstrated that the social infrastructure of the Cearn's follows this pattern. Historically such rural intimacy was reinforced by co-operative activities around crofting, such as sheep dipping or fencing, activities that led to the development of strong ties so characteristic of rural communities (Granovetter 1973), and significantly these strong ties were carried forward into the Cearn's, evidenced by the numerous examples in the study of practical and emotional support, offered and accepted. The author of this thesis believed the ties to be further strengthened by the sense of self-help reinforced by remoteness. Reciprocity and trust were discernible from many narratives, including both young and old, with men often co-operating around practical tasks and women, in addition to offering practical support, being sources of emotional support in times of difficulty.

The role of family members in offering support to younger residents is important and workers such as Cheal (2002) have suggested that younger residents in rural areas rely extensively on close family when they live nearby; and this was evidenced in the Cearn's. Respondents appeared to value the support and friendship offered through family networks, but many had wider networks that were often extensive, resulting in a degree of bonding social capital with family and close friends and bridging social capital with others. The possession of such a wide range of membership groups was typical of those with a *solidaristic* network pattern, evidenced by strong local ties and looser contacts, the latter often acquired through a high level of involvement with local voluntary groups.

Residents whose networks corresponded to the *solidaristic* model were more tolerant in their views of others, for example incomers or ethnic minorities as well as showing a broader understanding of social issues. They were able to cope

interactively with membership of local groups as well as giving and gaining support from close personal or neighbourhood ties, having therefore homogeneous and heterogeneous ties that enabled them to build up social capital with both thick and thin trust.

Cattell (2004) has pointed out that those residents with more restricted social networks, the *socially excluded*, tend to show a variety of personal circumstances involving poor physical and mental health, low self-esteem and poor coping skills, including often a fear of crime and lack of trust in others. Some respondents' narratives suggested membership of this network; however, respondents failed to demonstrate the explicit articulation of fatalism or hopelessness evidenced by Cattell and those who admitted to some degree of social isolation had regular contact with neighbours, and had developed social networks that facilitated coping with adversity. When people co-operated, social networks evolved and a resource was produced that generated social capital thereby reducing the sense of fatalism and hopelessness (Wellman and Wortley 1990), and this was evidenced.

The next section examines the influence of a cultural identity, the symbolic label of being not just an islander, but also a 'Hebridean', on notions of self and social infrastructure.

10.2.2 How did the Hebridean identity interface with the social environment?

The meaning of Hebridean identity was strongly articulated by residents, especially when the 'Proud to be Hebridean' car sticker was shown. Constructivists, such as Rutherford (1990), have suggested that identity relates to an interaction with place, positioned within a specific socio-cultural context that results in a sense of belonging. The author of this case study found a constructivist perspective helpful in understanding identity in terms of interactions, with place and people set within a geographical and historical context. The notion of identity seen by essentialists as a summation of specific

qualities, was not viewed as helpful as it rendered identity as little more than a checklist against which one did or did not measure up. The interaction of the constructivists' epistemological position, which allows for changes over time of the context, was reflected in narratives; for example, one could still feel a Hebridean and be in favour of Sunday ferry sailings, opposition to which, until relatively recently, was seen as being synonymous with membership of the true Hebridean culture.

Notions of home, place and identity in the Western Isles were rooted in collectivist and community values, with a partial rejection on the part of residents of the postmodern analysis of 'home' as a fluid concept that valued individual difference and thrived only on its own diversity set within a globalised, technically sophisticated environment. However the remoteness of the area led many respondents to value modern communications with many recalling, as mature students, how local further and higher education delivery was centred around on-line course delivery and support through video-conferencing. The Cearn's respondents represented an example of traditional, modernist views of place and identity with views that are evolving within a wider postmodern technologically sophisticated society.

The notion of a Hebridean identity with its emphasis on a distinctive pattern of social interaction was elaborated further by some residents in terms of a raft of perceived differences with mainland communities, with a sense of 'us' and 'them' or 'home' and 'away' being stressed. The application of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979) to individuals adopting an identity suggested that a psychological group was formed in which a shared social categorisation of self in contrast to others evolved which, in a given situation, becomes the basis for behaviour. Social identity can usefully be regarded as a 'socially structured field' with its in-group and out-group categorisations that reflect social relationships. Identity was facilitated because norms and traditions were shared, there being a high degree of 'connectedness' between individuals. By applying Social Identity Theory, this author suggests that further categories could be identified within the Hebridean in-group, for example the crofters who, with their specific relationship to the land (with its grants and loans), make for a

degree of exclusivity in relation to non-crofting rural dwellers. Crofters represent a specific in-group with social networks that are maintained by common purpose, for example, coming together at village level to dip sheep, maintain fences or to make decisions on applications for housing developments on common land.

Hebridean identity was clearly and positively defined. A constructivist epistemology and the application of Social Identity Theory helped to interpret the respondents' narratives; and demonstrated that identity, with its emphasis on positive relationships and getting on with others, had helped to explain the patterns of social networks and social support mechanisms shown by residents of this small, remote scheme. Respondents were asked to compare their perceptions of Hebridean culture and identity to notions of urban culture and the next section briefly discusses the differences between rural and urban culture.

10.2.3 What were the differences between rural and urban culture?

The debate around rural and urban culture has been influenced by researchers from the Chicago School of sociologists (for example, Redfield 1947; Simmel 1994; Wirth 1938) with contemporary language still reflecting that used by earlier workers. It is posited that urbanity is distinguished by high levels of anonymity between individuals, that populations are transitory and that the way of life reflects that articulated by Tonnies (1960) or Liebersohn (1988), that of *gesellschaft* or simple association between people, as opposed to *gemeinschaft* or community, commoner in rural communities, where a social order involving norms, shared values and traditional religion exists. Respondents within this urban case study articulated examples of shared norms and values, of a life around cooperation more than competition and to that degree the Cearns represented a distinctive phenomenon, an urban *gemeinschaft*, where trust and reciprocity are still to be found and the patterns of social infrastructure reflect those of traditional *gemeinschaft* rural communities.

Attitudes and shared values are mediated through a common language and, unusually within the context of modern Scotland, the Gaelic language is used as the language of choice by many residents within the Western Isles, including those residing in the Cearns. The next section briefly discusses the perceptions of Gaelic speakers in relation to Hebridean identity and social infrastructure.

10.2.4 How did Gaelic speakers view the Hebridean culture and how different were their social network patterns?

Gaelic speakers are as diverse in background, life experiences, attitudes and needs as any other linguistic group in Britain, and, with the exception of physical activity uptake, mental health and alcohol, they appeared to show the same health concerns as the general population (MacNeil, Stradling and MacNeil 1996; Scottish Executive 2000c; Scottish Executive 2005). Respondents shared the view posited by MacNeil and colleagues that culturally they saw themselves as ‘somehow different’ whilst accepting that they ‘operated across two cultures’. The home language may be Gaelic, but English television programmes are watched and English language books and newspapers read. Also, the globalised nature of the world was recognised.

Respondents felt that Gaelic was an important ingredient of the Hebridean culture, an ingredient having an historic thread to the past and yet clearly in evidence in the present in terms of music, art and literature. However, there was little evidence that respondents’ patterns of social networking were determined by possession of the Gaelic language; a broader range of social forces were at work, for example, cost or availability influencing, for example, leisure or social activities.

10.2.5 How did religion interact with the social environment?

One of the aims of this study was to investigate the effect of religious belief on the social environment of respondents at two levels, the individual and the community.

At an individual level it was clear from respondents' narratives that religion played an important part in day-to-day living. Within the context of the Presbyterian faith some residents admitted to being regular or irregular worshippers, whilst others, known as adherents, showed greater commitment, the most devout of whom having experienced some inner spiritual change as a result of God speaking to them. This was the most sacred category and in the local vocabulary they would be described as 'getting the *curam*', a phrase that was understood by all of the island population. The individual believes that they are one of the elect, will get to heaven and be saved, provided they live a blameless life, teetotal, morally pure and devout. Positive benefits accrued to the individual, a healthier lifestyle was followed and feelings of self worth were enhanced, benefits articulated by Koenig and others (2001) in their review of the health impact of religion.

