EMPOWERMENT THROUGH TENANT PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING (1979 - 1997): A GENDERED PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The research explores the role of women and tenant participation, considering: i) the gendered nature of tenant participation and ii) the role of tenant participation as a potential avenue of empowerment for women. The case study approach was adopted for this study and fieldwork was conducted in four contrasting local authorities, involving qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data from tenants, housing officers and councillors.

The thesis begins by reviewing the role of housing policy under Conservative governments from 1979 to 1997. It identifies the ways in which Conservative policy led to the residualisation of the social housing sector and comments upon the impact of policy on tenants, particularly female tenants, in this tenure. It examines the growth of participation initiatives encouraged by Conservative governments during this period.

The study moves on to locate female tenant participation within wider theoretical and political contexts. It addresses the role of housing in women's lives, considering the different value of the home for women and men, and examines the position of women in the public and private spheres in the wider context of citizenship. The concept of participation in relation to the policy-making process is considered, with an analysis of the power dimensions that exist between the various actors involved and the gendered nature of tenant participation.

Having demonstrated that differences exist between female and male participation, the study investigates the differences in greater detail, examining how women participate, and establishing criteria for empowerment. The evidence from the fieldwork suggests that tenant participation is indeed a gendered process and, moreover, has the capacity to empower women at several different levels.
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We want a world where inequality based on class, gender and race is absent from every country, and from the relationships among countries.

We want a world where basic needs become rights and where poverty and all forms of violence are eliminated. Each person will have the opportunity to develop her or his full potential and creativity, and women's values of nurturance and solidarity will characterize human relationships....

We want a world where all institutions are open to participatory democratic processes, where women share in determining priorities and making decisions (Sen and Grown, 1988).
Chapter 1

Introduction

This research focuses upon the role of women and tenant participation, considering the gendered nature of tenant participation and the role of tenant participation as a potential avenue of empowerment for women. This introductory chapter explains the rationale behind the focus of this research and outlines the main propositions to be investigated. The chapter also provides a brief overview of the structure and content of the chapters that follow.

1.1 The research propositions

Gender inequalities in housing are manifestations of wider inequalities in society; indeed housing itself can create disadvantages or advantages for the individual. By focusing on local authority accommodation which now houses some of the most marginalised in society (Malpass and Murie, 1999), this research identifies participation in tenants' associations as a possible forum for women to become empowered and to exercise some control. 'Top down' approaches such as the Sex Discrimination Act, 1975, and the Equal Pay Act, 1970, have succeeded to some extent in combating, or at least increasing awareness of, inequality among citizens. However, despite policies for equal rights, substantive equality has yet to be achieved (Young, 1998), and is unlikely to be eradicated merely by the passing of legislation. To achieve higher levels of equality, there may need to be a focus on introducing equality from the 'bottom up' (Chapman, 1995; Edwards,
Building equality from the 'bottom up' may complement, and extend, the impact of the top down approaches. There is a considerable body of literature addressing women's relationship with housing at social, economic and political levels. Austerberry and Watson (1986) consider women and homelessness; Little, Peake and Richardson (1988) discuss design and the environment; Morris and Winn (1990) consider inequalities in housing access; Darke (1994) studies the meaning of home for women; and Coatham and Hale (1994) address the careers of women in housing departments. There has been research into different areas of tenant participation and empowerment (Lowe 1986; IoH/TPAS, 1989; Cairncross, Clapham and Goodlad, 1994; Foley and Evans, 1994), but relatively little on the role of women in this sphere (Hood and Woods, 1994).

Studies of tenant participation are generally city or area based and, beyond observing that women usually play a significant role in initiating tenant associations and are often the 'backbone' of any group, women are given little more comment. There are no national figures which break down tenants' associations membership by gender, and research on tenants' associations is rarely disaggregated by gender. This lack of attention to gender differences has resulted in a neglect of important actors within tenant participation, who warrant further, deeper analysis. This study contributes to rectifying, at least in part, this omission. This research explores the proposition that tenant participation is a potential avenue of empowerment for women residing in the local authority sector. It also explores the proposition that the process of tenant participation is itself gendered.
1.2 An overview of the thesis

Relevant policy and theoretical literature is reviewed in chapters two, three and four and is drawn on throughout subsequent chapters of the thesis. Having established here the propositions for investigation, chapter two reviews the impact of Conservative housing policy during the period 1979 to 1997 upon local authority tenants, particularly female tenants. Housing policies during this time focused upon twin objectives: first, the expansion of the owner-occupied sector, and second, the promotion of Housing Associations as the main providers of social housing. The encouragement of market forces and the decrease in public sector involvement led to the polarisation of housing between the affluent owner-occupied sector, and the rented sector providing accommodation for the impoverished, the unemployed, the elderly, and ethnic minorities (Cole and Furbey, 1994). Such policies were detrimental to tenants residing in local authority accommodation and chapter two assesses the claim that local authority housing was, in effect, 'residualised'. During this period, Conservative governments encouraged various tenant participation initiatives which are also examined in chapter two.

Chapter three considers the politics of women's participation, locating tenant participation in the wider context of gender inequality in society. The chapter begins with an investigation into the nature of tenants as political activists, considering the argument that tenant mobilisation constitutes an 'urban social movement' (Lowe, 1986). The chapter moves on to examine the continued male dominance of British society, and the reality of women's sustained inequality. Women's political involvement, both in the
public and the private spheres is explored. It is argued that many women lack citizenship rights in a substantive sense (Prior, Stewart, and Walsh, 1995) and are, in effect, 'second class' citizens. The role of housing is presented as an ideal arena in which to focus upon the position of women as citizens in more detail. Whilst the persistence of male dominance is evident, the potential for women to organise and to challenge such pervasive patriarchy is also recognised.

The fourth chapter considers the differences between women and men's experience of housing and explores different motivations for tenant participation. The chapter aims to provide the theoretical background within which female tenant participation can be analysed. The concept of participation is examined, revealing its potential as a control strategy for the state, as well as its more positive, educative role in enhancing democracy. The chapter considers the gendered nature of power itself, and the implications for participatory action. Following this, the potential of participation as a route towards empowerment and increased gender equality is investigated. Arnstein's 'Ladder of Participation' (1969) is used to illustrate 'official' motivations for encouraging participation, whilst a model of citizen 'ideal types' is developed to illustrate individual citizens' motivations for participation and non-participation.

Chapter five outlines the research design and methodology. It reviews the debate concerning feminist methodology and the characteristics of a 'feminist' research approach. The research is identified as 'feminist' in that it studies women's inequality and that it promotes the interests of women. The research design is based on the case study approach
which provides the framework and sets the parameters for the specific methods to operate within. The research utilises quantitative as well as qualitative methodological techniques to collect the empirical data and, in seeking to highlight gender differences, it includes men as well as women as its subjects.

The research findings of this study are presented in chapters six and seven. Chapter six analyses tenant experience of local authority housing from a gendered perspective. It also considers the gendered nature of participation, analysing the differences in female and male participation. The chapter investigates the composition of tenant groups, examining their structure and organisation. Chapter seven addresses the gendered motivations of tenant activity. It analyses the relationship and power dynamics that exist among the main stakeholders. The chapter explores the effects of involvement upon female and male tenants, analysing the gendered acquisition of skills, and their further utilisation, by tenants. The chapter also considers the potential of tenant participation to empower women residing in local authority accommodation.

Chapter eight reviews the main theoretical and empirical arguments of the thesis. It considers the validity of the proposition that tenant participation is a gendered process and, moreover, has the potential to empower some of the most deprived and marginalised women in British society. In so doing, tenant participation may lead to greater levels of equal citizenship between women and men.
Chapter 2

Conservative Housing Policy (1979 - 1997) and Its Impact
Upon the Local Authority Sector

2.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the key issues in which the research for this study is grounded, providing an introduction and context for the more in-depth analysis of later chapters. It is concerned firstly to present a brief historical background regarding the provision of social housing. The chapter then reviews housing policy under Conservative governments from 1979 to 1997: it identifies ways in which policy led to the residualisation of the social housing sector and comments upon the impact of policy upon tenants, particularly female tenants in the local authority sector. Thirdly, this chapter examines the growth of participation initiatives encouraged by the Conservative governments during this period. It focuses on tenant participation as a route towards the empowerment of women in this sector.

2.2 Historical background

When the First World War began, only 0.5% of housing stock was owned by local authorities (Boaden et al, 1982). Severe housing shortages at the end of this war prompted the first significant local authority involvement in the provision of social housing. The 1919 Housing and Planning Act offered local authorities subsidies to build new homes. At this time there were developments in housing design which moved away from the
nineteenth century terraced housing to more spacious housing with gardens and inside bathrooms; 'many council homes were built with a "garden village" approach in the 1920s when the quality of council housing was high but rents were beyond the reach of the poorest' (Harriott and Matthews, 1998: 6). Thus, the local authority sector housed the better-off workers and excluded the less well off. The design and standards were similar to those of the charitable trusts at the time and, the work of Octavia Hill, who emphasised 'the social as well as the financial and physical dimensions of housing management' (Cole and Furbey, 1994: 134). Whilst the management of council housing was very paternalistic in style, it was less people-oriented, or 'social', than Hill's example.

The 1930 Greenwood Act shifted the emphasis for local authorities from building new houses to clearing and redeveloping the slum areas. The quality of new homes built declined during this period as rents needed to be lower so that poor families from the slum properties could afford local authority housing (Malpass and Murie, 1999). There was a boom in private house building during the 1930s which can be seen as 'a product of market conditions, specifically low costs of land, labour and materials, and low interest rates, coupled with rising living standards in the more prosperous southern half of the country, where most of the new building was located' (Malpass and Murie, 1999: 38).

By the end of the Second World War housing policy was high on the political agenda. Approximately 400 000 homes had been destroyed and the focus was once again on building new houses rather than slum clearance. From 1945-51, local authorities built over 80% of new dwellings (Harriott and Matthews, 1998). However, in the early 1950s
the new Conservative government again shifted the emphasis as this quote from Harold Macmillan in 1954 illustrates:

Local authorities and local authorities alone can clear and re-house the slums, while the general housing need can be met, as it was to a great extent before the war, by private enterprise (cited in Murie, 1995: 130).

As Murie observes, this shift formed part of a 'more general "market" philosophy in housing' (1995: 130) as the private sector was given a dominant role in the provision of housing in Britain. In 1955, the government urged local authorities to set "realistic" rents and to channel subsidies towards the less well-off tenants. However, in comparison to other services of the welfare state, the service offered by local housing authorities at this time has been criticised as poor. As Cole and Furbey note: 'the prevailing values in housing management were often patronising, oppressive and inflexible' (1994: 78).

The target of the new Labour government of 1965 was to build half a million houses a year by 1970 (Harriott and Matthews, 1998). But, by the late 1960s general economic problems forced the government to reduce building and slum clearance as part of public expenditure cut-backs following the devaluation of sterling in 1967 (Malpass and Murie, 1999: 57). The new policy emphasis on housing, then, was on the rehabilitation of existing stock rather than re-development. The 1969 Housing Act introduced 'general improvement areas' and the Housing Act of 1974 added 'housing action areas'; both policies identified areas for improvement and extra grant aid to prevent their demolition. The style of housing management remained paternalistic in nature and an unequal relationship between tenant and landlord existed in the mid-1970s. The freedom of tenants was limited by regulations and subject to rules regarding 'alterations of their homes or controls on the right to keep
pets, backed by handbooks giving condescending advice on how to undertake housework and rear children' (Cole and Furbey, 1994: 139). Ward describes the unequal power relationship at this time:

Municipal housing is still dominated by its origins in late nineteenth-century philanthropic paternalism. The tenant's relationship with his landlord is only a contractual one in the sense that a serf in the middle ages was a party to a contract with the lord of the manor. It is the lords of the municipal manor who call the tune (cited in Cole and Furbey, 1994: 139).

Since 1945, then, local authority housing has played an important, but changing, role in housing provision:

... the early post-war years were a period of high output, followed by a growing preoccupation with the problem of replacing old and unfit property, which itself gave way to a policy of rehabilitation rather than redevelopment as financial problems came to dominate the debate. Throughout much of the post-war period the rise of home ownership has been highly influential, producing a considerable degree of interparty consensus. As a corollary of this trend, council housing has been subject to a strong residualising tendency (Malpass and Murie, 1999: 76).

2.3 Conservative housing policy 1979 – 1997: an overview

State housing underwent a transformation under Conservative governments during the period 1979 to 1997. Housing policies reflected a 'new right' belief in free-market capitalism, evident in the main philosophy running throughout Conservative policy which emphasised 'the ideological premise that market solutions will maximise individual freedom and economic utility' (Cooper, 1996: 13). Such a philosophy had a particularly detrimental effect on women who were less able to compete in the private sector than men, largely due to their lower incomes (Joshi et al, 1995). Despite the increasing numbers of
women in employment, the role of women as homemakers was stressed\(^1\) and the Conservatives advocated a return to 'traditional family values'. Indeed, two years prior to the 1979 election, a Social Security spokesman for the Conservative Party stated that:

> There is now an elaborate machinery to allow equal rights; but I think we ought to stop and ask, where does this leave the family? ... If the good Lord had intended us all having equal rights ... he really wouldn't have created men and women (cited in Cole and Howe, 1994: 17).

The Family Policy Group suggestions on the 'traditional family unit' were leaked in 1982; Thatcher blamed single mothers for the homelessness problem in 1988 (Birchall, 1992) and Major's Conservative Party Conference speech in 1993 made 'traditional values' central to his 'Back to Basics' campaign.

Several key reasons can be identified for the Conservatives' promotion of home ownership and their negative attitude towards local authority housing: the encouragement of consumer preference and consumer rights in the delivery of services, privatisation of services; and the emphasis on removing dependency on the state, replacing it with 'enterprise'. The Thatcher governments 'consistently pursued a related set of policy objectives which both drew upon and reinforced processes of social restructuring, undermining working-class solidarities, and the "privatisation" of politics' (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993:30). Furbey et al describe local authority tenants as,

> both recipients of one of the historically less legitimised and universal public services and, in the wake of the accelerating residualisation of the tenure, increasingly likely to be claimants for state income support and housing benefit. Tenants presented themselves, therefore, as prime targets in the new right assault on 'dependency' of a particular and constructed kind – dependency upon state

\(^1\) Although this did vary throughout the period and by Department, for example, the employment initiative Opportunity 2000 was launched by Major to improve 'the quality and quantity of women's participation in the workforce' (Hardy, 1992).
welfare. In this context, tenant participation emerged for the conservative government as an important and challenging arena in its drive to replace dependence with enterprise (1996: 258).