The conversion process may offer health-related and other benefits to the individual, but the narratives of respondents suggested dimensions to conversion undescribed in the literature. An individual may feel abandoned and snubbed as they see a former friend becoming converted; a result of conversion being that the church recommends former friendships be broken and new networks formed essentially with others who have also been converted. Similarly, residents' narratives suggest that a public witness of conversion left many adherents and worshippers feeling singularly inadequate, as they compared themselves to the saved member and it is posited by this author that both processes operate to undermine self-esteem and personal levels of confidence.

The converted, as a group sharing similar values and following similar behavioural norms may be viewed using Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979) with the converted being seen as an in-group, separated from a wider

church-related in-group. The notion of the Hebridean identity discussed in an earlier section suggests that an in-group could be defined, both as an entity in itself, and in relation to others. The case of the converted 'in-group' merited a rather different analysis. The converted, by definition, saw themselves as the most sacred, *the* saved, *the* elect and, as a consequence, viewed others not in the group in a more negative way as witnessed by the breaking of former friendships, so clearly articulated by some Cearnas respondents. Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT), derived from Social Identity Theory (Turner *et al.* 1987), was useful in an analysis of such an in-group, suggesting that the group prototype was maintained by a range of additional processes, for example conformity, power, hierarchical leadership and control. Social processes involving power were not in evidence in discussions around Hebridean identity.

The strength of religious belief determined and mediated the social network of many residents, with variable outcomes that related to the number of membership groups (Bott 1957) and their homogeneity (Cattell 2004) and the sacred provided examples of few membership groups and homogeneity of network structure and function. For worshippers in the Church of Scotland, individual expectations were less in terms of dogmatic adherence to scripture, and the categorisation of devoutness into worshipper, adherent and communicant was blurred, with less self-categorisation and negativity. It was appropriate to use Social Identity Theory to compare Free Church communicants with Church of Scotland communicants in terms of their positions within the parent body. It may be suggested that the communicants of the Free Church represented an in-group existing *in parallel* with the wider church congregation, whereas in the Church of Scotland, the communicants existed *nested* within the whole church.

The case study included respondents with no religious belief plus those who admitted to being intrinsically religious but not interested in attending church services, reflecting the views of Wilber (2001a; 2001b) where a spiritual need was described outwith an established formally-constituted and denominational church structure. This disparate group of individuals could not be analysed using social identity approaches, as their narratives had little in common. The

narratives of members of other churches, for example Roman Catholics or Mormons, offered little new to the findings of the study, except by the presentation of a sharp contrast of their religious practices with those of the Presbyterian churches. Earlier studies on Protestantism in Lewis, described fully in chapter 4, underlined the strictness of the faith (MacRitchie 1994; Mewett 1983; Parman 1990) and this author was surprised to find in the narratives that views had changed little from those described in earlier studies. The protestant religion was still strongly adhered to, by a majority of the Lewis population, including residents of the Cearnas.

Narratives relating to religion at the level of the neighbourhood produced a polarisation of views, some believing it to be a good basis for children's moral and social upbringing whilst others saw it as a negative, divisive influence. Some non-believers surprisingly held the former view, and related it to the way a community 'looks after its own'. Believers felt that churches maintained community cohesion, often bemoaning the perception of a 'broken community' that could be repaired if only church attendance levels rose and more believed. A number of respondents were clear that religious influence at community level was divisive and damaging, especially if non-believers were labelled negatively by religious individuals perceived to be behaving towards them in a sanctimonious manner. Charges of hypocrisy were in evidence with respondents stating that when some believers were on the mainland they would travel and shop or use other facilities open on the Sabbath. An interface emerged between visible and unobserved behaviour, a relationship described in earlier accounts of religious societies and one that postulates that a degree of hypocrisy holds communities together as it allows the blurring of boundaries. For example, Wilson writing on Victorian England suggested:

“Without a measure of hypocrisy, a blurring of the edges between Appearance and Reality, societies cannot function.”

(Wilson, 2002: 565)

There is an acceptance in Lewis culture that behaviours exist that would excite disapproval if permission were sought from strongly religious individuals yet, if they are not visible, they will be tacitly accepted and go unchallenged and this

author posits that this may aid community cohesion by ensuring the community changes occur incrementally and often without serious acrimony.

No issue was found from the narratives to polarise discussions on religion like Sabbath observance and most religious respondents believed it should remain as it has done for decades, silent with shops closed and no transport, no work and no children playing outside. The opposite view was expressed by some who wanted it to be like any other day, with a full range of services, mirroring the mainland Sunday with its widespread opening of shops. Two aspects of narrative were significant in the discussion of this study; first, respondents both young and old with no religious interest (or who were avowed atheists or agnostics) liked the quietness of a Lewis Sunday and the fact that they did not need to work and could not be asked to work. For many it reinforced the difference between 'home' and 'away' and was in their eyes a further dynamic to being a Hebridean. Secondly, many respondents from the Church of Scotland, and others with what may be cited as a 'loose faith' declared that they would be happy to see wider transport options including a mainland Sunday ferry sailing. The Sunday issue (for press cuttings that show the strength of feeling around Sabbath sailings see appendix 6) was perceived by some as unwarranted social control of a majority by a vocal, well-organised and significant minority of the population, whereas, at the other extreme, the strictly religious saw in Sabbath observance a visible demonstration of true and unyielding Christian belief, a demonstration that acted as a reinforcement of group membership. One fascinating observation that arose from this study was the degree to which a religious practice, for example Sabbath observance, had become part of Lewis culture, a phenomenon defined by Bourdieu, in Mitchell (2005) as 'habitus', whereby a culturally specific action or behaviour became internalised and part of a wider identity.

A perceptive anecdotal view that emanated from the narratives was that change 'comes late to Lewis and when it comes it is late to leave'; it was felt that many issues in relation to the historically late adoption of a strict religion, and more latterly its possible replacement by a more liberal interpretation of scripture, fell into this analysis. However, it should be remembered that thousands on the

island still proudly follow the strict dogmatic fundamentalist approach to religion.

The next section briefly discusses respondents' views in relation to their health and the specific impact of religion.

10.2.6 In what ways did religion interface with health?

When asked about health religious adherents specifically identified personal prayer and support from fellow churchgoers in times of marital crisis and bereavement as being of positive health benefit and also mentioned teetotal lifestyles, a balanced, if traditional, diet and an appropriate level of physical activity. These positive health outcomes can be located within the Beliefs - Community and Beliefs - Practices Framework of Religion and Wellbeing developed by Marks (2005) and discussed in chapter 4. Conversely, religious judgementalism and the negativity associated with being perceived as inadequate may lead, as one respondent suggested, to 'a degree of spiritual anxiety that leads to religious depression.'

Evidence from rural mental health literature suggested that social isolation exacerbated a tendency of vulnerable individuals to possibly turn to alcohol or drugs (Philo, Parr and Burns 2003), and the author of this thesis tentatively suggests that some respondents might be said to have echoed this finding.

Clearly articulated throughout the research findings was the issue of alcohol, negatively in terms of its effect on health and families and positively in terms of being a distinctive element of local culture, and the next section discusses alcohol and its effects in greater depth.

10.2.7 How was the relationship with alcohol articulated?

Both respondents' views and examination of routine datasets highlighted the dominant position of alcohol in any health related debate, with discussion at

three levels. First, alcohol related morbidity and mortality leading to an examination of hospital admission levels, patterns of drinking and levels of consumption. Secondly, alcohol as an ingredient of local culture and lastly, the possible relationship epitomised by the phrase ‘church or bottle’, whereby over-consumption of alcohol by some was seen as a rebellion against a dominating church.

Routine data sets (NHS Western Isles 2008; Scottish Public Health Observatory 2008) indicated levels of alcohol-related hospitalisations consistently above Scottish rates, for both directly related alcohol conditions and for alcohol attributable conditions. In recent years rates are increasing faster amongst women, and there appeared to be some geographical variation of alcohol misuse rates within the islands, but almost all levels were above national levels. Respondents in the case study perceived over consumption of alcohol to be a problem, many having first-hand knowledge of the effects of alcohol, either directly at home, or through its effects on the neighbourhood. An acceptance of alcohol together with tolerance of the alcoholic was evident in respondents’ narratives and was seen as a part of the culture, features similarly recorded by Ennew (1980) and Macdonald (1997) in their studies of the Hebrides. Reasons for acceptance may be complex but the drinker may well be a relative, albeit a distant one; in the country areas he will be a neighbour not to be offended as being offensive or unfriendly is not an island trait, such characteristics belonging to those who live ‘away.’ He, it is almost always a he, will make a tour of the village knocking on doors to get either alcohol or money to buy alcohol. As Macdonald cites:

“the already drunken X will be given a lift to the bar; and children will talk politely to a drunken neighbour who has wandered into their house, and when he pulls out his ‘carry-out’ their father takes a dram too.”

(Macdonald, 1997: 174)

Whilst this behaviour was less prevalent than was formerly the case it still occurs and was apparent within the Cearnas.

The relationship between alcohol consumption and the church is many-faceted, and a number of religious respondents felt that they would be taken on one side and spoken to by an elder if they were seen drinking alcohol. Macdonald (1997) has suggested that Presbyterianism generally expects temperance rather than abstinence, yet the author of this thesis has found from narratives of residents that the Free Church family of churches leans more towards a 'teetotal' lifestyle. It was clear however from other narratives that worshippers and adherents, as opposed to communicants of the Free Church took a more liberal view, although many would not frequent pubs, any drinking being done at home. There was no evidence from literature that heavy drinking was a rejection of religion or that it was a pathological outcome of the imposition of a dour Calvinistic religion; in fact, contextually, drinking was seen as a positive dimension of local social life, and the narratives from within the Cearnns chimed with such a finding. Macdonald has suggested that drinking acts as a symbolic rebellion against the authority of ministers and elders, drawing upon male camaraderie and the social *bonhomie* that is associated with drinking, with the imagery of drinking offering individuals a sense of community and belonging in the face of Calvinism's emphasis on the lone individual. The author of this case study believes that whilst this analysis is credible up to a point, it has not been contextualised in terms of young men's drinking habits or the drinking behaviour of women, and little evidence was forthcoming from respondents' narratives to be sure of a clear answer.

The discussion so far has focused on those born locally and the next section seeks to examine the social infrastructure through the eyes of incomers.

10.2.8 How did the social networks of incomers manifest themselves?

Data presented in chapters 6 and 7 demonstrated that, in absolute terms, the number of incomers to the Cearnns was small and that most respondents who were incomers had settled well. The attitude of locally born residents to incomers appeared to follow a pattern of acceptance driven in the first instance by a desire to show friendliness and neighbourliness. If the incomer accepted the

local culture, or better still symbolically became part of it, for example by learning Gaelic, acceptance into the community was assured, with the incomer's achievements being discussed with approval by all. Vocal and public criticism of aspects of the culture by some incomers led to a small number of incomers being viewed critically and seen as outsiders.

Only a small number of respondents were incomers and the majority fitted well into the social infrastructure of the Cearn; respondents cited positively the importance of having good neighbours and feeling part of the community with a number of local friends. The perceived better quality of life in the Cearn was a recurrent theme, often made in the context of comparing the present with an earlier life elsewhere.

The final part of this chapter examines the strengths and weaknesses of the study.

10.3 Strengths and weaknesses of the study

This section reflects on both the process and the findings of the study and incorporates researcher reflections wherever appropriate.

In chapter 5 the philosophical position that underpinned the research methods used in the study was discussed and related to issues around sampling, reliability, validity and generalisability. Epistemologically, the adoption of Critical Realism or Subtle Realism allowed the identification and explanation of a range of social phenomena from representations of these phenomena in the narratives of the interviewees. The case study approach emphasised particularisation and a strength of this study was the extent to which, over recent years, the researcher had got to know the scheme and its residents and the author would not seek to use the findings to make claims about other less-familiar communities. The Cearn is small geographically with a relatively large population, its compactness being an advantage in terms of the researcher being seen frequently around the courts.

The researcher was known to many in the scheme, as in the decade prior to retirement in 2005 he had worked in the area initiating and facilitating a range of health promotion and community development activities. Not being local in origin and not being 'connected' through family or kinship proved a strength, as residents made their assessments of the researcher from an earlier knowledge of work delivered in the area, rather than through familial relationships or connections. Being a 'kent face' allowed access to individuals who would have been apprehensive about discussing potentially sensitive issues with a stranger, yet it was known that confidentiality and anonymity would be respected. Professionals working within the Western Isles soon become aware of the risks of talking about an individual to others, as one may later find out to one's cost that they are related, albeit distantly, and it is easy for issues to get mixed up with personalities! The researcher was able to enhance the quality of the study further by having a close understanding and empathy for wider Lewis culture, in which the Cearnas residents are located. Living for 20 years approximately six miles from the scheme, having a family that went to local primary and secondary schools and being involved in a number of community groups paved the way for an appreciation of the context that motivates and influences the lives of residents.

The researcher was seen as committed, enthusiastic and serious-minded, and through being open-minded about religion, was not seen to be a follower of a particular dogma or denomination. Therefore he was viewed as a non-judgemental and non-evangelical researcher, which appealed to non-believers, whilst religious respondents respected his views on social issues, for example, health inequality or social justice. With strongly religious respondents a less structured approach was taken, with an invitation to the person to outline their views in their own way, so that reassurance of a sensitive approach was demonstrated.

The study started with a focus on health and urban deprivation, areas of public health interest in their own right, especially as there has been little research to date on health and urban deprivation in housing areas outwith the large towns or

cities. Use of convenience sampling in the early fieldwork on health had the advantage of identifying potential interviewees quickly, from which the emerging themes of rurality and religion emerged, presenting the researcher with a 'tale of two stories', where urban deprivation met a rural environment, mediated by strong religious pressures. The employment of purposive sampling for in-depth research on rurality and religion in stage 2 allowed criterion referencing to be carried out in advance, ensuring a degree of clarity for potential interviewee selection. The recruitment of gatekeepers to aid in the identification of potential interviewees at both church level and community level had only limited success, and the researcher decided to view the Cearn community as a 'hard to reach' group and, informed by the literature (Faugier and Sargeant 1997; Reid 2008), embarked on a process of snowballing where a respondent identified a potential interviewee and that person or the interviewer made contact. Church-based gatekeepers, for example elders and ministers of the three churches within the Free Church family, proved to be of limited value, as they appeared to view the study with ambivalence, agreeing to help but then not discussing the project with residents who might become potential interviewees. A difficulty associated with a study of religion in Lewis is the degree of uneasiness that emanates from officials of the church when a perceived challenge emerges to their certainty of belief. An exception was a minister from one of the Church of Scotland parishes, who identified names and asked worshippers if they would offer themselves for potential selection.

A total of 55 residents were interviewed, approximating to 1 in 10 of the adult population (General Register Office for Scotland, 2003a), with a wide age range across both genders, although men proved more difficult to recruit often citing shortage of time or lack of interest in the study.

In any study using one-off interviews the researcher can only check participants' representation of situations during the interview process itself, there being no further opportunity, and recognition of this constraint ensured that the interaction between researcher and interviewee was as productive as possible. The findings were reliant on an acceptance of the participants' own representations of attitudes, beliefs and knowledge, gained through a reflective,

iterative process whereby the next interview would not be undertaken until the recording of the previous one had been listened to and notes made. Where possible, further interviews would be delayed until transcription and coding had been undertaken, allowing for regular refinement of the fieldwork process.

The thesis shared some findings with other research in key parallel studies at community level in other urban areas, especially around health (Blaxter 1990; Blaxter 2001), health inequalities (Ellaway, Macintyre and Kearns 2001), social infrastructure (Cattell 2004) and social capital (Pooley, Cohen and Pike 2004) but the strength of this study, in terms of findings, lies in the fact that there has been no other study of an urban area located in such a remote, rural context as the Western Isles. Studies of the Western Isles have been anthropological and based on Skye (Macdonald 1997), theological (Macleod 1993; Macleod 2008) or geographical (Boyd and Boyd 1990). No sociological studies that focus on the patterns of living shown by various groups within a small remote area have been undertaken.

CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSION

This short chapter presents a summary of key findings and conclusions in relation to the two aims of the thesis, followed by recommendations for further research and development.

11.1 Summary of key findings in relation to the two aims of the thesis

The first aim sought to explore health, health inequality and place effects within the Cearn environment and in terms of an analysis of routine data, coupled with residents' perspectives in relation to their own health, yielded data that echoed that found within other Scottish deprived urban areas. The study area was reminiscent of a mainland urban scheme in terms of housing design and layout yet significant differences were apparent: crime levels were low; the housing stock was, on the whole, well-maintained; and, public investment was evident within the area. The formerly negative image of the area had been replaced by a genuine sense of civic pride by those that lived there. Residents appreciated the compactness of the scheme and the facilities it contained and identified these as areas of difference from mainland schemes where satisfaction levels are low and facilities are few. The Cearn was regarded as close-knit, with a high degree of friendliness and neighbourliness, this being evidenced by respondents of both genders covering an age range from early 20s to over 70. This was attributed to the fact that whilst urban in its design and socio-economic profile it was located on an island, a remote and rural context.