The Conservatives' right-wing think-tank, the Adam Smith Institute, illustrates the thinking of that time: ‘The public sector has become inefficient, wasteful and costly, has discouraged mobility and has allowed no place for consumer preferences to determine supply’ (1983: 153). The Conservative party valued the 'merits of ownership of capital rather than seeing home-ownership as a means of achieving housing policy objectives' (Malpass and Murie, 1999: 82).

It can be argued that during the Thatcher years there was a 'tenure' policy, rather than a housing policy. Owner occupation was advocated as a positive ideal which all should strive towards, and the establishment of a 'property owning democracy' was encouraged. Such promotion of owner-occupation led to the demise of local authority housing provision. The success of policies in increasing the levels of home-ownership is illustrated in the table below: between 1981 and 1996, owner occupation increased by 10%, whilst local authority occupation fell by approximately 11%.
### Table 2.1 Dwelling by tenure in the UK 1981 - 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Owner-Occupation (%)</th>
<th>Local Authority (%)</th>
<th>Housing Association (%)</th>
<th>Private rented (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>66.1</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>9.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: DETR 1997, Housing and Construction Statistics)

The central concern of housing legislation during this period was to increase the owner-occupied sector:

rather than being based on a re-distributive welfare state approach, with priority given to homelessness or housing stress, and subsidy directed to those in greatest need, housing policy was intended to promote a people-owning democracy giving freedom and mobility and the prospect of handing something on to their children and grand-children (Murie, 1994:133).

Two main phases of housing policy can be identified during this period. Policies in the first two terms of Thatcher government (1979 - 1986) concentrated on the extension of home ownership. Policies in the second phase (1987 - 1997), whilst still primarily focused on the promotion of owner occupation, were also concerned with increasing the availability and provision of rented housing, removing the 'monopoly' control of local
authorities by expanding private and housing association sectors (Malpass and Murie, 1994).

2.3.1 Housing policy 1979 - 1986: the promotion of home ownership

Home ownership was given a high profile during this period and proved to be a successful campaign issue. The importance of home ownership to Thatcherism was 'premised on the belief that council housing was an inherently inferior form of housing provision compared to owner occupation and represented a stumbling block to the creation of a nation of home owners' (Hughes and Lowe, 1995: 36). Whilst both the main parties had promoted owner-occupation since the mid-1950s, it was Thatcher who accelerated the process. The main policy which led to the increase in owner-occupation, and the contraction of council housing was the 'Right to Buy' policy introduced in the 1980 Housing Act and subsequent extensions to it (for details of Housing Legislation, see Appendix I).

The Right to Buy enabled tenants in the public sector who had been living in their homes for three years or longer to purchase their dwellings at a discounted price. In 1984, the Housing and Buildings Control Act reduced the occupation time to two years and enhanced discounts, increasing them to 70% for tenants in flats. In 1985, local authorities were given powers to dispose of housing and land, paving the way for Large Scale Voluntary Transfers (LSVTs) to occur, which permitted the transfer of stock from local authorities usually to housing associations (250,000 dwellings were transferred under LSVTs between 198 and 1996 (Mullins, 1998: 128)).
By 1986, 'cash incentives' were offered to tenants to give up their local authority homes and move into the private sector. The Building Societies Act (1986) enabled societies to extend their activities to own and invest in housing. Also in 1986, the Housing and Planning Act further increased Right to Buy discounts and facilitated the sale of all or part of the local authority stock into private or housing association ownership. The new housing benefit system, established in 1982 (Social Security and Housing Benefits Act) marked 'a shift away from general "bricks and mortar" subsidies towards individual subsidies targeted on basis of household needs and incomes' (Malpass and Murie, 1999: 82).

By 1986, then, housing policies had seriously reduced the role of the local authority in housing provision and the number of households in council accommodation had fallen from 34% in 1979 to 26% in 1986 (GHS, 1986). There had also been a shift in the gender balance of council house tenants: in 1979, 69% of heads of households residing in local authority accommodation were male compared with 31% of female heads; in 1986, 61% of male headed households rented from a local authority, compared to 39% of female headed households (GHS, 1979). As Cole and Furbey observe, Conservative policy amounted to a wide-ranging programme of privatisation ... it reduced state provision by limiting new building programmes and encouraging council house sales; it reduced subsidies to council house tenants while enhancing tax expenditures to owner occupiers; reduced state regulation by relaxing controls on rents in the private sector (1994: 197).
2.3.2 Housing policy 1987 - 1997: a new approach to the rented sector

Whilst housing policies continued to promote owner occupation as the ideal tenure during this period, the Conservatives also advanced their strategy for rented housing (see Appendix II). The objective of the government's White Paper 'Housing: the Government's Proposals' (DoE, 1987) was for local authorities to adopt a more strategic role and for housing associations to play a greater role in social housing provision. The direct housing function of local authorities was undermined by central government over this period and redefined as an enabling function, mirroring wider changes in local authority roles (King and Stoker, 1996). Housing Associations\(^2\) were considered a more appropriate mechanism for social housing provision by the government, which had become disenchanted with local authority housing:

> In the ... development of policy towards housing associations, central government has used the voluntary sector to increase its direct control over housing programmes and by-passed local authorities with which it has a less simple relationship. This development of housing associations can be seen as part of the wider centralising tendency evident in housing policy (Malpass and Murie, 1999: 149).

Indeed, as Cole and Furbey highlight, 'the attraction of housing associations lay in their independence from local political control and dependence on direct central government support – a more acceptable form of public landlordism' (1994: 201). Housing Minister, William Waldegrave, stated that there was no future for council housing and 'the next big push should be to get rid of the state as a big landlord and bring housing back to the community' (cited in Malpass and Means, 1993: 30).

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\(^2\) For a definition and comprehensive description of Housing Association work see Cope, 1990.
The Housing Act 1988 altered the role of local authorities in the rented sector, from landlord to enabler (see table Housing Legislation in Appendix II). Tenants could vote for a change of landlord under 'Tenants' Choice', but abstentions counted as voting in favour of a transfer (DoE, 1988). This Act also introduced Housing Action Trusts (HATs) which were 'intended to tackle problems of run-down, predominantly public sector housing by taking over responsibility for local authority housing in designated areas' (Malpass and Murie, 1999: 101). In spite of these initiatives, local authority tenants remained reluctant to leave local authority tenure, with few transfers of council stock occurring under Tenants' Choice; all tenant ballots rejected transfer to HATs in the first phase of the initiative (Cole and Furbey, 1994: 202).

The Conservative Party Manifesto of 1992 was concerned with the future of housing in the context of the Right to Buy and the Citizens' Charter, which sought to identify individuals' entitlements as consumers of public services (Prior, Stewart, and Walsh, 1995). In 'Home Ownership' (a one-page document), owner occupation was further promoted and a strong private rented sector advocated (Cole and Furbey, 1994). The encouragement of the transfer of council stock continued through the initiation of 'local housing companies' and the allocation of £300 million for 'tenant-involved' council house improvement programmes in 1996/7, which was 'to prepare some of the most deprived estates for transfer out of public sector control' (Cooper, 1996: 11) During this second phase of Conservative policy it is obvious that emphasis on the owner occupied sector continued and, in 1996, 67% of UK dwellings were owner occupied (1997, DETR). However, as Malpass and Murie comment, this phase also
embodied a significant change with the acknowledgement of need for a social rented housing sector ... [and saw this sector] as the most cost-effective way to provide long term housing for those with low incomes ... because providing a subsidy to a social landlord to charge a below market rent was cheaper over time than paying housing benefit on a market rent, it reduced dependency on benefits and improved work incentives and therefore increased prospects of breaking out of benefit (1994: 87).

The role of local authorities as direct housing providers, then, had been replaced with an 'ill-defined "enabling" function' (Cole, 1993: 150). Local authorities, particularly Labour controlled authorities, reacted by focusing on decentralisation as the main 'rescue' strategy for council housing. As Cole observes,

decentralisation was full of promise - as a harbinger of radical reform, as a critique of the prevailing political and managerial culture in local government, as a riposte to Thatcherite ideology and as a vehicle to win public support for services under increasing financial and political attack' (1993: 151).

For housing, decentralisation involved a more localised approach, with more control and decision making powers devolved to area and neighbourhood offices. Tenants were also encouraged to take an active role in the development of services to improve their performance (Beuret and Stoker, 1986). By giving housing officers more autonomy, local authorities sought to show central government that service provision at the neighbourhood level was less bureaucratic and more responsive to customer needs. It was a direct response to central government criticism and control and proved relatively successful in its aims (see Cole and Furbey, 1994: chapter eight). However, whilst decentralisation improved performance in many areas such as reducing the number of empty properties, monitoring repairs more effectively and increasing the allocation processes, it was also highly costly and perhaps 'it was fanciful to have ever assumed that opening a clutch of neighbourhood
offices would somehow turn the tide of history and reverse the residualisation of council housing in Britain' (Cole, 1993: 161).

Conservative housing policies from 1979 to 1997 then, dramatically altered housing tenure in England. It is generally recognised that these policies hit those most dependent on social housing the hardest (Cole and Furbey, 1994; Morris and Winn, 1990). The minimisation of public sector involvement and encouragement of market forces to take over much of the local authority role resulted in an increasing polarisation within housing:

between the owner-occupation sector catering for the affluent majority and a rented sector serving an 'underclass' of poor, unemployed, elderly, ethnic or social minority households (Cole and Furbey, 1994: 208).

The effect of this residualisation of local authority housing is the focus of the next section.

2.4 The residualisation of local authority housing

Malpass and Murie define residualisation as

The process whereby public housing moves towards a position in which it provides only a 'safety net' for those who for reasons of poverty, age or infirmity cannot obtain suitable accommodation in the private sector. It almost certainly involves lowering the status and increasing the stigma attached to public housing (1982: 174).

In essence, residualisation refers to that part of the housing stock which is left over for people who have no choice. Policies which encouraged home ownership can be argued to have been in the interests of the majority (Cooper, 1996) and, as a consequence, the interests of the minority effected little influence upon policy makers. Kleineman (1996)
refers to two strands of housing policy: one concentrating on majority interests and one concerned with minority views,

The interests of the majority of the population are largely served by the State intervening mainly to ensure continuity and reasonable conditions in the market. .... Other aspects of housing policy, for example, homelessness, social housing provision, means tested housing allowances are provided to a minority which is increasingly segregated or at least differentiated from the majority in terms of its location, its ethnic group or its household type. Whatever the formal appearance, such policies and their associated expenditures are consented to by the majority not as a type of collective provision, but rather as an expression of altruism (helping the poor); or as an insurance payment against riot, theft or social disorder; or as socially necessary expenditure (because low paid but essential workers need to live somewhere) (1996:175-6).

The government perceived housing problems and inequalities experienced by this minority as somewhat peripheral and addressed them as a residual problem (Clapham and Maclellan, 1983; Malpass 1990). Indeed, Miller cites an extreme version of this view, taken from a background paper to 'More Than a Roof: The Future for Social Housing' conference (1988), where a statement was made by a Tory party think-tank that council housing was

only.... for those who whether through poverty or lack of initiative cannot make the grade as owner-occupiers. We've got to accept it as a second-class sector for second-class people (cited in Miller, 1990: 28)

Between 1979 and 1997, 1.3 million council tenants bought their own homes (1999b, DETR). Tenants who were able to take advantage of the Right to Buy policies shared similar characteristics. They were predominantly middle aged, employed and living in semi-detached housing in popular suburban areas (Morris and Winn, 1990). This resulted in a dramatic change in the profile of remaining local authority residents: households were
now more likely to be comprised of elderly or single parents (most of whom were female) on low incomes or dependent on benefit (Forrest and Murie, 1991).

The majority of properties remaining in the public sector were in unpopular areas, concentrated in inner cities or on outlying estates (Cole and Furbey, 1994). Access to decent housing is usually determined by access to financial resources. The average income of council tenants in 1981 was 73% of the national average, by 1991 it had fallen to 48% (Hood and Woods, 1994). Housing policies in this period served to reinforce inequalities in society: 'for some of the poorest households, the public sector has changed from being a route to better housing to being trapped in bad housing' (Goodlad and Williams, 1994: 26).

Income played an important part in determining the type of tenure available. Households that rented were more likely to be from the unskilled manual group whilst the majority of owner-occupiers with a mortgage were engaged in professional or non-manual employment (Social Trends 26, 1996: 183). Indeed, in 1996/7, only 24% of council house tenants had full time employment and 70% of households contained no earner; the average gross weekly income was £154. (SEH, 1998). Gender was also a significant factor in determining tenure type. According to the 1991 census, 69.4% of households were headed by men and 30.5% by women and 76.1% of male heads were owner-occupiers against 23.8% of female heads (OPCS, 1993). A survey conducted by TSB in November 1993 found that the average man needed 24% of his earnings to cover a first time mortgage compared with 31% for a woman (Abdela, 1994). Women, then, were seriously disadvantaged in the owner-occupied tenure. Securing private rented accommodation could also be problematic for women, who were less
likely to possess the necessary initial payments of advance rent and deposits than men, again because of the disparity in earnings.

Without the ability to secure a mortgage, many women were reliant upon a residualised local authority and social housing sector. In 1996/7, 30% of all female-headed households were council tenants compared with 13% of male-headed households (SEH, 1998: 105). The proportion of female-headed households also changed over time: in 1986, 39% of households were headed by women compared with 61% of men (GHS, 1986). By 1996/7, the proportion of male-headed households had decreased to 56%, whilst the proportion of female-headed households had increased to 44% (SEH, 1998). There were definite gender differences in housing tenure primarily reflected by differences in income. Thus, when Edwina Currie shared her belief that, ‘We in this country are extremely lucky to have a government who run the economy in such a way that we can all afford to buy our homes’ (Hansard, 1989), she was speaking to a specific, privileged section of society (albeit the majority). Those who remained in the local authority sector were those with little option or alternative, as it became the tenure of ‘last resort’. Conservative policies

have worked against those in low paid employment or unemployed. Withdrawal of HAG and HRA subsidy has had the effect of driving up rents in the social sector, creating benefit ghettos which offer little hope. The constant erosion of benefit levels and eligibility has in parallel removed under 18 year olds from the system entirely and extended the poverty trap for many households on the breadline (Pearl, 1997: 243).