Application of social network typology suggested that for many residents their networks were narrower and *traditional*, yet those with wider contacts, possibly through work demonstrated membership of a *solidaristic* network. Finally, some residents' membership groups and associated lifestyles placed them within a *socially excluded* network construct. The characteristics associated with notions of being close-knit began to emerge as a theme worthy of further study early in the research process and were more closely examined within stage 2, as it

became apparent that whilst the scheme appeared urban to the outsider the majority of those living within had a rural background. The key features associated with *gemeinschaft* or community became apparent, notably cooperation, trust and reciprocity in contrast with the more urban notion of association or *gesellschaft* with its high social and geographical mobility, competition and anonymity.

The second aim related rurality to social infrastructure and the Hebridean identity as well as examining the roles of religion and language. Initially findings revealed that historical rural intimacy around village activities, such as crofting, was carried forward into the Cearn, further reinforced by a self-help, 'can-do' mentality driven by a sense of remoteness. The scheme, whilst being urban in style was located in the town of Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, one of Scotland's most remote, rural areas. Application of Social Identity Theory allowed an analysis of the Hebridean identity in terms of an in group with perceived characteristics, culturally defined and manifested, a social categorisation, not exclusive nor unwelcoming, but worn with pride. It involved norms and traditions around friendliness, politeness and fortitude, reinforced through history and to some extent maintained through Gaelic as the first language of choice, and adherence to a strict Presbyterian religion. Surprisingly, it was possible for irreligious non-Gaelic speakers to describe themselves as Hebridean, birthplace and place of upbringing being paramount. In the context of language Gaelic speakers appeared to have broad social networks including Gaelic and non-Gaelic speakers, the language appearing not to predict or determine patterns of networking. In addition, alcohol appeared to have a place in local culture.

Religious adherence, for many, offered health benefits, for many a teetotal lifestyle with high levels of social support when needed. Individuals saw themselves as worshippers or as more committed adherents, the latter having experienced some inner spiritual conversion, a profession of faith at a deeper level that would guarantee personal salvation, and such individuals would use language reminiscent of pre-Enlightenment communities in 18th century Scotland. The converted saw themselves as an in-group and use of Self-Categorisation Theory helped to explain the relationship between power and the

maintenance of a self-determined male hierarchy. At the level of the community, religion was viewed positively by many, believers or not, as a code for good living, a moral direction for all to follow. Others saw things differently viewing religious individuals as hypocrites or as agents of social control restricting the venturing of opinions and actions - notably on a Sunday. Sabbath observance has high symbolic significance in Lewis, with a vocal sizeable minority ensuring shops and leisure facilities stay closed and only since July 2009 has the mainland ferry sailed.

There are few incomers living in the Cearnas and most have settled well, being interested and involved with the local culture. Most assess their life in the Cearnas favourably in comparison with former home areas.

The relationship with alcohol can be viewed at three levels; first at the level of the individual where routine data shows hospitalisation rates and morbidity rates above the Scottish average. Secondly, in terms of culture alcohol is part of Hebridean life related to generosity and friendship with a tolerance extended to the habitual drinker. Abstinence from alcohol is also an ingredient of local culture, essentially amongst the strictly religious. Finally, the relationship between alcohol and the church is complex, there being little evidence to show that drinking is a form of rebellion against a dogmatic and oppressive religion.

The chapter concludes by offering a range of recommendations for further research and development, recommendations that have been informed by the findings and conclusions from this thesis.

11.2 Recommendations for further research and development

The study has shown the richness of Hebridean community life within a small housing scheme and has identified some questions for further academic research as well as some recommendations for policy makers and practitioners.

In terms of academic activity, more research is needed into the social networks and social support mechanisms of young residents of the scheme, especially socially excluded males, especially those with alcohol and drugs problems. The coping mechanisms and support systems of other population groups in the scheme is also largely unknown, for example, those women with families who are left at home while the partner is away working off-shore on a two week work cycle, or incomers whose networks are different as close family is not nearby. The effects of religion at individual and community level are clear findings from this thesis; however, little is known about the health status of the converted including the possible feelings of unworthiness and guilt as well as the effects of the pressure to conform that is exerted by local elders. Previous and abandoned friends of those recently converted have a story to tell, a story that began to surface within this thesis. In summary, further research around religion and health could be identified from this study focusing on the interaction between religion and feelings of depression, low self-esteem and inadequacy. A further direction for health research could focus on the cultural aspects of alcohol consumption.

National housing policy makers and local politicians reading this study will be aware that the housing layout of courts and central areas was experienced positively as residents appreciated regular opportunistic contact with neighbours. Problems arose when policies in relation to housing and greenspace maintenance were amended, resulting in decreasing frequency of attention by housing association staff. This was felt to be maintenance not a housing design issue. This study has shed light on the lives of some vulnerable and unsupported residents, reinforcing a policy approach to health inequality that, whilst recognising the health gradient, at the same time seeks to target action at area level. Reinstatement of the Community Health Project would be an appropriate action.

Issues for practitioners from this thesis include training of ministers in mental health issues especially in relation to older female residents who after a family bereavement appear to feel inadequate or unworthy. The 'Health Issues in the Community' course would offer a structured interactive course, one underpinned

by showing the importance of self-esteem and confidence, aspects of mental health often at odds with Calvinistic worship. Similarly, an understanding of the protestant faith would be relevant to a range of professionals whose remit covers the Cearns area, for example, housing officers, community nurses or schoolteachers, especially if new to working in the Western Isles.

The twin influences of rurality and Calvinistic religion are clearly operating within this distinctive housing area and the findings from this study have relevance for the training of health promotion staff and others involved in community development work, thereby enabling them to fulfil their professional role more effectively.

This chapter has examined the key findings of the thesis in relation to its aims and detailed objectives and from these findings has outlined possible areas for future research and development.

AFTERWORD

This study has felt like a remarkable journey through a remarkable community, a study that initially was focused on public health and deprivation issues, widely understood from working within that field. It soon became apparent that this community was different from others described; its residents showed aspects of deprivation yet it was like a rural community transplanted into an urban context with its close networks and mechanisms for support. Its dynamics were akin to those seen in other Western Isles communities where most people are local and connected with each other, it was also like small town communities elsewhere - but 50 years ago!

A tale of 'two stories' began to emerge; one relating to health and deprivation in an urban context, the other relating to rurality, remoteness and religion and most of this thesis has focused on the latter.

Western Isles communities are distinctive and maybe offer policy makers and others food for thought:

"In the Western Isles of Scotland the significance of island life is not so much for the past, which cannot be changed, as for the future which can...this significance lies in the intensity of its communal traditions, extinguished elsewhere. The enduring elements of communal life are still valued, recorded, remembered and surviving in the 'Outermost' Hebrides, at the core of 'the North and West.'

(Williams quoted in Bell and Newby, 1974: 65)

This quote is as appropriate in 2009 as it was in 1974.

APPENDIX 1: APPROVAL FROM ETHICS COMMITTEE

----- Original Message -----

From: "Linda Bauld" <l.bauld@socsci.gla.ac.uk>

To: <brian.chaplin@bosinternet.com>

Cc: <J.Pilkington@socsci.gla.ac.uk>

Sent: Monday, April 10, 2006 2:17 PM

Subject: C.Hoy@socsci.gla.ac.uk

> Brian

>

> A message to let you know that your ethical approval form has been reviewed

> and approved by the Dept ethics committee. I will provide Jacqui Pilkington

> (who is now the new Undergraduate and PhD programme manager -

> J.Pilkington@socsci.gla.ac.uk) with a copy of your forms to add to your file.

>

> Best wishes

>

> Linda

> _____

> Dr. Linda Bauld

> Senior Lecturer

> Director of Teaching

> Department of Urban Studies

> University of Glasgow

> 25 Bute Gardens

> GLASGOW G12 8RS

> tel and fax: 0141 330 4352

> <http://www.gla.ac.uk/departments/urbanstudies/staff/bauldl.html>

>

APPENDIX 2: TOPIC GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWS: STAGE 1 RESEARCH

Introduction

Welcome, tea/coffee, aims of research, consent issues, use of results.