Pearl (1997) comments that this period of Conservative government was marked by an emphasis on the deserving and undeserving poor. Lone parents were particularly singled out for attack: Thatcher stated that ministers should act on the growing problem of ‘the
young single girls who deliberately become pregnant in order to jump the housing queue and get welfare payments' (Travis, 1988: 6); Major's Back to Basics campaign 'sought to promote orthodox family values while vilifying the irresponsibility of single parenthood' (Pearl, 1997: 243).

Conservative housing policies have been detrimental to women (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993); whether intentionally or unintentionally, directly or indirectly, women have suffered adversely from Conservative policies. During this period, freedoms and rights for women were gradually eroded by a depletion in welfare services which were disproportionately used by women. Conservative policies were integral to maintaining and reproducing gender divisions. Policy was based on the assumption of women's financial dependence on men and a domestic division of labour assigning to women primary responsibility for housework and childcare and care of the elderly. (On the adverse effects of Conservative government policies on women's paid employment, on women's role as carers for the elderly and infirm, and on women's use of public transport, see Lovenduski and Randall, 1993: 49-52.)

Policy during this period, then, reinforced economic and social dependency of women in the nuclear family. Alternative types of household such as single, single parent, lesbian or gay, faced difficulties as they did not conform to the traditional image of a 'household' and were seen as 'transitional stages of the family' (Brailey, 1986: 6). The assumption was that

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3 This argument is put forward in Labour's 'Governing for Equality' document: 'Much damaging legislation brought in by the Conservatives, notably in the fields of employment, social security and housing, has been particularly harmful for women' (Guardian, July 13, 1996: 12).
they would eventually progress towards a 'conventional' household or become 'residual from it' (Clapham, Kemp and Smith, 1990: 71). Morris even accused the Conservative government of engaging in 'social engineering', believing the government had clear ideas about how people should and should not behave, and what kind of households (and relationships) are to be encouraged. In particular, it favours heterosexual family households (1988: 21).

Conservative housing policy clearly favoured those who possessed capital over those without; in effect, it was oriented to benefit more men than women due to the economic inequality gap which existed in society. As Dutta and Taylor note: 'Many women depend upon a man's earnings to get a roof over their heads' (1989: 48) and women often suffer serious consequences if that man dies or leaves without making adequate provision for that woman and any dependants. A woman may be forced to remain in a house because her lack of income prevents her from moving into the private sector. Her alternative under Conservative government was temporary accommodation supplied by the local authority, in which it was possible to wait up to four years before permanent accommodation was offered (Green, Firth and Chandler, 1988). Women facing violence or abuse, or even amicable relationship breakdown, experience frustration (and often danger) as a result of being unable to move elsewhere, especially if children are involved. As Miller recognises, 'freedom to buy translates into the prison of an unhappy marriage, an overcrowded parental home, a Bed and Breakfast hotel or the streets' (1990: 2). Pressure to remain within the family unit was strong, a pressure that only increased as the number of council housing dwellings declined.
Whilst the promotion of owner occupation benefited many who were able to move out of the local authority sector, it was clearly less advantageous to the minority who remained. Arguing that 'social problems' on estates arose out of both bad design and poor management, alongside the 'dependency' of tenants, Conservative governments desired a decrease in the size of local authority stock. The aim was to decrease tenant dependency and increase 'consumer rights' for the remaining tenants. The extent and success of these rights is discussed in the next section.

2.5 Developments in tenant participation

Despite the residualisation of local authority housing, it has been argued that local authority tenants have been empowered⁴, or enabled, by much of the legislation passed during the period 1979 to 1997 (Cooper, 1996). The promotion of participation and consultation among those receiving public services had been high on the political agenda throughout the 1980s and 1990s with for example, the introduction of the Citizen's Charter, Housing Acts 1980 and 1985, Housing and Planning Act 1986 and the 1993 Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act. The aim was the attempt to involve those receiving or using services - the 'customer' or 'client' - to ascertain if services were being delivered successfully. By mobilising consumer pressure, it was intended to improve the efficiency of local authority providers, who were seen as lacking market pressures, local authorities were encouraged to adopt a more customer-oriented approach. The purpose was to clarify the nature and standard of service that tenants (and other public service users) could expect, improving access to

⁴ The concept of empowerment is fundamental to this thesis and analysed in detail in the following chapter. It is used here as a descriptive, rather than a theoretical, category.
information as well as involvement, to define standards and, in some areas, make compensation available if these were not met. The Council Tenant’s Charter states that tenants:

should get a good service. … Your council must keep you in touch [and] tell you if it is going to make any changes in the way it runs your home and your estate. It must also ask your views about those changes. You have the right to be consulted … [and] the right to information. … You can help your council help you by establishing just how your council involves its tenants in its proposals; insisting that you and other tenants are properly consulted; joining a tenants’ group and making sure your council consults you on all plans; trying to get other people on the estate to take an interest in those plans; replying to the council’s questionnaires about what you want; giving the council ideas for improving your estate, not just waiting for them to do something; training to take a bigger role in running your estate (DETR, 1999b)

It can be argued that the encouragement of participation at this level does strengthen the confidence of those involved and can lead to feelings of empowerment and influence as tenants become more active stakeholders (the debate is discussed in more detail later in this chapter). A high profile was given to tenant participation and great emphasis placed on its empowering nature and qualities which were perceived to be a positive ideal in attempts to increase involvement. The consultation of tenants was advocated by central government as a requirement for local government policy makers. As a result, two fifths of local authorities had formal methods for consultation in place by the end of the 1980s (Gilroy and Woods, 1994).

The 1980 Housing Act introduced the Tenants’ Charter, discussed earlier, which gave tenants rights to information and consultation about housing management. Legislation in 1985 required local authorities to provide information and consultation with tenants on matters concerning their rights. In 1986, the Housing and Planning Act required local authorities to consult tenants over proposals to sell their homes to approved landlords and
In 1987 under the Landlord and Tenant Act, tenants were given rights to form co-operatives to manage their own housing. The Priority Estates Project (PEP) was set up by the Department of the Environment to concentrate resources on problem estates, and to encourage tenant involvement and partnership arrangements between various agencies (Power, 1987). In 1987, recommendations that emerged from the PEP work concerning partnership arrangements between local authorities and tenants, made possible the establishment of Estate Management Boards (EMB), which allowed tenants certain responsibilities for estate services. The Housing Act of 1988 introduced the Tenants' Choice initiative which gave tenants the right to choose their landlord. This initiative had been detailed under 'Rights for Tenants' in the 1987 Conservative Manifesto, 'If [tenants] are ever to enjoy the prospect of independence municipal monopoly must be replaced by choice in renting' (cited in Malpass and Murie, 1999:101). Malpass and Murie highlight the relevant paragraphs:

We'll give tenants the right to form tenant co-operatives owning and running their management and budget for themselves. They will also have the right to ask other institutions to take over their housing. Tenants who wish to remain with the local authority will be able to. We will give each council house tenant individually the right to transfer the ownership of his or her house to a housing association, or other independent approved landlord (Tory Party, 1987, cited in Malpass and Murie, 1999).

The 1989 Local Government and Housing Act required councils to deliver Annual Reports to tenants on their performance in an effort to increase the standard of services by making them more accountable. In 1993, the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act required tenants to be consulted on certain issues concerning Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) and granted tenants the right to manage their own estates under Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs). The 1990s also saw the introduction of City
Challenge, and subsequently the Single Regeneration Budget, both of which stressed tenant involvement in regeneration schemes.

The extension of tenants' rights and the stress on participation were consistent with Conservative policy in other areas during this period. In education, for example, there was emphasis on individuals taking control of their own lives through increased parent involvement on school governing bodies. Baistow highlights one theme in the literature on empowerment in health and welfare which, sees the citizen's lack of control over her/his life as the major social problem of our time; in which case, by implication, a dose of empowerment should provide a solution that is both panaceaic and prophylactic (Baistow, 1994/5: 40).

This is of course too simplistic and it would be naive to credit empowerment with the potential to solve or heal all society's ills. However, this is not to deny its dynamic and positive characteristics, which can and often do result in a growth in competence, control and influence (Barnes and Warren, 1999). In the context of local authority housing, then, the promotion of participation and involvement of tenants can be perceived as a potentially empowering and liberating experience for the tenants.

Although tenant consultation rights have now been enshrined in the legal framework, tenants did not wait for such legislation before becoming involved in issues concerning their housing: for example, the 1915 Clydeside rent strikes, tenant action against the rent increases of the 1972 Housing Finance Act and, tenant campaigns against the transfer of local authority housing stock granted in the 1988 Housing Act. Such examples illustrate the interest of local authority tenants in their housing, even when they had few official
rights. Some commentators believe that tenants only become active when there is a specific issue at stake and, when that particular issue has been resolved, tenant activity dissolves until the next time. However, whilst the difficulties of maintaining tenant momentum in participatory groups is acknowledged, research has shown that there are many tenant groups in which activity is sustained (Cairncross, Clapham, and Goodlad, 1992; Smith, 1992). The role of women in tenant action has been recognised as important 'owing to their centrality to neighbourhood social relations and their particularly intense experience of the dwelling and the estate as domestic managers' (Cole and Furbey, 1994: 156). Tenant involvement in participatory activities and the role women play in tenant groups is discussed in greater detail in chapter three.

2.6 Conclusion

Conservative policies during the period 1979 to 1997 emphasised privatisation, consumer choice and enterprise over dependency; this affected women and men differently. By focusing on local authority housing the Conservative government demonstrated that radical incursions could be made into the heart of public provision without disastrous electoral consequences. ... The attack on state housing therefore foreshadowed a more fundamental reappraisal of other services - first, social security, and then health and education (Cole and Furbey, 1994: 182).

Policies reflected the government’s new right belief in market principles; shortcomings of public sector provision were exemplified by local authority housing which was 'unpopular, socially stigmatising, incompetently managed and oblivious to consumer preferences' (Cole and Furbey, 1994: 188).
Despite strategies such as decentralisation implemented by local authorities in response to central government housing policies, the residualisation of the sector could not be reversed. Housing policies had a more negative affect upon those who were most dependent on social housing. As a consequence, the local authority sector became a sector for those individuals with little choice to move elsewhere; an increasing proportion of whom were women. It is argued that women in this sector suffer a double disadvantage, first, by residing in marginalised accommodation and second, by being women in an unequal society which treats women as 'second class' citizens. The position and role of women in the wider society is examined in the following chapter.
Chapter 3

The Politics of Women's Participation in Housing

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter gave an account of housing policies and their affect upon local authority tenants, particularly female tenants. It also revealed the gendered nature of these policies which tended to have a more detrimental effect upon women. This chapter begins with a brief discussion concerning the nature of tenants as political activists and questions the potential of tenants to mobilise into an 'urban social movement' (Lowe, 1986). Before proceeding to analyse female tenant participation in more depth, the chapter considers the wider involvement of women in local and neighbourhood groups. Such participation is located within the broader theoretical and political contexts of women's equality.

The chapter explores the patriarchal origins of women's inequality and considers feminist criticisms that mainstream politics is founded on male norms and values, the structures of which continue to maintain and perpetuate male dominance. The position of women in the private and public spheres is examined in the wider context of women's 'second class citizenship'. Finally, the chapter identifies the role of housing as an ideal arena in which to focus on the position of women as citizens more closely, and observes the different meanings, interpretations and values of the home for women and men.
To analyse fully the concepts discussed here would demand more space than this thesis allows. However, they are addressed here, as an awareness of patriarchy and the 'public/private debate' is important to this study in order to understand women's continuing inequality, and in order to understand the power dynamics of participatory decision-making. In short, they are fundamental to placing women's tenant participation in its wider context.

3.2 Tenants as political activists

This section is divided into two sub-sections: the first concerns the nature of tenants as political activists, investigating the potential of tenants to organise as a 'social movement', and the second considers the involvement of women at the local and neighbourhood level.

3.2.1 Nature of tenant activism: an 'urban social movement'?

According to the three core criteria - collective consumption, cultural identity and local control - Castells (1983) argued that tenants' associations were a form of 'urban movement'. However, it can be argued that the potential basis for solidarity has been fragmented by government policies, largely by the right to buy and subsequent legislation (see Lowe, 1986). Indeed, research by Cairncross, Clapham and Goodlad reveals that tenants do not generally have a strong orientation towards collective, militant, protest action. ... the concept of an ‘urban social movement’ would seem to be a far cry from the reality of the tenants’ movement in the late 1980s in Britain (1993: 192).

Whilst this presupposes a need to be an urban social movement to achieve change, there are several factors that need to be addressed in the 'tenant-as-political-activist' debate.
Firstly, local authority tenants are not an homogenous group but are divided by race, gender, employment and personal status (e.g. identification with a 'good' or 'problem' estate); such divisions are evident in the lack of success often experienced in forming and maintaining Tenants' Federations (see Woodward, 1991). Secondly, where tenant groups exist, they are often seen as unrepresentative of those that they seek to represent (Cairncross, Clapham, and Goodlad, 1993). Tenants' associations are usually under-resourced; if resources are provided by the government they may have certain preconditions or intentions attached (e.g. Section 16 of Housing and Planning Act, 1986 which offered £3.25 million to tenants).

Thirdly, campaigns are usually defensive rather than proactive and tend to be issue specific, once a campaign is won or lost, the impetus to sustain activity frequently diminishes. Fourthly, many tenants' associations are initially founded by women and usually organised around an informal structure; this can then be undermined by the local authority, which may insist on certain formal procedures as they are often unable (or unwilling) to co-operate with more informally organised groups. As a result, a tenant association may become disunited and outmanoeuvred by the local authority which is then playing according to 'their' rules (For a more detailed discussion of the difficulties preventing the mobilisation of a mass movement see Cole and Furbey, 1994, chapter six).

Finally, several factors may be identified to explain tenants' relative lack of political action: tenants may be genuinely (or generally) satisfied and see no need to participate for change; tenants may be apathetic and find little incentive to participate; tenants may
be cynical and believe participation to be a worthless and futile activity; tenants may also be unaware of the opportunity to participate; they may be too inhibited, or they may have difficulty in attending meetings as a result of time and financial constraints. The factors identified here for non-participation contribute to the model of participation citizen 'ideal types' developed further in chapter four.

Despite the failure to organise into a mass movement, tenants can and do benefit and progress from their participation and involvement in tenants' associations. This can take the form of developing certain skills to real feelings of empowerment (Hood and Woods, 1994; Smith, 1992; Henderson, Wright and Wyncooll, 1982; Mayo, 1977). Cairncross, Clapham and Goodlad (1994) consider whether participation empowers tenants and conclude that 'it all depends'. It depends directly upon: 'the way that tenants, councillors and housing managers play the game, the tactics they use and the resources they can deploy' (1994: 198), and indirectly upon the influence of the political culture at the time (Cooper, 1996). That tenants are at times able to 'play the game' successfully is echoed by Smith who observes that 'because national and local governments have encouraged participation to make the process of government easier, we should not conclude that it cannot be used by the community to obtain change desirable to them (1981: 13). It is possible, then, for tenants, as well as housing officers and councillors, to influence others in the participatory arena to advantage their own position. The influence held by one group over another is often determined by the power relationships that exists between the main actors. Smith defines participation as:

- a relationship between those with the power to take decisions and those who ought to have a right to influence them. As politics is about the exercise of power, then obviously participation is a political activity (1981: 16).
The Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) together with the Chartered Institute of Housing, have developed a more succinct definition of participation in housing as:

A two way process involving sharing of information and ideas, where tenants are able to influence decisions and take part in what is happening (1989: 19)

Despite the 'power games', participation is generally seen by all parties, or actors, as a positive in the housing sector (see chapter two) and many would agree with Smith who sees participation as 'potentially good in the sense that an extension of democracy is good' (1981: 15). The particular ways in which the various actors involved view tenant participation is discussed further in chapter four. In order to locate specific female involvement in tenant activity, a brief consideration is given to women and participation in the next section, before it is developed further in subsequent chapters.

3.2.2 Women and local involvement

Local authority tenants can be seen as united in their experience of the same regulations and procedures as they share the same tenure, although individual local authorities may operate in different ways. Beyond this, female tenants also have in common the fact that they often make up the majority of tenants in their area and reside in accommodation that has usually been designed and constructed by men. In contrast to local authority committees where men usually predominate, especially in the higher echelons, tenants' associations have a high level of female participation (Gilroy and Woods, 1994).

It has been widely documented that community and local level groups and organisations are the arenas in which women find it 'easier' to participate (Dominelli, 1990; Gelb, 1988; Mies, 1986; Randall, 1982). The reason advanced for this is two-fold: first, that such
groups are usually found to be informally structured and flexible, allowing for domestic, care and other responsibilities that are predominately the concern of women, second, that the concerns of such groups are more relevant, or more pressing, to women. Women are more likely than men to be employed in the local area close to home (Tivers, 1985). The experience of women in the domestic sphere can mean a greater sense of identity with their local community and in relation to issues surrounding their local environment. Women may have a greater tendency than men to be provoked to campaign in their communities for better and more equitably located services, for better home and estate maintenance, for housing construction and neighbourhood design that meet their needs (Mackenzie and Rose, 1983: 185).

The focus of this study is to explore the role of women in participation. Whilst it is recognised that a gender based political movement is unlikely (McDowell, 1983), that 'gender interests and gender-based organisations have the potential to transform political practice' (Bondi and Peake, 1988: 38) is not ruled out. The organisation and structure of informal groups have much to offer and can challenge the composition and character of other groups.

That women are more likely to participate in informal activities at the community level, rather than in formal arenas such as the government or political parties has been documented by Parry, Moyser and Day (1992). Their research findings suggest that the greater accessibility and flexibility of informal organisations encourage women to voice their interests, problems and expectations. Randall (1982) contends that it is the 'result of both constraints and choices' that women predominate in informal action. The responsibilities that fall to women in the domestic sphere prevent or 'constrain' them from
participation in the formal environment. Lister argues that many women are deficient in two fundamental resources: time and money; in the case of female tenants (and more generally), experience could also be added. As a result, women may 'prefer' to be more active in informal processes which 'represent a more accessible, fulfilling and enjoyable form of politics' (Lister, 1991: 69).

However, the dominance of male interests in society means that many women are not only confined to this sphere by being denied the same employment opportunities as men, but also that women's concerns about the quality of the home and neighbourhood are seen as being of secondary importance in economic and social policy (Blackman, 1995: 163).

Whilst issues at this level may be viewed as 'secondary', women's involvement within these groups may strengthen and empower them to become active in matters considered to be of primary importance by society, bringing with them an alternative perspective to these areas and demanding a primary focus on 'women's issues' previously considered as secondary. Many women have access to local neighbourhood networks through which informal arrangements are often made, for example, in the area of childcare. It has been argued that such networks are invaluable for women (Russell, 1999) and may contribute to the formation of 'social capital' (Lowndes, 2000). These issues are discussed in greater depth later in this chapter. There has been a demand for the increased representation of socially excluded groups (Geddes, 1995) in an effort to enhance democracy. Such a call is positive news for women, as the areas in which they are more active - the community and neighbourhood – may be given a higher profile. As groups in these areas are given recognition for the ways in which they operate, their organisational structures may even
be applied to other public policy arenas, and as a result a more gender equal democracy
may be envisaged. Such movement towards the recognition of the merits of grassroots
action can be understood as a positive move for women as their perspective infiltrates
and is further transposed into other areas of policy; a gradualist approach towards
enhancing equality in society.\textsuperscript{5}

This research concentrates on tenants' groups as informal, community-based
organisations which, whilst women play a central role in them, are not gender specific.
Analysing women within groups not specifically for women or composed solely of
women, is as important as analysing women only groups. ‘The differentiation and
interaction of women and men’ (Randall, 1991: 527) is a vital focus for the research on
tenants' associations. It is also fundamental beyond this, to the future of feminism and
the creation of an equal society. Cooper argues that:

\begin{quote}
Small-scale initiatives [in tenant participation] may provide the seeds of a wider
consciousness-raising process and future calls for wider participation in British
\end{quote}

If he is correct, the empowerment of women through participation could contribute to,
and perhaps even initiate, a more equitable policy-making process. Before analysing the
potential of female tenant participation in greater depth, it is necessary to place female
tenants in the wider context of the gender inequality in society; that is, in a society
where male dominance is prevalent in both the public and the private sphere. The
following sections address the issue of women's 'second class' citizenship.

\textsuperscript{5} The Social Exclusion Unit, set up by the New Labour government, has developed various
neighbourhood approaches through the Policy Actions Teams (PATs). See for example, Social Exclusion
Unit 1998).
3.3 'Second-class' citizens

This section examines citizenship rights, exploring citizenship both as an official status, and in practice, as a lived experience. It considers the existence of patriarchal dominance in British society and how it may oppress women. The section concludes by addressing the differences between women and the effects of these differences in achieving equal citizenship rights.

3.3.1 Citizenship rights: formal and substantive

The position that women occupy in male-dominated British society is central to this study and its feminist approach seeks to emphasise the gendered construction of social reality. It is argued that society is dominated and ordered by mediating struggles and conflicts that arise within it. Patriarchy is perceived by many to be, if not the ultimate then at least, a major force within society which the state may reinforce and mediate (Eisenstein, 1992). However, it is possible to see the state not so much as a mediator of this patriarchal force but as a protector of it or even a potential counter-force. Millet (1993) and other feminists believe male power over women is exercised through the state; all areas are male-dominated from the government, the civil service, the social services to the judiciary and beyond. The state provides and maintains the structure in which male power is exercised over women; it could be said then, to have institutionalised patriarchy. Radical feminists observe that patriarchal power of men over women is evident in all aspects of life (Millett, 1993). Such domination is 'so universal, so ubiquitous and so complete that it appears "natural", and hence, becomes invisible, so that it is perhaps the most pervasive
ideology of our culture and provides its most fundamental concept of power' (Bryson, 1992: 185).

In spite of the extension of 'official' citizenship rights for all, women's oppression and lack of influence persists; it can be argued that equal citizenship is, in effect, denied to women (Pateman, 1988; Phillips 1991). Prior, Stewart and Walsh distinguish between 'formal' and 'substantive' citizenship rights, that is 'between citizenship as a status which gives individuals formal possession of rights and entitlements, and citizenship as a status which provides individuals with the opportunity or capacity to realise those rights and entitlements' (1995: 11). In essence, it does not follow that the establishment of formal citizenship rights equates to meaningful citizenship status. Many factors exist which effectively prevent individuals' exercising their rights, such as,

income, employment, housing, educational achievement, access to transport; and various forms of exclusion, for example discrimination based on race, gender, age or disability, or constraints arising from fear of crime and other threats to personal safety (ibid.: 158).

From a feminist perspective, the 'individual' is male:

The crucial building blocks of liberal democracy are the individual, citizenship, rights and consent, and it has been argued by a growing number of feminists that these categories are themselves male (Phillips, 1991: 33).

Rousseau's work and that of other social contract theorists such as Locke and Hobbes, established the principles of a society in which men could be equal and free to determine their own fates. The individual is considered by Pateman to be a 'patriarchal category. The

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6 Women over 30 years gained the right to vote for the first time in 1918; in 1928 women achieved the same voting rights as men; in 1970, the Equal Pay Act granted equal pay for women and men; and in 1975, the Sexual Discrimination Act was passed.
individual is masculine and his sexuality is understood accordingly' (Pateman cited in Phillips, 1991: 35). It was on these male norms and values that the British system of government was founded and thus, it is these male norms and values which predominate within political, economic and social life. Whilst a participatory democracy commends the universality of citizenship, that is, the right of all citizens to participate equally, the difference between 'formal' and 'substantive' rights means that in practice equal citizenship does not apply to all. Some individuals are consciously excluded from citizenship on the grounds that they couldn't adopt the general point of view, or that their inclusion would disperse and divide the public. ... modern man expressed a flight from sexual difference from having to recognise another kind of existence that they couldn't entirely understand, and from the embodiment, dependency on nature, and morality which women represent. Thus, the opposition between the universality of the public realm of citizenship and the particularity of private interest became conflated with opposition between reason and passion, masculine and feminine (Young, 1998: 404).

Women may be effectively excluded, then, on the basis that they lack 'dispassionate rationality and independence required of good citizens' (ibid.). The exclusion of women is not a necessary but a contingent feature of citizenship; the perception of citizen as male persists, this perception is, rooted in a public sphere derived from masculine values and the structural characteristics of the male gender role. Because of the identification of women with the 'private', domestic sphere and the limitations this places on their lives even now, it has always been difficult - originally impossible - for them to qualify as citizens (Chapman, 1995: 107).

The practice whereby the private sphere of the home and family has been constructed as a woman's place, whilst the public sphere of employment and politics is a man's, has been questioned by feminism (Charles, 1993). Feminism argues that patriarchy extends to the private sphere of personal relations and calls for the recognition of male dominance in this sphere. As Lister argues, 'by treating as irrelevant for citizenship whatever occurs in the
private sphere, the dominant public-private discourse erects a "moral boundary" between
the family and the "political" (1997: 120). Even in advanced industrial societies, caring for
children and adults, and domestic work remain primarily a woman's responsibility.
Women represent 60% of those providing regular care for children, elderly, sick and
disabled (United Nations Fourth World Conference, 1995:129). Moghadon notes:

The specificity of women's oppression is that their subjugation is rooted not in
capitalism, which it long predates, but in patriarchy; not in the wage relations
between capitalist and worker, to which gender is not central, but in the domestic
relations between men and women; not in the workplace where sexism is but one
of the many forms of division and discrimination, but in the patriarchal household
(1990: 21)

To consider personal relations as being outside politics, or politics as isolated from private
concerns is 'a nonsense' (Phillips, 1991: 95). Whilst some feminists call for the 'dissolution'
of the two spheres (see Millet, 1993), most feminists argue for a 'rearticulation of the
public and private, and of the relationship between the two, as necessary to the
understanding and achievement of women's citizenship' (Lister, 1997: 120). Lister
identifies three 'elements' of this rearticulation: first, the deconstruction of the sexualised
values associated with public and private; second, the rejection of the rigid ideological
separation between the two; and third, the recognition of the changing nature of the
boundaries between public and private (1997: 120).

Fundamental to the position of women's citizenship is the division of labour which extends
male power beyond the public sphere of politics and economics into the private realm of
sexuality and the family (Randall, 1987). The prevalence of male working patterns
reinforces this importance of male paid employment (over women's) to the family. Equal
citizenship then, is frustrated as 'women are constructed as economic dependants of men,
confined, more or less, to the private sphere [thus] key aspects of their relationship to citizenship tend to be mediated through those men who enter the public sphere on their behalf' (Lister, 1997: 130). By reinforcing women's economic dependence and domestic role at home, and by marginalising women from the labour force through, for example, the lack of childcare provision, ensures that men are perceived as the natural wage earners and owners (Bryson, 1999). As a consequence, paid employment is significant as a route for women's equal citizenship: 'Paid work (outside the home) represents an important locus of social participation which many women value, as well as a source of self-esteem which ... is important for the fulfilment of women's potential as citizens' (Lister, 1997: 139).

Despite the increase in female employment - women aged 16-59 years made up 53% of the labour force in 1998 (United Nations Convention, 1999: 13) - many women work in jobs which they can do part-time or have other flexible arrangements such as job share and term-time work. Salaries for such jobs are, generally, lower and as a result women's average earnings are 80% of men's (United Nations Fourth World Conference, 1995:54). Paid employment can lead to economic independence; however, the concentration of women in lower paid jobs means few women are able to achieve such independence, and are thus unable to enjoy equal citizenship rights as structured by society. As Lister confirms, 'poverty is corrosive of citizenship both as a status and a practice, undermining rights and the ability to fulfil the potential of citizenship' (1990). This echoes Prior, Stewart and Walsh's (1995) distinction between the 'formal' and 'substantive' rights (or the 'status' and 'practice') of citizens.

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7 Ethnic minority women more likely to be unemployed than white women, and if employed can earn up to 25% less than white women (United Nations Fourth World Conference, 1995).
3.3.2 Patriarchal hegemony

A further obstacle in achieving equal citizenship rights lies in the belief held by many women that equality has been attained and thus, there is no need to reconstruct society. Others believe social inequality is the natural result of the biological differences between women and men (see Sayers, 1986). That this belief is so prevalent is seen by some as a tribute to the success of male dominance in constituting the consciousness of women in all areas of society. Patriarchy as a result, can be seen as an example of 'hegemonic control'.