Living in the Cearn

Demographic details

What are the good things about living in the Cearn?

What are the less good things?

In what ways is the Cearn distinctive?

What was the area like say 10 years ago - how has it changed over recent years? If you have only recently moved here, what are your views?

We hear the term 'community' used a lot, what does it mean to you?

Prompts: Cearn is a geographically self contained area

Everyone knows each other

Safe place to live

BUT

Everyone knows your business

'Goldfish bowl'

Social isolation

'colditz' reputation, image

Built environment

What are your views on the housing, court layout, green space?

Crime, litter and vandalism

Social infrastructure

Is there a sense of local identity/belongingness amongst residents of the area?

Can you give examples of your social networks and who you would go to for help and support? Do you think young/old or men/women see things differently?

How do incomers fit in?

Do you feel that ordinary residents can shape community affairs? How?

What formal and informal groups are available in the Cearn to people of your age/interests?

Health issues

What does the term 'health' mean to you? What are the population health issues?

Changes and comparisons

How do you think the area will change in the next couple of years? How does it compare with mainland schemes?

APPENDIX 3: PURPOSIVE SAMPLING FILTER FOR POTENTIAL INTERVIEWEES, DISTRIBUTED THROUGH MINISTERS AND ELDERS

HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN AN ISLAND COMMUNITY WHERE URBAN STYLE DEPRIVATION AND TRADITIONAL RURAL VALUES INTERACT

I have been a resident in Lewis for about 20 years working for most of that time at the Health Board. During some of that time I worked on health promotion activities in the Cearnas area in conjunction with the Cearnas Community Development Project and the Community Association. I have recently retired and have started a research degree with the University of Glasgow and my study focuses on the health of residents and at the friendship and support networks that are evident in the area; it looks at how extensive they are and their purpose.

So far in stage 1, I have interviewed 12 residents and the results indicate that the Cearnas is a close-knit community with many family and neighbourhood networks. The shop is proving to be a popular meeting place and the Cearnas Community Development Project has offered a valuable service to many residents, whilst others would like to see more activities. The study focuses only on the views of those over 18 years of age.

The second stage of the research seeks, through individual interviews lasting about 1 hour, to get a more in-depth understanding of the social environment of the Cearnas and how being an islander or being religious affects the ways that networks develop. The study would value the views of Gaelic speakers, as well as those who know no Gaelic; locally born residents as well as those living in the scheme who were born outwith the area. The views of Christians and church attenders would be of particular value, as church involvement brings with it friendship and support networks that might be different to neighbourhood networks and the study would seek to examine reasons for difference. The views of both men and women are sought as friendship patterns are often distinctive and different. The views of retired residents as well as those with children would be valuable.

The Cearnas has never previously been the subject of a study and yet it is distinctive. I believe it is unique in Scotland as many of residents have the Gaelic and are committed in their religious beliefs, yet the housing area feels urban whilst being located in one of Scotland's most remote island locations.

It is hoped to start the interviews as soon as possible, holding them in the Ceilidh Hoose, next to the shop and continuing during the summer and autumn at a time to suit participants. All interviews will be confidential and anonymous.

If you are interested would you let [Minister or Elder] know, who will then pass your details to myself, who will contact you. I shall be conducting the interviews and will be processing the findings. You must be a resident of the scheme and be over 18 years old.

For further details please contact Brian Chaplin, 01851 870906 or Dr Mhairi Mackenzie at the University of Glasgow, 0141-330-4352.

APPENDIX 4: PURPOSIVE SAMPLING FILTER FOR POTENTIAL INTERVIEWEES, DISTRIBUTED THROUGH SHOP AND COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN AN ISLAND COMMUNITY WHERE URBAN STYLE DEPRIVATION AND TRADITIONAL RURAL VALUES INTERACT

I have been a resident in Lewis for about 20 years working for most of that time at the Health Board. During some of that time I worked on health promotion activities in the Cearnas area in conjunction with the Cearnas Community Development Project and the Community Association. I have recently retired and have started a research degree with the University of Glasgow and my study focuses on the health of residents and at the friendship and support networks that are evident in the area; it looks at how extensive they are and their purpose.

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If you are interested in being considered for interview please give the following information.

Have you lived in the Cearnas for at least 2 yrs?.....

Are you maleor female.....(Please tick)

Where were you born?.....

Are you a gaelic speaker?..... Telephone.....

Name.....Address.....

PLEASE PLACE THIS FORM IN THE BOX IN THE SHOP/ COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION OFFICE OR RING BRIAN CHAPLIN 01851 870906 WITH DETAILS.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE.

For further details contact the interviewer, Brian Chaplin on 01851 870906 or Dr Mhairi Mackenzie at Glasgow University, 0141-330-4352.

APPENDIX 5: TOPIC GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWS: STAGE 2 RESEARCH

Introduction

Welcome, tea/coffee, aims of research, consent issues, use of results.

Extent and purpose of social networks

Can you outline your family networks, your network of friends, workmates, and neighbours? Practical help and emotional support

Rurality and its influence

Do you think country people have a different way of looking at friendships than people from town? If so, how?

If a person is brought up in a crofting family or is from a village how might they have been brought up? Importance of family and significant others

What does the term 'Hebridean' mean to you? Is it a term you would use to describe yourself?

Do incomers have any advantages/disadvantages over those born locally? If so, what?

The Gaelic language

How important is Gaelic to you?

Do you think those with the Gaelic see friendships differently from those who don't speak it?

Religion and its impact

Church members, adherents and worshippers

What does belief mean to you?

How has church affected your friendship networks and who you would go to for support?

Does being religious influence your lifestyle? Examples

What is your view on conversion or getting the 'curam'?

Community level

How do you think the church influences life in the community?

Respect for others, politeness and dignity, foundation for upbringing

Possible links between religion and alcohol consumption

Judgementalism, social control. Examples

Sabbath observance

Tell me what happens in your house on a Sunday

Should the ferry sail?

Do you think the sports centre in Stornoway should open?

What about the pubs?

Why should it be a 'day of rest' for all?

APPENDIX 6: PRESS CUTTINGS

The Remnant Shall Be Saved

by Rev. James Clark

Nothing is more clearly brought out in Scripture than that in every age, out of the whole number of persons blessed with the means of grace, only a few have been effectually called to receive the gift of salvation!

This has been the experience of the church, and it should come as no surprise as this is what the Lord taught – ‘many are called, few are chosen’ (Matthew 20:16); ‘many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able’ (Luke 13:24); ‘narrow is the way that leads to life and few there be that find it’ (Matthew 7:14). The inspired Apostle Paul also stated this as a fact clearly seen in the early New Testament days, “Even so then, at this time also (as formerly), there is a remnant according to the election of grace.” (Romans 11:5).

The doctrine of the remnant was frequently proclaimed among the prophets: cf. Isaiah 10:22, Jeremiah 44:28, Ezekiel 6:8. The consolation given to the Church in the Book of Jeremiah is that God “will not make a full end” (Jerem. 46:28), and Ezra, confessing the sins of his people, expresses his dread lest there should be “no remnant” (Ezra 9:14). This therefore is the uniform teaching of Scripture, that the elect are few although many are outwardly called in the preaching of the Gospel. All may run in the race, but not all gain the prize. (1 Corinth. 9:24). Only God’s elect have the gift of perseverance.

This history of the church provides many examples of this doctrine. At the time of the Flood, despite Enoch’s preaching and Noah’s building of the Ark, only eight people were delivered by God, and even one of those few was reprobate. All the Israelites were brought

out of Egypt but it became clearly manifest that many of them did not journey in faith, 1 Cor.10:5. After Solomon’s death only two tribes out of twelve continued in their adherence to God’s Covenant. At the time of Elijah only seven thousand remained who had not given themselves to false gods and false worship. Many of Christ’s ‘disciples’ followed Him at first, but latterly turned away from Him (John 6:66) and only a remnant remained.

This doctrine of the remnant is clearly seen in our own times – the same precious mercy from God, the same ingratitude from man, the same scarcity of genuine faith and holiness, the same indifference to Scriptural Truth and duties. “They are not all Israel who are of Israel” Romans 9:6.