The concept of hegemony, developed by Gramsci, was first used in relation to class. His concern was:

with the way the various fractions of the ruling class were together able to produce a social and cultural environment in which capitalist relations of exploitation appeared quite normal and acceptable to ordinary people. How was it that certain interpretations of reality, that logically could be seen to be in the interests of the dominant class, could appear as 'common sense' to those they ruled? (Cockburn, 1991: 168).

It has been applied to gender where the oppression and inequality of women is seen as 'common sense' both to women and men (Cockburn, 1993; Showstack Sassoon, 1992). Many women do not perceive of themselves as oppressed just as many members of the working class do not. The subordinate classes develop their thoughts within the framework of the beliefs of the dominant class. The 'dominant ideology thesis' states that capitalist societies need a prevailing ideology to ensure that the political superiority of the ruling class is maintained (Abercrombie and Turner, 1980).

Over the last decade welfare state services (which affect a large percentage of the female population) have been depleted, increasing hardship for women (Lovenduski and Randall,
1993). Under the Conservative governments between 1979 and 1987, freedoms and rights for women were gradually eroded, as discussed in the previous chapter. Such attacks on women's economic and sexual liberty were a direct outcome of the new right ideology adhered to by the Conservatives. It can be said that hegemony 'is not the automatic attribute of rule. It is the achievement of political and cultural work' (Cockburn, 1991:169). When Margaret Thatcher advocated individuality and freedom from constraint, in practice this favoured men, (or freedom for women in the image of men). Many women have benefited, and indeed many have not rejected this position and even appear to endorse it (see ten Tusscher, 1986). Gramsci's concept of hegemony is not monolithic or singular and can flexibly accommodate different emerging struggles such as race or disability. As such, Laclau and Mouffe call for a counter-hegemony, more pluralistic in nature, 'forging progressive alliances (between women's movements, anti-racist movements, environmental movements) on the left that might come to constitute a new 'common sense' in a society of the future' (cited in Cockburn, 1991: 169); women's community action (including action in relation to housing) could be part of this.

3.3.3 Achieving equality through difference

Whether all women are always and everywhere oppressed is a moot point: is women's experience essentially the same everywhere because of their subordination to men? Whilst it is possible to comment that, in almost every culture and society world-wide, men hold the dominant power over women, the point must be emphasised that women are oppressed in different ways, at different times and under different circumstances. Socio-economic
class can cause major divisions between women. It can be said that working class women more fully experience the double oppression of the sexual division of labour at work and in the home, than do women of the middle classes (Mies, 1986). Moore (1988) in her work on women in the third world, speaks of a 'triple burden' of domestic chores, unpaid subsistence work and paid work. However, when women benefit from their position in the middle class, they do not necessarily benefit as women, often they are merely more materially privileged.

Ethnicity may also cause divisions between women, indeed, race has been particularly controversial in the feminist movement (especially in the 1980s) (Crenshaw, 1998). The women's movement has been accused of racism and exclusivity to the extent that groups and organisations representing specific interests have been set up, such as Southall Black Sisters. Physical disability, mental disability and sexuality also adds to the diversity amongst women as their experiences from each other differ and their priority of issues also differs in relation to each other (Morris, 1996). Women may also belong to more than one 'division' and as such, find themselves with changing and conflicting priorities. Women as a group are oppressed, not because they are an homogenous group, but because they are defined collectively as different and unequal in respect of men.

8 Lister identifies an increasing 'occupational class cleavage' within the female workforce between 'successful, better-educated, 'career' women (who may nevertheless find their advance checked by a 'glass ceiling') and part-time, low-paid female workers ' (1997:141).
9 Perhaps from a post-essentialist viewpoint, it can be argued that whether women constitute 'a group' or 'many groups' is variable according to contexts and specific relations i.e. no aggregate of individuals are objectively a group (e.g. a 'class in itself') but must be constituted as such (see Nash, 1998).
However, can differences such as class, race, age, disability, and sexuality, hinder progress towards equal citizenship for women? Are the divisions between women too deep to effect any significant changes by working towards the common goal of equal citizenship? Some commentators argue that specific groups will further their own interests rather than considering the wider picture and thus some groups will always be oppressed by others (although this is not to say that it will always be the same groups) (Young, 1998). The promotion of the equality, or universality, of citizenship is a key problem here. That different groups should be treated the 'same' irrespective of their gender, class, race, etc., would appear at first glance to be a positive step. However, the patriarchal structure around which society is organised undermines this 'equal' treatment and perpetuates inequality. As a result of the historical and social conditions in which we live, groups do not start from an equal position. The study by Mansbridge of a New England Town Meeting government found that 'when participatory democratic structures define citizenship in universalistic and unified terms, they tend to reproduce existing group oppression' (Young, 1998: 410). (Similarly, research on British local government found that 'patterns of social exclusion can be reproduced within participation initiatives' (Lowndes et al, 1998: 83).

It can be argued, then, that citizenship rights should acknowledge differences and recognise that some citizens are more disadvantaged than others. However, such differences should not be allowed to dominate to the extent that groups are only interested in themselves and only participate for their own gain. So a complex situation arises: in order to treat citizens equally, they must be treated differently. However, in contrast, Barber (1984) argues that differences should be overcome to avoid self-interest and to
ensure that all participate towards a common good despite group differences. Young provides a possible solution believing that,

It is possible for persons to maintain their group identity and to be influenced by their perceptions of social events derived from their group specific experience, and at the same time, to be public spirited, in the sense of being open to listening to the claims of others and not being concerned for their own gain alone (1998: 409).

Whilst this appears to be a possibility, it is perhaps rather utopian, not all citizens are 'public spirited' and will participate in order to advance their own interests. Hence, Young suggests that 'mechanisms should be provided for effective representation and recognition of the distinct voices and perspectives of those of its constituent groups that are oppressed or disadvantaged within it' (1998: 413). Thus, differences need to be acknowledged and addressed if citizens are to participate equally on a 'level playing field'.

The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing 1995, called for differences between women to be recognised within individual countries and states, as well as globally. From Britain, the Women's National Commission, together with other Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), proposed that the needs of different groups of women be recognised in housing policies and also by public and private providers of housing. This included 'young women leaving care, low income women, older women, lone parents, ex-service wives and others leaving tied accommodation and single women...' (United Nations Fourth World Conference, 1995: 112). The Conference also called for the 'mainstreaming of women's needs into policy and programme development

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10 At policy level, this is evident in debates around the issues of affirmative action, positive discrimination programmes, quotas, etc (Bryson, 1999).
in national and local government', where women's perspectives had not been traditionally considered (1995: 112).

To summarise, it has been argued that women are disadvantaged in British society, that in effect, they are second-class citizens. This inequality has its roots in history and tradition. Despite more recent, formal measures to secure equal citizenship rights, many substantive factors persist which limit gender equality. The relationship that women and men have to the public and the private spheres differs, that is, their experience is gendered. Social housing presents an ideal arena in which to focus on the position of women as citizens in greater detail.

3.4 The importance of housing for women

This section focuses on housing as an area in which the persistence of male dominance is evident, highlighting the existence of patriarchy in the private sphere. It also explores the potential for women to organise and to challenge male dominance.

3.4.1 The gendered experience of the domestic sphere

Housing is a fundamental human need, which holds an importance beyond the concept of basic shelter. Indeed, 'houses ... embody the dominant ideology of a society and reflect the way in which that society is organised' (Watson, 1986: 3). Housing circumstances affect relationships developed within the home and beyond, influencing experiences and opportunities in other areas of life such as employment, education or
health which are often dependent upon the type of accommodation lived in and its location. Housing is instrumental in an individual's life: without a place to live it is difficult to function as a full member of this society; housing can represent relative success or failure in society. Social status is defined, at least in part, by housing: each tenure, whether owning or renting, carries with it certain labels and categorisations which influence society's perception of an individual and also an individual's self-perception and identification.

One person's experience of housing can be very different from another person's, depending on a variety of factors including: type of tenure, design, location and environment, gender, ethnicity, age, physical ability, class and occupation (Sykes, 1994; Birchall 1992; Morris and Winn, 1990). These factors are not exclusive: the disabled, white, male, owner-occupier will probably have a different experience from the Pakistani, male, owner-occupier, whose experience will differ from the elderly, female owner-occupier. But the concern here is primarily with the gender differences and housing experience.

That women and men experience housing differently has been widely documented (Madigan and Munro, 1997; Darke, 1994; Green, 1990) and it has been argued that these differences are a result of the dominance of patriarchy within the social and economic structures of society. Despite the increasing activity of women in the labour market (as discussed previously), it is the outcome of the sexual division of labour that housing and the home sphere are perceived as the female domain and as holding a special significance in a woman's life. There are gender differences in access and allocation of housing (Watson, 1988). More men reside in owner occupied accommodation than women, usually
as a result of their higher earning capacity, whilst women predominate in the local authority and social housing sector, especially single parents and single elderly women (see chapter four and United Nations Fourth World Conference, 1995:110).

The design and form of housing, including the surrounding environment can have a different and often more negative effect upon women than men (Cole and Furbey, 1994; Brailey, 1986; Matrix, 1984). Much of the housing built in the public rented sector, especially during the 1960s and 1970s has been criticised for its hard, inhuman environment, for difficulties of access, poor facilities for children and lack of safety from assault. Segregation of roads and pedestrians often means long walks down unsupervised, poorly lit pathways..... Women, in particular, feel vulnerable at night and resentful by day, negotiating these routes with heavy bags, prams or small children. Children's play is not visible from windows and complex levels and entranceways encourage dangerous activities (Madigan and Munro, 1997: 206).

This is despite attempts at user-participation in development and design, 'What is built still reflects the ideas of politicians and architects far more than those of the occupants' (Woolley, 1994). The home can be a place of sanctuary and comfort, a safe haven where it is possible to relax and be yourself away from the pressures of outside forces. However, for women, the home can also represent a continuing area of work and, with the absence of outside forces, it can be a place of domestic violence and abuse rather than a place of relaxation and security (Sexty, 1990).

A study by Saunders (1990) asserts that there is little difference in women and men's perception of the home and finds that both view it in a positive light. Much research has been conducted which conflicts with Saunders' findings and suggests that gender
differences are present in the interpretation and values placed upon the home\textsuperscript{11} (Madigan and Munro, 1997; Darke, 1994; Marcuse, 1987; Watson, 1986; Allan, 1985; Mackenzie and Rose, 1983). Saunders highlights the division of domestic tasks (seen in table below) which seem to be based on heterosexual, stereotypical constructs of the female and male role. Women predominate in the cooking, house cleaning and laundry duties, whilst men are more likely to be found in the garden or involved in car maintenance, which can be defined more as hobbies than daily domestic chores. It is clear that women are performing the most arduous and time-consuming domestic tasks within the home environment. Despite Saunders' argument, the evidence suggests a gender difference in relationships with the home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Responsibility</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooking</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing Up (dishes)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing and Ironing</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning the house</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car Maintenance</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Window cleaning</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The focus of women's tasks is on personal servicing at both a practical and an emotional level, which is more likely to be taken for granted and less likely to be valued. The home, then, is not only a place of relaxation, it is a place of work. For women, 'there is no

\textsuperscript{11} Darke (1994) observes that Saunders' findings appear to be based on a small sample and on just one question at the end of a large scale survey: "People often distinguish between 'house' and 'home', what does the home mean to you?"
separation in space, time or identity between work and rest' (Bondi and Peake, 1988: 36). A recent study conducted by Stockman et al (1995), reached a similar conclusion concerning the division of domestic tasks, finding that 'the primary burden of domestic labour falls upon the wives'. Jowell et al's (1998) analysis of the British Social Attitudes Survey (see Table 3.2 below), also found household tasks divided traditionally between women and men to the extent that: 'doing the laundry is so much a female task that anyone unfamiliar with the power of socialisation might assume that there must be a "whiter-than-white" gene!' (1998: 31). Even when both the man and the woman are in full time employment, it is women who remain primarily responsible for household tasks and childcare (Witherspoon and Prior in Jowell et al, 1998). The increase in male unemployment appears to have had little effect on the domestic division of labour, as little change has been found in male and female domestic roles (see Morris, 1990). Kiernan (1990) observes that 'practice has lagged well behind changes in attitudes in this area'.

Table 3.2   Household division of labour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% saying always or usually the woman -</th>
<th>% saying always or usually the man -</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>Britain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing and ironing</td>
<td>Makes small repairs around the house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking after sick family member</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(adapted from British Social Attitudes, in Jowell et al, 1998: 32)

Lister suggests that, by failing to extend their involvement, 'men are reinforcing their privileged position in the public citizenship sphere in the face of increased female labour
market participation' (1990: 132). She goes on to observe that any increase in male participation in the domestic sphere is usually in the more

...enjoyable tasks. Moreover, most importantly, women retain the overall responsibility for housework and childcare. ... thus, the time, responsibility and energy (physical and emotional) which women have to devote to the household is open-ended in a way that is rare still for men, with implications for health and for their freedom to act as citizens in the public sphere (1990:132).

3.4.2 Positive aspects of women's relationship with the home

The gender differences in perceptions and experience of the home appear to present women and men in stereotypical roles, confirming women's relative lack of power. However, these patriarchal structures which maintain women's inequality can and are being challenged by women who advocate the elimination of 'the economic, social and sexual structures which allow men to dominate women' (Ramazanoglu, 1989: 187). Despite women's position in the public sphere, their place in paid employment and their low incomes, women often play a leading role in community or neighbourhood initiatives, overcoming all these difficulties (see chapter two; Emmanuel, 1993; Dominelli, 1990). The way in which women organise and become involved is often different from men, usually less formal and less hierarchical (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993; Halford, 1992). The European Network of Experts put forward a strong version of this argument:

Because of their history as a group, women have their own and unique perspective. They have different values and ideas and behave differently. Increased participation of women in decision-making will create a new political culture and shed new light on how power should be exercised. Women attach great importance to the quality of contact between people. They are less individualistic than men (1994: 8)

Whilst this is rather an essentialist view, this thesis is concerned with the potential of female participation as a means to challenge and overcome male oppression and to
confirm women's citizenship rights. As was highlighted in the discussion of women and local involvement earlier in this chapter, research suggests that women have greater access to social support networks than men, as a result of their position in the private sphere. This can be seen as a positive aspect of women's relationship with the domestic environment (Phillips, 1996; Wadhams, 1996; Barry, 1991; Dominelli, 1990). Indeed, many believe that 'the very building blocks of social networks are gendered' (Russell, 1999: 219).

Ros Davies' study of working class women running a playgroup on a local authority estate is just one example of women's positive experience of the private sphere. She found that the support from the group had extended into their personal and community lives. They talked about how they passed each other's houses and looked to see if everything was all right. They had set up their own babysitting service amongst themselves (1988: 112).

Such support networks could be described as 'social capital', defined by Putnam as:

features of social organisation, such as trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating co-ordinated action' (1993: 167).

Lowndes (2000), in her comment on Hall's 'Social Capital in Britain' (1999), considers the importance of gender dynamics, arguing that childcare networks have been an important omission in the social capital debate. The omission reflects the traditional assumption that women's activity falls into the private rather than the public sphere. However, informal, neighbourhood networks offer support, care and solidarity which

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12 Research by Helen Russell (1999) on the social networks of the unemployed argues that 'women's more home-centred social activity and their stronger neighbourhood and kinship links means their social networks are less vulnerable to unemployment than men's' (1999: 205).
can lead to an increase in confidence, independence and self-esteem for many women. Such skills may 'spill over' into the formal political arena as activists' competence grows' (Lowndes, 2000: 5).

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter, then, has located female tenant participation within the wider context of women's continuing inequality. The dominance of male values and the patriarchal hegemony in society has denied practical, or 'substantive' equal citizenship rights to women (Barnes, 1997; Prior, Stewart, and Walsh, 1995). Despite formal, legal measures to achieve equal status, assumptions about women's place in the domestic sphere persist. For women, the relationship with the home has two sides: on the one hand it is a place of relaxation and security, whilst on the other it is a place of work and potential abuse. However, through the informal networks that develop between women and through their participation in local initiatives, male dominance might be challenged and substantive equal citizenship rights pursued. The following chapter examines this claim for participation in a theoretical context, whilst chapters six and seven examine the claim in relation to the primary research data.
Chapter 4

Participation as a Route towards Empowerment

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter established that women and men experience housing differently and that housing can be seen as a political issue for women. This chapter moves on to consider these differences in more detail, examining motives for participation and the potential of participation as a route towards empowerment and increased gender equality. The twin objectives of this chapter are to establish the context within which the power dynamics of participatory action take place, and to provide the background against which female tenant participation takes place. The chapter is divided into three main sections. It begins with a definition of participation, considering its potential as a controlling mechanism as well as an educative one, with the potential to enhance democracy. Second, the concept of power is analysed, considering its gendered nature and the way in which it affects participatory action. Following this, the potential of participation to empower is investigated. Third, the chapter moves on to identify the reasons for, and expected outcomes of, participation from both an 'official' perspective and from the perspective of the individual. A model of citizen participation is developed, based on 'ideal types', to examine the differing motivations behind participation and non-participation.
4.2 Participation defined

This section is divided into three sub-sections. The first examines the various interpretations, or definitions, of participatory activity; the second, considers the 'controlling' nature of participation; and the third, addresses its educational aspect.

4.2.1 Interpretations of participation

'Participation is a slippery concept' according to Furbey, Wishart and Grayson, 'raising questions of power, ideology and influence in public policy-making and service delivery' (1996: 251). Participation operates at many levels. At the minimal end of the scale there is participation which involves voting once every four or five years, when citizens can express satisfaction or dissatisfaction with how those representing them are performing in meeting their needs and interests. At the other points on the scale, there is participation which involves any number of activities from letter writing, to group or association memberships, partnerships with local government, to participating in protests and demonstrations. All these activities are referred to and can be defined as participation, yet vary widely in commitment and involvement, access and availability. Parry, Moyser and Day in their survey on participation and democracy in Britain support a wide ranging definition of participation as 'taking part in the processes of formulation, passage and implementation of public policies' (1992: 16). More simply, Smith describes participation as 'to have a share in decision-making' (1981: 13). Barber is more specific, stating that 'to participate is to create a community that governs itself, and to create a self-governing community is to participate' (1984: 155). Sartori defines a self-conscious approach:
Participation is taking part in *person*, and a *self-activated*, willed taking part ... participation is *self-motion* (1987: 113).

There are various levels of participation. Participation at any level is dependent upon: first, the nature and agenda of those who are able to offer access to involvement and decision making (present power-holders); and second, on the nature of those who desire or demand that involvement (potential power-holders). For the purposes of this study, the definition offered by Croft and Beresford is most useful,

> Participation does not only mean participatory initiatives set up by the state or service providers. It is also about people struggling to gain more say and involvement for themselves and working to enable the broader involvement of their peers in their own organisations (1992: 38).

Those who are able to offer opportunities for involvement may do so at a rather minimal level, for example, only allowing participation in elections; or at a greater level, where the citizen is not only consulted but plays a major role in decision making processes, perhaps even where power is delegated to the individual or group. Those who desire involvement may desire it on the grand scale of directly sharing in the policy making processes in a partnership (if denied, they may protest or campaign in order to realise this), or they may be content to participate in an election every four or five years.

Each position is largely dependent upon the degree to which it is desirable for those already in powerful decision making positions to increase participation by offering individuals and groups the opportunity to participate where previously they were excluded. Encouraging participation may be related to two distinct types of motivation: first, it may
be a pragmatic action which sees increased participation as enabling more informed and effective policy decisions; and second (which is more cynical), participation may be encouraged with the aim of lessening the potential threat of protest, loss of legitimacy and revolution by subsuming citizens into the process and thus controlling them. Both these motivations are instrumental, although in different ways. The first motivation hopes to generate more effective policies and practices by involving as many people as possible, whilst the second motivation does so in the hope of stabilising the existing relationships of power through the incorporation of potential dissenters. There may be a third motivation, which may be more 'altruistic', one which encourages participation because it is held to be a good, in and of itself - an essential component of a healthy democratic political culture. However, if this is followed through it does have potentially contradictory consequences. The goal of achieving the widest possible participation by citizens in the governance of their own lives may, for instance, generate less effective policy decisions - the time and cost implications of allowing greater involvement in more decisions may outweigh the benefits. In practice, the need to compromise between diverging opinions may lead to confused and incoherent policies. Conflict may also be high between the amateurism of the participatory citizen and the professionalism of the expert, and among citizens and stakeholders.

During the 1980s there was an increasing trend to refer to citizens as 'customers' or 'consumers' and their participation was encouraged in order 'to achieve greater economic efficiency and effectiveness' in the delivery of services (Croft and Beresford, 1992: 32). Treatment of the citizen as consumer was advocated by Conservative governments in
many aspects of an individual's life (as discussed in chapter two). The Citizen's Charter was introduced to enhance the efficiency and responsiveness of services and was 'important in stating the concept of citizenship based upon "liberal individualism"'(Prior et al, 1995: 22). Prior et al draw upon a speech by William Waldegrave (1993) the minister responsible for the Citizen's Charter at the time, to illustrate the Conservative perspective at the time. Waldegrave's argument involves four key points:

1. Accountability has not been weakened because 'we have not in any way altered or undermined the basic structure of public service accountability to Parliament and hence to individual citizens.

2. The government has strengthened accountability that was in practice weak because 'accountability to the citizen, clear enough in theory, was dissipated between too many half-responsible interests'.

3. Accountability has been strengthened by 'making public services directly accountable to consumers'; this is seen as more effective than a 'democratic voice, and a distant and diffuse one at that'.

4. Accountability would not be strengthened by enhancing legal rights which would be no more likely to lead to better public service, creating a 'legal strait-jacket which would put paid to further public service reform' (Prior et al, 1995: 65).

What Waldegrave presents here is 'a form of politics without power or conflict, where the market resolves differences. It does not take account of the idea of politics as the resolution of contrasting and conflicting interests and values' (Prior et al, 1995: 66). As discussed in chapter two, in social housing the consequence of this accountability to the consumer has been: the sale of houses under the right to buy, which gave tenants the right to purchase their own homes, Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVTs), which gave tenants the choice to change their landlord; and Estate Management Boards /Tenant Management Organisation schemes under which tenants could even choose to manage their own estates. Phillips (1991: 51) has argued that: 'democracy is being redefined in consumerist terms' by
new right governments. From a Marxist perspective, this movement could be seen as an extension of capitalism, spreading market values into more and more areas. This process of 'commodification' can be perceived to be 'reversible only by revolution, an entire restructuring of society (Abercrombie, 1994: 56).

Two main approaches to participation can be identified here: the consumerist and the democratic (Hambleton and Hoggett, 1987). From the consumerist perspective, citizen's views as users of a service should be given value and considered together with those of the providers. From the democratic perspective, citizens participate in order to promote and extend democracy/equality and to speak for themselves (Smith, 1992: 11). This goes beyond immediate service use and has been considered by Prior, Stewart, and Walsh, who see 'the citizen not just as the customer of services, but as the "constituent" of public services and beyond that of the public domain, if by that we mean not merely the public services provided but the realm of public action and public discourse' (1995: 70). The consumerist approach 'has been associated with the new right... [whilst] the primary concern [of the democratic approach] has been with empowerment, the redistribution of power and people gaining more say and control over their lives' (Croft and Beresford, 1992: 32).

4.2.2 Participation as 'control'

In practice, those in positions of power and authority may be reluctant to cede, or even to share, their power despite the wider advantages such action may bring to society (Arnstein, 1969). Those in powerful positions hold a privileged position because of their power and
may perceive any relinquishment as a potential loss of this full control. Few power-holders are altruistic enough to advocate a more equal distribution of power, although a certain amount of lip service is paid to the idea (Walsh, 1995). An increase in participation in the policy decision-making arena by those with little control, may be seen as dangerous to the current power holders as it may upset the status quo. However, some citizens demand more involvement than their vote in elections and, in order to retain power, it is argued that a certain commitment to wider public participation must be demonstrated in an effort to avoid possible protests demanding more involvement. Hence, it could be argued that government promotion of participation and the setting-up of participatory procedures and mechanisms to ensure that citizens feel involved and consulted, is merely a way of the government controlling to a large extent any participatory activities (Blackman, 1995). The dangers of a hidden agenda are great and whilst citizens think they are participating fully, in reality they may be incorporated into the process on the state’s terms.

That citizens should play a limited role is advocated by those who consider that any greater participation, far from enhancing democracy, could undermine it (Sartori, 1987). Increased participation is perceived as being too sensitive and even dangerous for a capitalist democracy - at its extreme, the belief is that if citizens were able to participate in and at every level of decision-making it could lead to the downfall of capitalism. With the population concerned with and involved in policymaking, a situation may result where no one was actually implementing the decisions. The real fear here is that increased participation may lead to an increase in activity of the less advantaged socio-economic groups, who often possess and express different, and at times conflicting, views and values.
which could threaten the stability of the democratic system (Dahl 1956: 10). The unequal nature of the system, it is argued, suits the power holders; indeed it enables them to continue to hold power. Advocates of this view suggest a division of labour between the elite representatives elected to power and the citizens who put them there believing and trusting in them to govern, with this resulting in a stable democracy. Even writing letters to elected representatives is disapproved of as being, 'against the spirit of the democratic method' (Schumpeter (1943) cited in Pateman 1970: 5).

This view is oligarchic and whilst it advocates the maintenance of a stable democracy - what is the price of a democracy which denies citizens any further 'real' participation? The argument is that the general population knows little about politics and, possessing no expertise, should remain outside of it. Sartori claims that personal experience and ideas that 'we are capable of formulating' are the only ones we are fully capable of comprehending (1987: 107). In other words, according to Sartori, a citizen lacks the necessary qualifications to participate on issues beyond their personal understanding. As such, a citizen should be discouraged from participation, and therefore, politics in a liberal representative democracy becomes the territory of those who possess this expertise. There is in effect a slippage from 'democracy' ('demos' 'kratos' - rule by the people) to 'aristocracy' ('ariston' 'kratos' - rule by the best).

4.2.3 Participation as education

Counter to this argument is the position which sees increased participation as a premise of increased democracy. Barber advocates: 'strong democracy [as] the politics of amateurs,
where every man is compelled to encounter every other man without the intermediary of expertise' (1984:152). His call is for 'self government by citizens rather than representative government in the name of citizens' (ibid.: 150). Through participation, then, citizens can learn about the functioning of the political sphere. It is this school of thought that regards participation as educating people into the processes of the political system, thus teaching them and enabling them to perform as 'whole' citizens who understand and comprehend the society they live in (Mill, 1963). Participation is not innate, it has to be discovered through experience (Barber, 1984; Hill, 1974). By increasing knowledge, people can become empowered, encouraged to speak out and to exercise some control in their everyday lives. Through this process, people's confidence can increase to the extent that they are able to assert power in areas of their lives where they thought they were previously powerless; no longer just accepting policy decisions because they lack the skills and confidence to challenge them.

Participation as education can be seen in a positive frame as it is perceived as a means of enhancing democracy. Citizens become less accepting as once they are educated they are able to make informed decisions and choices increasing their personal, social and political liberty and giving them a greater sense of duty in society and development of a social conscience. As Barber states,

Participation has as its primary function - education of judgement.... We often rank politicians and statesmen by their capacity for judgement. No different with citizens, whose responsibility it is not merely to choose but to judge options and possibilities (1984: 158).
As Pateman argues, the ‘major function of participation in the theory of participatory democracy is...an educative one, education in the widest sense, including both the psychological aspect and the gaining of practice in democratic skills and procedures’ (Pateman, 1970: 42). This has been echoed more recently by Young.

In participatory democratic institutions citizens develop and exercise patterns of reasoning, discussion and socialising that otherwise lie dormant, and they move out of their private existence to address others and face them with respect and concern for justice (1998: 403).