However, it is clear from Scripture that the Lord delights Himself in this small company who adhere to Him; cf. Deuteronomy 7:7, Luke 12:32, John 17:9, Rom. 8:29. He will never leave them nor forsake them, and that is why they will never leave nor forsake Him. Run, God’s elect, run the race set before you.... keep your eyes on the Forerunner, keep your eyes on the prize. Hebrews 12:1,2. Philippians 3:12-14.

Rudhach, October 2008

Stormy times ahead

THE Sunday sailings issue hit the headlines again this week when it was announced that the matter would not be decided until an assessment was made on the impact of the Scottish Government’s RET pilot.

As the decision was taken only last October, the pilot will continue for almost another three years.

Some people are of the opinion that there is no need to wait until then as a decision could be made now. However, the Government are unlikely to have a change of heart, despite the feelings of some island travellers who feel Sunday sailings should be introduced.

The Lord’s Day Observance Society have welcomed the delay, saying that the community can now enjoy a rest from ‘the contention of the issue’.

Whenever the decision is going to be taken, it is likely to split the community as there are strong views for and against Sunday sailings.

And that will continue in the years ahead.

Stornoway Gazette 19 March 2009

No decision likely on Sunday sailings for three years

STORNOWAY
GAZETTE
19/03/09

by DONNIE MACINNES
donnie.macinnis@stornowaygazette.co.uk

A DECISION on whether Sunday sailings will be introduced to the Stornoway-Ullapool service is unlikely to be made for around three years.

Highlands and Islands Labour MSP, David Stewart asked the Scottish Executive this week whether it considered that the best interests of the people in the Western Isles would be served by allowing Sunday sailings between Stornoway and the mainland and access to local facilities such as sports facilities.

Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson said there were clearly 'very different and irreconcilable views' about the potential introduction of Sunday sailings on the Ullapool to Stornoway ferry service.

"CalMac Ferries Ltd is best placed to

consider that issue in the first instance. CalMac is keeping this issue under review pending its assessment of how the Scottish Government's Road Equivalent Tariff pilot is impacting on ferry services to the Western Isles," he said.

The RET pilot for the Western Isles, introduced in October, is for a three-year period. Said Mr Stevenson: "It is for the owners and managers of local island facilities, such as sports facilities, to make their own decisions on opening times."

Secretary of the local branch of the Lord's Day Observance Society, Angus Mackay stated: "We are glad that the Minister's statement clarifies the position."

"The community can now enjoy a rest from the contention of the issue."

David Stewart said that he had raised the matter with the Transport

Minister in response to representations by an island constituent and felt that the Government should make their views known.

"The Minister and the Scottish Government own CalMac, and they are responsible to the Scottish Administration," he said.

Mr Stewart, a former member of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee, went on: "I am very aware that Sunday sailings is a controversial issue within the islands, but I don't see how the Scottish Government can ignore responsibility and not make a decision on it."

"Some people in the islands have strong views on this issue. Whether the Scottish Government are for or against Sunday sailings, it is important that they make their views known."

He added: "I'll be keeping a careful watch on this



The 'Isle of Lewis' - supporters of Sunday ferries want service to start now. SGD. 15866

issue." Council Transportation chairman Donald Manford stated: "The Minister has always said that when the pilot was introduced little would change on it until it had run its course and was evaluated."

"This has always been the position of the Government on it."

"It doesn't prevent organisations like Caledonian MacBrayne or Comhairle nan Eilean Siar assessing their positions if they were minded to move from the current positions they

hold," he added.

Supporter of Sunday sailings, Stornoway Management Consultant Donald Macleod said that when he went to the Scottish Government consultation meeting in Stornoway last week, he had raised the issue with a CalMac representative.

"CalMac have a fully-crewed ferry, the 'Isle of Lewis' sitting in Stornoway every Sunday and I don't understand how they can afford to have a major

asset like that not sailing."

He said that he had written to Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Chief Executive and councillors last year on the issue.

"I pointed out that the Council were being unreasonable because of the benefits that would derive from Sunday sailings."

"It is irrational that there is one policy for the Southern Isles and another one for Lewis."

"They have ferries sailing into the Uists on a Sunday and leisure facilities are open there that day," said Mr Macleod. "I am 100 per cent in favour of Sunday sailings. It is a matter of choice if people object to sailing on a Sunday, they don't have to do so."

"What if somebody wants to go to a church service on a Sunday on the mainland? They could do so if there was a service and return that day," he said.

Mr Macleod did not feel that the introduction of Sunday sailings would increase haulage traffic to the island.

"Why would the lorries come into Stornoway on a Sunday when they don't go anywhere else on that day?" he asked.

Mr Macleod pointed out that flights were now coming to and from

Stornoway every Sunday.

"I am sure that people who objected to this in the first place are now using the service."

"The Council shouldn't be prohibiting any activity on the grounds of a belief of a proportion of the community."

"We have got to move on. I am pretty sure that hotels and guest houses don't get the business they would because people have to leave Stornoway a day earlier," he said.

He pointed out, however, that the Stornoway-Ullapool ferry operates on Sundays when the need occurs, such as sailings not having been possible on the Friday or Saturday because of bad weather or other problems.

Mr Macleod said that he knew of people who were having difficulties trying to get back to the islands on a Monday because of the amount of traffic booked on the ferry.

Regarding the Minister's statement that the matter would not be discussed until an assessment was made of how the Scottish Government's Road Equivalent Tariff pilot was impacting on ferry services to the islands, Mr Macleod described this as 'an excuse'.

Stornoway Gazette, 19 March 2009

There is an interesting and arresting line in the appendix to the Directory for Public Worship, which was one of the primary, if now neglected, documents published by the Westminster Assembly. (Interestingly, Christian Focus Publications, to their credit, have re-published the Directory in a new and pristine format.)

On the principle that the Reformation represented a reforming of the Church's worship as well as her doctrine, Westminster – notwithstanding the divergent church traditions within the Assembly – considered it vital to address issues of worship.

Much of the Directory was a principled opposition to the use of an empty liturgy, and an attempt 'to hold forth such things as are of divine institution in every ordinance' – in other words, to ask what God himself demanded of his own worship.

The Directory, not least in our day of consumer-led, pick-a-mix worship, would repay careful reading and reflection, but my interest, as I write this over the Easter holiday, is in the following line: 'Festival days, vulgarly called Holy-days, having no warrant in the word of God, are not to be continued'.

There is a twofold polemic in this outlawing of special holy-days (or

'holidays', as we have come to call them) to celebrate Christmas and Easter. On the one hand, there is an insistence that God's Word requires only one holiday each week; the Directory is adamant that 'there is no day commanded in scripture to be kept holy under the gospel but the Lord's day, which is the Christian Sabbath'.

That particular issue, as I have frequently argued in this column, is supremely important, and the position of Westminster absolutely biblical. Our contemporary society has rejected God's holy day, and in consequence spends thousands of pounds each year on secular holidays and leisure breaks. Having discarded weekly rest-days, it tries to compensate for the loss by annual rest-days, and wonders why these are never enough.

On the other hand, the Directory was right to question why observation of special holy days in the church's liturgical calendar was not working either. The Westminster divines considered it a form of idolatry to have set forms of worship, and holy days in addition to the Lord's day, arguing that in many cases ministers and people were pleasing themselves by their presence at such services, engaging in them with lip-service only, and thus hardening themselves to 'saving knowledge and true piety'.

A casual glance at contemporary

Post-Easter Reflections

church life shows the reality of the Assembly's concern. Christmas and Easter services attract a higher than average attendance, but our society slips further and further into secularism and away from true piety. We like the holy days – we will take the Christmas presents and the Easter eggs – but not the holiness. We are attracted by the days more than by what the days represent.

It is easy, however, to write columns and even organize soci-

eties designed to point out the sins of others. There is no inherent difference between a nominal Anglican who attends Church only at Easter, and a nominal Presbyterian who attends only for baptism. The man who tries to please God by giving up something for Lent is no different to the man who thinks it enough to attend his Free Church congregation only on the Sunday evening of a Communion.

To look at it from another per-

spective, I noted that the Radio Times pages for Good Friday were all bordered with images of Calvary – women, soldiers and crosses. But the religious content of the programmes that day was minimal, and the entertainment being advertised was the same banal, hedonistic, self-serving and mind-dumbing nonsense we have come to expect. Are we really so blind that we cannot see the relation of the one to the other – it was precisely for the sins with which we are entertained that the Son of God died.