Despite advances in IT, it would be highly problematic in British society to demand participation from every individual for every decision. There would be practical problems of access as well as a need for judgement or arbitration between inevitably competing views. Some form of representation must be present. However, it can be argued that participation should play as large a role as is feasible within society; without this, 'politics becomes less a matter of active citizenship and more a question of rules' (Phillips, 1991: 17). Indeed, as Barber states, citizen involvement is, 'not necessary at every level and in every instance, but frequently enough and in particular when basic policies are being decided and when significant power is being deployed' (1984: 151). (This does of course, present a dilemma in itself: who will decide when and where participation is necessary?)

There are dangers however, with promoting participation. Whilst essentially it can be perceived as a positive practice and proclaimed as a solution to many problems in society, there is also a more negative undercurrent, to which serious attention must be paid. Often, increasing participation merely increases the hold of those already in possession of some
power and in privileged positions, thus reproducing, or even reinforcing, patterns of exclusion - hardly the way forward to creating a greater degree of democracy. The challenge is to increase participation without favouritism or advantaging one group over another. For participation to have any credibility as a means of enhancing democracy

depends on its contribution to securing greater popular control over the collective decision making, and greater equality in its exercise; participation is thus, subordinate to, and to be judged in terms of, these two prior democratic principles... popular participation..... is a necessary condition for, not an alternative to, representative democracy (Beetham, 1996: 33).

In summary therefore, there appear to be two issues. First, there is the possibility that participation may be promoted and implemented in such a way as to favour those who already have power - widening the disparity between groups of citizens and sections of society. In this sense it can be seen as a means of control encouraged and endorsed by the state. Second, can participation increase democracy on Beetham's twin criteria of popular control, (i.e. maximum participation), and political equality (i.e. arrangements to ensure equal access)? Indeed, is it possible in the current decision making structures or will such participation only be a possibility in a re-structured, more equal society? To answer this question we need to consider the power relationships that are present in society and which determine the patterns of participation.

4.3 Power in the decision-making process

To participate effectively in the decision-making process is ultimately about the possession and distribution of power. How much those in charge of the decision-making process are prepared to relinquish and/or share power, and how much participants can
acquire it through their involvement in decision-making, are vital issues in understanding and interpreting the relationships of the relevant actors in this study. This section is divided into four sub-sections. It begins with an analysis of the concept of power and its relevance to this study; the second sub-section considers the gendered nature of power; the third investigates the potential of participation to empower; and the final sub-section addresses the support and encouragement offered to tenant participation.

4.3.1 The concept of power

The concept of power, then, is not a straightforward or simple concept and there are various approaches to it. A single, essentially uncontested concept of power does not exist (Lukes, 1974). The most influential approach since the mid-1970s has been that of Lukes (1974) and his ‘three dimensions of power’. The first dimension is concerned with who makes decisions. Different individuals and groups have different interests which may conflict; those who advance their own interests in observable conflict are perceived as those with power. Lukes’ second dimension is concerned with ‘hidden power’ (see Bachrach and Baratz’s work, 1970, on non-decision making). This is a structural approach to power, recognising that certain interests can use their influential positions within the structure to prevent unfavourable issues reaching the agenda for public debate. Objections may occur but are not raised in the formal arena. Thus individuals appear to acquiesce because certain interests are prevented from being raised as a consequence of ‘non-decision making’ (Lukes, 1974).
The third dimension advocates that power may also condition individuals and groups into accepting certain decisions which may be against their interest (for discussion of 'latent conflict' see Lukes, 1974: 24). Thus, certain individuals are unable to determine their own interests as a consequence of the power of the prevailing ideology which influences their perceptions of their environment. This concept of power would appear to be relevant to this study, i.e. women's 'real' interests may be concealed by the patriarchal ideology in society and local authority tenants' 'real' interests may be concealed by the dominant values that exist in the economic and social structure of society. However, the third dimension is problematic, for what are these 'real' interests that individuals are suppressing? (Komter, 1991). For example, what level of participation is in the real interest of tenants: participation which leads to control and managing of their own estates, or participation which involves consultation on certain issues but which leaves the main responsibility of housing management to the local authority?

Clegg offers an example of this conundrum:

Do the 'Women who want to be Women' an Australian interest group which articulates women's real interests are in the home, as wives and mothers, have a more correct analysis of what women's interests are than do 'lesbian feminist separatists? (1989: 113)

There is no correct analysis (see Clegg, 1989; Barbalet, 1987) and advocating effective participation represents a challenge to this perspective of power. But participation does not necessarily mean the loss of power from current power-holders; it can also lead to a redistribution of power, that is a sharing of power. As Foucault argues, power 'holds' individuals rather than being held by them and has a fluid and shifting nature,
Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather something which only functions in the form of a chain... It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads, they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power (Foucault, 1976: 234).

When such a perspective is applied to this study, at an initial and superficial level there appears to be a hierarchy of power in which central government holds power over local government, which holds power over tenants (see Figure 4.1).

**Figure 4.1 Hierarchy of power**

```
  Central government
    ↓
  Local authority
    ↓
Tenants
```

However, this is a rather crude interpretation, for deeper analysis reveals that it is also possible for power to flow or 'circulate' between the various actors involved. The 'net-like organisation' of power, referred to by Foucault, means that tenants may have contacts at both central and local government levels which they may utilise to influence power relationships (see Figure 4.2 below).
There are also power relationships involved at each of these levels:

- within central government, the position and influence that social housing enjoys as a political policy against education or health policies for example;
- at the local authority level, the position and influence that social housing enjoys against, for example, environmental or leisure policies, alongside the relationship between elected members and council officers, and the relationship between elected members as a consequence of their political affiliations and elections to the various committees;
- and at the level of the tenants, as tenants in local authority accommodation, as women and men, as tenants who are involved in participatory activity and those who are not.

Beyond these obvious power relationships there are wider, more structural influences, including the patriarchal nature of society where power is determined by gender and the capitalist system where wealth and resources determine power. Different 'levels' of power exist then, as a consequence of different starting positions. Whilst the concept of power is important at all these levels, it is the relationship between the tenants and their participation at the local level that is of particular concern to this study.
Clegg's emphasis is upon the 'rules of the game'; rules that in society are often 'fragile, ambiguous, unclear, dependent upon interpretation, and subject either to reproduction or transformation depending on the outcome of struggles to keep them the same or to change them this way or that' (1989: 209), but which give a structure to the 'games' that the actors play. Clegg perceives power to be a phenomenon that only exists relationally. Actors may 'possess' power only in so far as they are relationally constituted as doing so. To the extent that the relational conditions which constitute power are reproduced through fixing their obligatory passage points, then possession may be fixed and 'reified' in form (1989: 207).

Power only becomes a 'thing' which an actor possesses when its representations are fixed or reified. Such reified power is unlikely to occur without resistance and thus 'passage points' may only be fixed temporarily. Clegg identifies two kinds of resistance to power: the first, resistance which may 'consolidate itself as a new power and thus constitute a new fixity... with a new relational field of force altogether' (1989: 207). The second kind of resistance may be the resistance to power 'which leaves unquestioned the fixity of the terms in which that power is exercised. It merely resists the exercise not the premises that make that exercise possible' (ibid.: 207).

It is Clegg's framework of power then, *inter alia*, that is most useful in considering the participation of tenants. The power relationships involved are not permanently fixed or secured; power held by one group of actors at one point in time may be held by another group at another time, thus power is a constantly changing phenomenon. Tenants, councillors and officers play the game then according to their influences and according to the 'rules'. There are certain factors beyond the control of the actors which may also affect the game, such as the influence of the wider political arena at central government level and
the prevailing ideology and hegemony operating in society. Clegg's concept of power identifies both the relationship between actors who are participating in the game, and also the fact that the rules of the game are at times beyond the control of these actors.

In the context of this study, a major 'outside' influence is the male dominated structure of society, which displays remarkable historical stability in Britain. However, there is no reason why the structure should not shift or change despite its history (Clegg, 1989). This is of particular relevance to feminist theory where,

concern is with gendered subjectivity and its reproduction in relations which privilege male and subordinate female subjectivity, then a conception of power as existing in the very discourses by which subjectivity's have been historically constituted and reconstituted will have evident potential. Knowledge which fixes the normal is evidently going to be knowledge which has a close relationship with power (ibid., 1989: 152).

If female subordination is to be overcome and a more equal society established, women must be recognised as equal citizens, both through formal and substantive citizenship rights (see chapter three). 'Equal treatment' must no longer require women to conform to standards laid down by men (Bryson, 1999). Feminists call for the present male dominance to be challenged and replaced with a more gender-equal structure. It can be argued that when such a structure is accepted as 'normal', the disadvantage and power of one gender in respect of the other will cease.

4.3.2 The gendered nature of power

It can be argued that the experience women and men have of power is different and it is the socialisation process of women and men which is seen to contribute to this (Edwards, 1995, Dukes, 1993). For example, from childhood males are regarded and treated
differently from females, given a sense of superiority (see Sayers, 1982; Sharpe, 1982). They suffer few limitations because of their sex, which actually becomes advantageous later in the sphere of employment and public life, where through the influence of societal values they learn dominance and power and how to wield it (see Van Nostrand, 1993, for a discussion on direct and indirect strategies concerning power use). As Phillips observes, 'Women only have to walk down the street to be reminded of physical vulnerability and lack of social power, ... men earn more money ... and have greater physical power' (1991: 97).

Feminists also argue that women and men differ in their perception, and consequent use, of power. Dukes (1993) argues that women see power as power-to, or empowerment whereas men see it as power-over others, or domination. It is argued that the 'power-over' model which exists at present needs to be overthrown and replaced with 'power-to', the problem arises however, of how this is to be achieved. In order to implement the 'power-to' model, championed by feminists, Ferguson (1984) argues that it would be necessary to enforce the 'power-over' measure first, thus placing feminists in a rather contradictory situation. They do not wish to place themselves in the very institutions which once housed their predecessors, however, the view is that there would be little alternative. They would have to employ the 'power-over' initially to obtain control, allowing them to implement 'power-to'. The fear here is that once in power they would not call for the construction of the power-to model (Ferguson, 1984). However, this does not necessarily have to be the case. It is true that 'as long as the male model of power is the only one accorded any legitimacy, women's co-operative vision of power is easily discounted' (Jacquette 1993: 6). But it is
the acceptance by society of the present system which has to be radically altered and the legitimacy of another established.

Two of the major theories in this debate over how equality is to be achieved are the 'bottom up', gradualist approach and the strategy of direct revolution. By adopting the gradualist approach (i.e. participation within conventional structures), the achievement of equality could be a slow process. However, the gradualist approach may be more realistic and viable than outright revolution. The gradualist strategy filters female perceptions into the decision making processes stage by stage and, thus, onto the policy agenda with the aim of restructuring a society in which women lack any real influence. It can be argued that such a strategy is perhaps no less radical in a patriarchal society than the revolutionary approach, yet it aims to achieve its ends without advocating the complete overthrow of the system in a single major struggle (Hernes, 1988). An infiltration of the present system at any level in an effort to permeate all areas and to begin to challenge the system from the inside is not impossible (after all, institutions do have histories). To challenge the system whenever, wherever, and in whatever capacity can be seen as a far more realistic avenue to the eventual goal of equality.

The possibilities for participation to transform the distribution of power and decision-making powers are great. Whilst it will not be immediate, and may prove a difficult process, which 'will involve a constant struggle to increase the range of issues on which it is possible to change rules by which decisions are taken' (Smith, 1981:13), the possibility for radical alteration does exist. The main criticism (emphasised earlier) is that the bottom
up approach will not achieve its initial aims because, as those who once had limited power learn to 'play the game' and begin to possess increasing power and control, the new power-holders will merely replace the old. It may also be the case that the old power holders remain powerful, simply incorporating the less powerful into 'the system'. From this perspective, if the current structures of society remain intact, then the distribution of power will remain unequal. Phillips suggests that it may 'prove intrinsic to liberal democracy that it cannot acknowledge women as citizens in the fullest sense of the word' (1991: 31). If this is true, then what this thesis is advocating - the bottom up approach - may be inappropriate within a capitalist democracy and thus citizenship will remain unequal (or whilst it may occur, it will only be at a superficial level and in reality nothing alters).

However, in the absence of a mass movement likely to support revolution, a strategy must be advanced and the feasibility of the bottom up theory makes it supportable. Indeed, it is the case in the present political climate that, 'many feminist goals can only be met by state institutions, e.g. affordable childcare, abortion on demand, free contraception...' (Halford, 1992. 159). Decent and affordable housing should also be acknowledged here and the recognition of the participation of groups, organisations and institutions as a positive way forward for women's equal citizenship. Chapman argues that:

As the proportion of women in legislative and other policy-making positions grows, so will their legitimacy in their own eyes and those of male politicians; they will feel able to act concertedly and as overt feminists who recognise women’s interests, in a highly-gendered society, as being different from those of men. The critical point will come when women’s presence in the system and their pursuit of women’s interests are taken for granted by all concerned. Empowered by the state (instead of marginalised), they will be able to pursue the goal of a ‘woman-friendly’ social order, in which women will enjoy ‘a natural relationship to their
children, their work and public life' (Hernes, 1987: 15) and not have harder choices forced on them than society expects of men (1995: 109).\footnote{It is naïve to assume that all women (or all tenants) hold the same ends or have the same conception of what is in women's interest. Not all women are feminists and not all feminisms aim for the same conception of 'emancipation' or 'equal citizenship'. However, through informed debate, being receptive to the position of others and not only concerned for personal gain, it may be possible to arrive at a consensus (Young, 1998).}

For such a 'social order' to become a reality, a more participatory democracy is called for in which the distribution of power will enable disadvantaged citizens to exert real influence in decision-making processes. Integral to this debate is the concept of empowerment and its role in the decision-making arena to effect change, and to which this study now returns.

4.3.3 Empowerment through participation

In addressing the potential of participation to empower, Bystydzienski's definition is useful:

Empowerment is a process by which oppressed persons gain some control over their lives by taking part with others in the development of activities and structures that allow people increased involvement in matters which affect them directly. In its course, people become enabled to govern themselves effectively. This process involves the use of power, but not 'power over' others or power as dominance as is traditionally the case; rather, power is seen as 'power to' or power as competence which is generated and shared by the disenfranchised as they begin to shape the content and structure of their daily existence to participate in a movement for social change (1992).