Yet, for all that, I struggle with the simple reality that in a godless culture, such occasions, vestiges of Christianity as they undoubtedly are, keep the elements of the Christian faith before the very people who need to know them most. In and of itself, that can never be a reason to justify them, but perhaps it can be a good reason to make use of them wisely.

At the same time, I insist that the Westminster Assembly points us to something infinitely better than an occasional holy day designed to highlight one aspect of religion: it brings us back to a weekly holy day designed to highlight every aspect of true religion.

It is not just one Sunday in the year that reminds me of Christ's birth or his death: every Sunday does that. After the resurrection, the weekly cycle of a first-day

Sabbath became the new biblical norm – even for believers who had been raised under an older system. Nothing was more natural than that they should now sanctify the day Jesus rose, without compromising the sanctifying of the day on which God rested.

There is no greater proof of that than our post-holiday lifestyle. 'Post-Easter' is a darling concept of New Testament scholarship – everything changed in the light of the resurrection of Christ. That was undoubtedly the case, although the scholarship at that level has become yoked too far to the liturgical calendar.

My question is simple: what does a secular society do after Easter? It returns to the depressing, daily grind, counting the weeks to the next vacation. What did the early church do after the resurrection? It turned the world upside down, counting it an honour to suffer for the sake of Jesus.

The former is the hallmark of a society whose chief end is to use God to enjoy itself. The latter is the hallmark of a society whose chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

And for those who, like the Apostle Paul, really wish to know the power of Christ's resurrection, fifty-two holy days a year are perfectly adequate.

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Stornoway Gazette, 16 April 2009

He knows what's in your heart

I was most disappointed by Rev. ID Campbell's column in last week's Gazette, April 16.

I am no scholar of the Bible, however I do believe in God, I don't attend Church every Sunday, however I do not believe that this makes me Godless.

I certainly don't attend Church when I do, including Christmas and Easter to 'enjoy' myself, as Rev. Campbell suggests. Attending Church is not about enjoyment, but for me taking time to reflect about the wider universe and the spirit behind this miracle.

There is joy in attending Church but not what I would call enjoyment.

I am not an idolator for attending Church at Easter and Christmas, I am mindful of God every day, not just on Sundays or on these particular days, and to suggest such a thing is simply offensive.

The Church I attend may be decorated and there may be ceremony however that does not mean I worship these decorations or ceremonies. All Churches that I have attended have a certain look and ceremony and to say one is somehow more pleasing to God than another is nonsense – I am certain he is more concerned with what is in our hearts than these trivialities.

I know some people who attend Church every Sunday and on that day are as pious as they can possibly be, but on other days of the week they will injure their fellow man, gossip and deceive to satisfy their own ends.

I do not attend Church every Sunday however I seek to help my fellow man where I can, I do not injure or deceive to further my own ends – so who is the better Christian?

My judgement will come just as surely as others but I am content that God will know what is in my heart and judge me by the way I have lived my life and not be concerned with whether I attended Church every Sunday or perhaps only several times a year, including Easter and Christmas.

Ms M SMITH
(Address Supplied)

Stornoway Gazette, 23 April 2009

When the boat comes in ... first Sunday ferry sailing to Lewis

Service goes ahead despite opposition

DAVID ROSS
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FOUR-and-a-half centuries of Scotland's social and religious history was closed yesterday, but only a couple of dozen people turned up to publicly mourn the passing of strict Sabbath observance.

Around 200 people, however, came to cheer the first-ever scheduled sailing of Caledonian MacBrayne's ferry Isle of Lewis from Stornoway to Ullapool yesterday afternoon.

Lewis was the last island not to have a seven-day ferry service because of religious tradition, and it was long overdue, according to one of the passengers, the celebrated Gaelic writer Dr Finlay Macleod.

"The ferry leaving today means a great deal to me. It is talismanic. It is how our island has always connected to the mainland. I have been looking forward to today for most of my adult life."

"I have been outspoken in my support for a Sunday sailing for years. I have been in touch with numerous secretaries of state and chairmen of CalMac, to gain for Lewis a normal civic freedom."

"A posse of Calvinists came to Lewis three or four generations ago. They were very effective. They turned Lewis effectively into a theocracy. People of creed were in charge. If you were inside it, it was very thrilling. If you were outside it, it was very confining, frightening and controlling. So today is a great day for Lewis."

Not all islanders agreed. More than 20 appeared at the Stornoway ferry terminal with a placard exhorting us to "Remember the Sabbath Day keep it holy." Most were from the Free Church Continuing.

None would speak but handed out a pre-printed statement. It said: "We are a group of local Christians who care deeply about our island. We are here to testify that to run this ferry service on the Lord's Day is against the fourth commandment, and so is displeasing to the living and true God."

To them and many other islanders, they are just trying

to obey the word of God as they understand it.

How they understand it is as all reformed Scotland understood it until about 100 years ago. It was the Westminster Confession of Faith in 1647 (born out of the Long Parliament when the forces of Puritanism were in the ascendancy) that laid down the rigour of sabbath observance Scotland clung to until the end of the 19th century.

They are not alone. Shornog MacRitchie, owner of the County Hotel in Stornoway, said he opposed the Sunday ferry on religious grounds and challenged the idea that it would be good for tourism.

"It will have an adverse effect of business. People who previously could not get off the island till Monday can now do so a day earlier, and local people can now leave the island. I have had five bookings cancelled since the

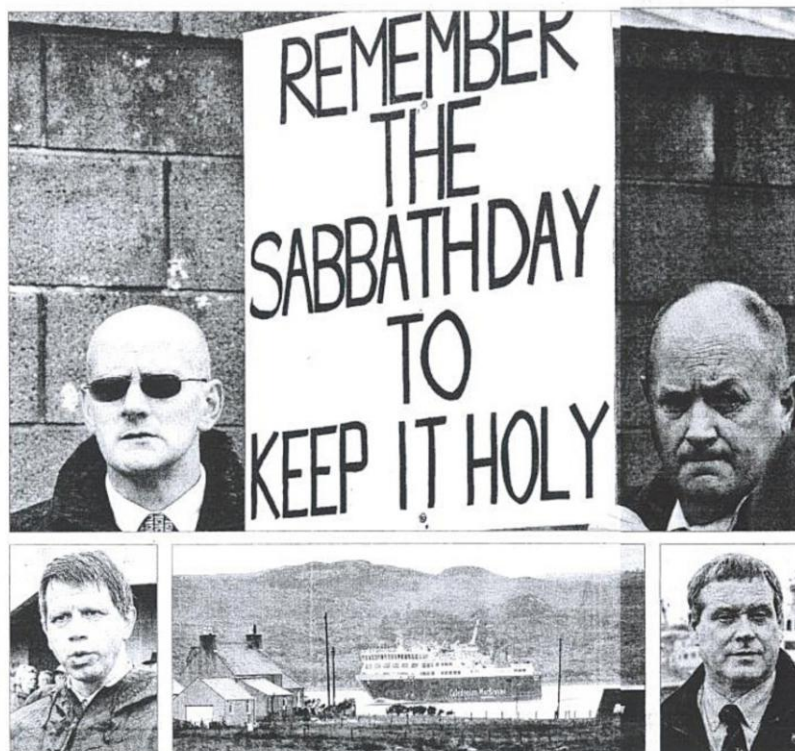
'I have been looking forward to today for most of my adult life'

announcement of the Sunday ferry last week."

But on board the Isle of Lewis there was a carnival atmosphere, with the remnants of the Hebridean Celtic Music Festival, determined to keep the entertainment going.

It was music that was sweet to the ears of Phil Preston, CalMac managing director, who was on board. "We have 81 cars and three commercial vehicles on board as well as 391 passengers. That shows the level of demand for a Sunday service. That's what we are responding to today. We were also advised that we could be in breach of the Equality Act if we continued with a six-day service only."

Mr Preston was speaking following two days of time-taking chaos after the Isle of Lewis broke down on Friday. It meant vessels on the Islay, North Uist/Harris services, heading to Stornoway/Ullapool after they had finished their work on Friday and Saturday. This left Islay with only one vessel, so the



STORM IN STORNOWAY: Free Church minister Reverend Timothy McGlynn, left, joined locals with placards, top, in protesting as Caledonian MacBrayne's ferry Isle of Lewis left Stornoway for Ullapool yesterday. CalMac managing director Phil Preston, right, said there was demand for a Sunday service. Pictures: Allan Milligan

Barra ferry headed south from Oban to help out on Saturday.

The Isle of Arran, which took over the Stornoway run on Saturday, was considerably slower and smaller than the Isle of Lewis. Her crossing on Saturday afternoon was packed with passengers having to sit on the floor.

But the vessel sailed throughout the night to pick up the traffic building up at Ullapool. It meant that she arrived at 4am yesterday

morning, making that the first Sunday service to the island.

Her arrival was applauded by two people who had just emerged from the festival club. Once the Isle of Lewis was fixed she crossed the Minch to Ullapool, arriving back in Stornoway at 4.45am.

But Mr Preston observed: "It has been a difficult couple of days but we managed to get through it thanks to a lot of people working very hard."

The Herald, 20 July 2009

PSALM CONTRASTS WITH ROUND
OF APPLAUSE FOR NEW LEWIS LINK

Protesters fail to stop first ferry on Sabbath

BY NEIL MACPHAIL

A psalm of protest from opponents and applause from supporters heralded yesterday afternoon's sailing of the first scheduled Sabbath ferry from Lewis in the Western Isles to the mainland.

The vessel Isle of Lewis was full, with 391 passengers and 84 cars and commercial vehicles, as she made the historic run from Stornoway.

A group of about 25 protesters, mostly from the Free Church Continuing, stood in silent condemnation as passengers, many of them revellers from the weekend Hebridean Celtic music festival, filed on board.

One man held a placard bearing the words "Remember the Sabbath Day to Keep it Holy".

As the boat backed away from Stornoway ferry terminal into the bay, a large group of Sunday-sailing supporters burst into applause and the protesters responded with a psalm.

While the protest group watched the boat sail into the distance, a party atmosphere developed on board, with homeward-bound festival musicians holding an impromptu ceilidh in the bar.

Protester Calum Smith, of Stuartfield, Stornoway, said: "We are not able to stop it.

The Lord is able to stop it. The Lord Jesus Christ is supreme and sovereign with dominion over all of us."

A statement read: "We are a group of local Christians who care deeply about our island. We are here to testify that to run this ferry service on the Lord's Day is against the Fourth Commandment, and so is displeasing to the living and true God."

The managing director of ferry operator Caledonian MacBrayne was on board for the trip.

Philip Preston said: "The Sunday ferry between Stornoway and Ullapool is here for keeps now.

"I am delighted. It is just normal business for us and I just want things to pass off smoothly. We are just responding to demand and the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

The Press and Journal, 20 July 2009

First Sunday sailing a little stormy

'DIVINE INTERVENTION' SLOWS CALMAC ON ISLAND ROUTE BUT CONTROVERSIAL SEA LINK IS FINALLY FORGED

BY NEIL MACPHAIL

Like an elderly aunt at a wedding dance, the island of Lewis was dragged into the whirl of Sunday ferry sailings yesterday - protesting, but not a lot.

The tune, of course, was *We Are Sailing*, but only when ferry operator Caledonian MacBrayne could get a serviceable boat on the 40-mile route between the island capital of Stornoway and Ullapool on the mainland.

Fate - although some claimed divine intervention - played a hand and on Friday the Isle of Lewis ferry broke down, stranding passengers and vehicles on both sides of the Minch.

Adding to the disruption

was the fact that it was one of the busiest weekends on Lewis, with the Hebridean Celtic Music Festival coming to a climax and Sall Hebrides being staged alongside a circus.

An Islay boat, the much smaller Isle of Arran, was rushed north to help out and clear the backlog.

This led to chaotic scenes at Ullapool on Saturday, with hundreds of anxious passengers clamouring to get on board, creating scenes akin to

a refugee ship, with passengers sitting on passageway floors for the three-and-a-half-hour crossing.

All the while, the bar did a roaring trade in drinks and snacks.

It also led to the historic first ferry sailing happening at dead of night, with the Isle of Arran arriving at 3.30am, and the repaired Isle of Lewis arriving at 4.45am as CalMac worked to clear the backlog.

One of the first ashore was a woman on holiday from the

US, who said: "I am sorry that the traditions of Lewis cannot be observed as they have been in the past."

But another visitor, a man from Germany, said: "People should be able to travel whenever they want, no matter what the day."

Objections to the Sunday sailing have come from the churches - in a community where Sunday is seen as a day of rest as the Bible commands - and from Western Isles Council, which cites protec-

tion of the islands' traditional way of life.

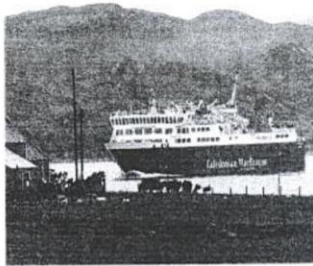
But another, more pragmatic, objection came from Stornoway businessman Shonnie Macritchie, 50.

The proprietor of the County Hotel said that he was against the sailings on both personal and commercial grounds.

Mr Macritchie said: "When visitors came on Friday, then they were guaranteed to stay until Monday, but not now."

"Another aspect is that the young people who wanted to go off to Inverness or Glasgow for the weekend were put off doing so because they had to be back for work on Monday."

"Now they will be travelling on the Sunday, and the town will lose their Sunday trade. I think we should really be focusing on faster, more regular ferries, instead of treating us with contempt with the service that is currently being run."



Isle of Lewis makes her first Sabbath sailing from Stornoway

Now a gay wedding is to shake up traditional island

THIS IS DISAPPOINTING, SAYS CHURCHMAN

A DAY after the launch of controversial Sabbath sailings between Lewis and the mainland, there will be another milestone in the Western Isles - the first gay wedding.

Children's TV presenter Andrew Robertson is due to tie the knot today with long-term partner Craig Atkins in a ceremony branded a sin by the island's Free Church of Scotland.

The couple are expected to seal a civil partnership, the first to be carried out in the Western Isles since they were introduced under a 2003 law.

Mr Robertson, who presents programmes on Gaelic channel BBC Alba, said: "Everything has gone smoothly, no hitches at all."

The 35-year-old lives at Ha-

boist, Lewis, with New Zealander Mr Atkins, 38, who is manager of Stornoway's arts centre.

At the weekend, however, Euphemia "Effie" MacDonald, the registrar legally obliged to conduct the Western Isles' first gay wedding, claimed she had no knowledge of the impending nuptials.

Asked if she would officiate, she replied: "I've been told not to comment. I don't know anything about it. Goodbye."

A Free Church of Scotland spokesman said: "On the very weekend the ferry was supposed to sail on the Sabbath, this is disappointing."

"This is wrong. The council should not be forcing staff to conduct ceremonies like these. It is immoral and a sin."

Continued from page 1 requirements of the equality laws."

Two uniformed police officers were on board the ferry, because of the special occasion and because it was expected that the boat would be busy with festival-goers heading home.

Other officers drafted on to Lewis for the festival were able to return yesterday, saving the taxpayer the cost of

another overnight stay in the Western Isles.

Members of the Lord Day's Observation Society (LDOS) are furious at the CalMac decision to break the sanctity of Sunday, as they see it.

But an equally staunch supporter twisted the society's LDOS initials with a specially designed T-shirt that read: "Let's Drink On Sundays in Ullapool now that we can."

Speaking on the ferry, for-

mer brewer Iain Turnbull, of Balmerino Drive, Stornoway, said: "I just think it is sad that a minority seem to rule by fear effectively over the rights of the majority."

"I don't believe that the Western Isles Council, by opposing Sunday sailings, are taking the objective view."

"Well done, CalMac. This town is dying on its feet and we need every bit of help that we can get."

"I don't believe a Sunday ferry is going to affect people's ability to go to church."

"It will enable people who want to go away for the weekend to do so."

Also on board for the trip was Gaelic writer Finlay Macleod, of Shawbost, Lewis, who said: "It is a great day for the islands. I have been waiting all my life for this moment."

CalMac said that no staff were forced to work on the Sunday, and one shore-based worker chose not to work yesterday.

Crew work 14-day stints in any case, and previously would spend Sunday on other duties.

There were cheers and applause from a small group of Sunday-sailing supporters when the Isle of Lewis docked at Ullapool last night.

COUNCIL ACCUSED OVER OPPOSITION TO SEVEN-DAY CALMAC SERVICE



PLEA FOR SABBATH: Representatives from local churches make their point at Stornoway

Sunday ferry 'no barrier to churchgoing'

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