Empowerment can be viewed from two perspectives: the first, is where empowerment occurs as a result of participatory action from the bottom-up, whereby 'powerless' citizens demand recognition of certain issues and projects onto the agenda. The second, is where empowerment occurs as a result of a top-down policy to include 'powerless' citizens in decision-making processes of existing institutions (e.g. the consultation of tenants in
The two perspectives are not mutually exclusive and whilst both can be said to empower, the problem with the first is that it usually requires a 'catalyst' to begin the process; 'a catalyst which widens people's horizons about what is possible... People then start by defining new purposes and new agendas, and then begin to pursue them' (Davey, 1999: 39). The danger with the second is that it tends towards 'false consciousness'. Existing institutions advocate participation, yet the empowerment may prove to be limited as institutions incorporate and control those participating (see the earlier discussion on participation as 'control').

However, participation does not always result in 'false' feelings of empowerment. Through participation citizens learn and become educated into the processes and procedures of policy making. Instead of being incorporated, and thus controlled, citizens may learn to 'play the game' (Clegg, 1989), resulting in individual development and personal empowerment which can often be seen as an 'evolving process' (Warren, 1999: 119). This returns to the theory of participation as education - that through active involvement the citizen becomes informed and develops a sense of responsibility (Pateman, 1970). Despite the potential for control on the part of the local government in its promotion of participation, it is also possible that participants may utilise their knowledge of the structures and processes to their advantage. This may indeed be the necessary 'catalyst' to empowerment. Participants may exploit, or capitalise, on what they have learnt in order to benefit their own needs and prioritise their own agendas. With such knowledge, participants are able to force issues into the arena in an effort to highlight objectives that they consider important; they are no longer necessarily in a position where feelings of
intimidation and an inability and inexpertise to challenge, force acquiescence. Thus, as long as participants have an understanding of their situation, being 'subsumed' into the system may in fact have some positive aspects. Seemingly deprived of any real decision making powers, there is a possibility that the reverse may occur and that participants, once aware of the rules of the game, may play a major role, undertaking initiatives to their own advantage.

As discussed earlier, those in disadvantaged socio-economic groups possess less power and control than those in advantaged groups; many are anxious about speaking out through fear of their own ignorance and status. But participation may lead to the development of the individual - in confidence, understanding and personal conception of status (Dominelli, 1990; Mayo, 1982). If the function of participation is to alter the environment; there will always be winners and losers; but if participation is also regarded as promoting or allowing the development of the individual, then participants will gain simply by being involved. However, involvement often needs to be encouraged and supported. 'Not', as Croft and Beresford suggest, 'because people lack the competence to participate in society, but because people's participation is undermined by, or not part of, the dominant culture or tradition' (1992:39). Whether women are engaged in top down or bottom up initiatives, several key criteria, or dimensions of empowerment can be identified:

- the skills gained as a result of their participation and the extent to which these have led to activity beyond the tenant participation sphere;

- the benefits experienced from activities both at a community and a personal level;
and their effective involvement in decision-making.

4.3.4 Supporting participation

In the context of tenant participation, support has been offered, in the form of tenant training, by various government tenant management initiatives, such as, Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) and Estate Management Boards (EMBs) (see chapter two for more detail). Section 16 of the Housing and Planning Act, 1986, was the vehicle for this training and support, funded directly by British government and, despite its potential for reinforcing control,... training can also be a powerful vehicle which releases tenants to develop their own priorities and strategies (Furbey, Wishart and Grayson, 1996: 253).

In 1992, in consultation with the DoE, a National Certificate in Tenant Participation was developed and validated by the Chartered Institute of Housing. Whilst the danger of control is evident in the incorporation of citizens into government bureaucracy, through their exposure to and experience of procedures and processes, the opportunities for developing competence and aptitude in this sphere are also great and can lead to the strengthening and empowering of the citizen's position. Gyford (1991) believes in the possibility of training, 'becoming a key element in an infrastructure of citizenship enabling people (...) to play a much fuller role in a political community' (cited in Furbey, Wishart and Grayson, 1996: 267). Back in the nineteenth century, John Stuart Mill argued that it is 'only by practising popular government .... that people will ever learn to exercise it' (in Pateman, 1970: 31). It can be argued, then, that an element of training in conjunction with

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14 From 1994 until 1997, 48% of those who had obtained the National Certificate in Tenant Participation were female (Chartered Institute of Housing).
experience, can only enhance the position of the citizen. In order to achieve real participation in social housing, learning through experience may not be enough, and is time consuming; training and being taught how the system operates can be seen as an essential component if participation is to have any value as a tool for empowerment.

However, in order for the training of tenants to be effective, an awareness of gender dynamics and the residualisation of council housing is vital. The fact that the population in this sector is predominately women - elderly and single parents and benefit dependent and unemployed (see chapter two), means that training must be conducted with these factors at the forefront. As Smith states, 'it is one thing to give tenants information and to impart skills and knowledge. It is quite another to give people the confidence in themselves to use that knowledge effectively' (1992:33).

Indeed, the importance of training, 'may herald the emergence of "professional tenants", who simply displace councils as a new group of "producers"' (Furbey, Wishart and Grayson, 1996: 265)15. There are two possibilities here: firstly, there is a danger for tenants that the training they receive ensures that they 'simply replace' the authorities, with very little being altered i.e. they become the new power-holders. Secondly, and more positively for the tenants, the 'new group', composed of women and the poor and deprived, may effect the development of radical changes. Indeed, 'those who have experienced inequality, marginality or exclusion are likely to be the best judges of what now needs to be done'

15 Particularly in the context of new tenure arrangements such as community based housing organisations, for example (Clapham, 1999).
Training, then, can be an empowering process and not necessarily a process of reinforcing dependency.

Through tenant experience and training, it is possible to perceive of participants as permeating the system from the bottom up. With tenant participation being promoted from the top by the government (see chapter two), tenants have a real opportunity to use this sponsorship to their advantage and it can be perceived as an avenue of empowerment for a section of some of the most deprived and powerless in society. Both collective and individual empowerment enable citizens to take control over one aspect of life, which may increase the likelihood of taking control in other areas. However, whether groups have formed dependently or independently of local authority sponsorship and guidance, they often conform to government organisational structures. This occurs despite the different ways of organising that initiated their participation. The following section moves away from the theoretical discussion of participation to consider, in greater detail, the practice of participatory activities, analysing local authority influence upon the organisational structure of tenant groups. In this discussion, parallels are evident between the subjugation of women and the subjugation of local groups to the local authority. It can be argued that the 'passive' role of both is essential to social and political stability in the current structure of society (see Pateman, 1970).
4.4 Participation in practice at the local level

This section is divided into four main sub-sections. The first considers the influence of local authorities upon the structure and organisation of tenant groups. The second examines the specific motivations which lead to participatory activity, and develops a citizen 'ideal type' model. The third sub-section reflects upon the empowerment that may emerge from participatory action.

4.4.1 Local authority influence upon tenant group structure

Many groups formed by citizens often aspire to an informal structure, with each member having equal standing and commitment to the group. However, when groups have to deal with the local authority their structure, and aspirations, may alter to accommodate this, conforming to the more rigid and hierarchical organisation of the local authority. It is not always the case, but in some instances, only by adopting such organisational structures can groups gain the recognition of the local authority, which may be unable to communicate with them without the more formal conventional structures they recognise. For example, the local authority may only acknowledge groups with a formal constitution, or only communicate by a specified 'link officer', or at particular meetings. Local groups in such authorities, then, may be in a disadvantageous position. Compared with the local authority, which is accustomed to operating according to such structures, local groups may have to conform to potentially unfamiliar and alien procedures in order to participate in the policy process. In such circumstances, a situation may arise where it is difficult for these groups to resist and easier for the local authority to manipulate and manoeuvre them, and whilst partnerships between authorities and groups can prove positive and enterprising, it is not
uncommon for them to ‘tend towards co-optive, ritualistic and... manipulated processes’ (Emmanuel, 1993:15).

The way in which organisations come to adopt similar structures has been described as ‘isomorphic processes’ (Hood, 1998; DiMaggio and Powell, 1991) and three common mechanisms by which this isomorphism develops are defined. In the context of this study, tenant groups may imitate local authority committee meeting structures (mimesis), they may be forced into organising in a particular way by the local authority refusing to acknowledge them unless they do so by setting down legal or funding requirements (coercion); or thirdly, tenant groups may believe that “the authority knows best” and thus structure their group accordingly (normative).

Some local authorities attempt genuinely to involve and consult local citizens without altering their organisational structures. However, other authorities that advocate participation may have a hidden agenda. It can be argued that local authorities are accountable for public money, they are elected and legally responsible for decisions that are made and, as such, should retain control. Where the relationship tends towards partnership, the issue of accountability is important, access to the relevant information is necessary if citizens are to be genuinely able to participate. However, there may be a tendency to patronise citizens as unable to make educated decisions; this may result in a sort of bureaucratic paternalism, ensuring that their position remains a subordinate one\footnote{This is often expressed in phrases like 'getting the voluntary sector up to speed'; capacity building can also have these connotations.}.
The belief is that the capabilities of those outside the official, elected arenas of policy making are considered to be inadequate and the role they play is merely tolerated by those in superior positions, many of whom would find little difficulty in agreeing with Schumpeter that, 'the electoral mass..... is incapable of action other than a stampede' (in Pateman, 1970: 5). Whilst many groups, then, are 'permitted' to play a role in policy making issues, this role may be limited; when greater participation is called for, or demanded, authorities may refuse, stating that widening their role would be stepping beyond the legitimate boundaries of their remit. However, experience varies between local authorities, and relationships may change over time and across contexts; there exists for local authority policy makers 'an underlying tension between control and facilitation' (O’Conghaile and Anderson, 1993: 18). Policy makers may divest little of their 'real' decision making powers and whilst an accusation of outright, conscious manipulation may be unfair, there may be a tendency towards tokenism (Walsh, 1995).

The argument here is that by allowing participation to occur, the government incorporates people into the policy making process on its terms, absorbing them into the structure, thus ensuring co-operation and endorsement of decisions and also minimising dissent. Emphasis is placed upon the integrative role of participation, institutionalising people into the participatory process. Thus, it may be argued that government control is derived from this absorption; it may prohibit any initiatives from citizens which the local authority disagrees with, and may result in citizens conforming to the system and structures of the
local authority\textsuperscript{17}. Participants in this arena may be intimidated, finding difficulties in relating to what is often an alien situation; tenants may, for example, be inhibited at public speaking and find difficulties in comprehending proposals submitted for debate. As a consequence, decisions are made and policies may be approved with little input from citizen participants as structures and cultures can inhibit their effective involvement.

As far as many authorities are concerned citizen participation may aid service delivery and policy implementation but little more\textsuperscript{18}. Scant attention is paid to the ability of participation to strengthen and stimulate democracy because the form of participation they advocate may not support this and such stimulation, \textit{inter alia}, may be envisaged as a threat to the local authority power base. O'Conghaile and Anderson suggest that there is, a general tendency of policy makers, whilst liberally invoking citizen involvement and initiative, in practice to hold on to the reins of control, sometimes to pursue important short term interventions designed to galvanise local development, but rarely to develop long term strategies to foster independent citizen initiative and involvement through group or collective action (1993: 18).

Participation, under such terms, could be described as 'negatively empowering' for those involved. This paints a rather depressing picture in relation to the capacity of participatory initiatives to develop and retain independence. However, having said that, this study is concerned with the potential for effective participatory action which

\textsuperscript{17} Community groups and voluntary organisations may also win funding from other sources such as central government or European funds, for example, via urban regeneration partnerships, where a range of different relationships between partners may exist. That is, they may exist as Lowndes and Skelcher note: 'in an environment where the power relations between various partners will be shifting and the resulting dynamics will at one point stimulate co-operation and at another conflict (1998: 2).

\textsuperscript{18} A survey conducted by the DETR, concerning public participation in local government, found that the main objective for local authorities was to improve services (by Lowndes et al, 1998)
contributes to the decision-making process and which does not become institutionalised.

This potential exists in two areas:

i) Effective participatory action can result from bottom-up initiatives and can be found in the knowledge that citizens have of the 'workings' of the system within which they are participating; that is, the recognition by citizens of a possible hidden agenda and their ability to use non-hidden mechanisms to their advantage. (Lowndes acknowledges local government as 'potentially an important arena for the development of 'citizen competence''(1995:171)).

ii) Effective participatory action can result from top-down initiatives. It can be found with those who do not wish to institutionalise participatory action but who seek to promote it in a genuine attempt to widen the decision-making process and are prepared to acknowledge different ways of participating, outside the more conventional structures.

When both these exist, the potential for effective participation may be intensified.

Broadly speaking, most people who participate do so in order to exert an influence and to initiate change. Research on public participation in local government has identified several motivations for citizen participation. Citizens were likely to participate in 'initiatives which address their stated priorities...; mobilise and work through local leaders...; and exploit the potential of inviting or actively recruiting participants, rather than waiting for citizens to come forward' (Lowndes et al, 1998: 9). But more detailed analysis reveals many differences in the reasons and expected outcomes behind citizen involvement. Whilst there may be certain conditions which encourage participation, are
there certain qualities that citizens need in order to participate? The next sub-section considers these 'qualities', or motivations, for participation in detail.

4.4.2 Motivations for participation

Are there specific characteristics which facilitate participation? The answer is not straightforward and the desire to participate for those presently outside the policy making process may vary along a continuum from weak to strong: from a desire to ensure that every viewpoint is heard, to a selfish desire to promote one's own interests. Arnstein's (1969) 'ladder of participation' illustrates these levels clearly from an 'official' perspective; that is, it refers to official intentions rather than individual citizens' motivations. She has eight rungs on her ladder which correlate to levels of participation.

Figure 4.3 Ladder of participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8</th>
<th>Citizen Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Delegated Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Placation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Consultation</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Manipulation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sources: Arnstein, 1969: 216-24)
The first two rungs allow no real participation as those who hold the power are loath to relinquish or concede any control and a process of indoctrination is effectively in place. At the next three rungs, the citizen enjoys some participation but it is limited and whilst invitations to meetings are publicised and attitudes to various issues are sought, participation at this level does not extend to involvement in decision-making and amounts to little more than tokenism in the majority of instances. The final three rungs encourage full and active participation in the decision making process, from partnership and beyond, to direct control. However, most participation in Britain rarely climbs beyond the sixth rung. Essentially, there is a tension between direct and indirect democracy — citizens grant political representatives (MPs, councillors, etc.) the right to exercise authority by proxy, then seek to claim it back from them by exercising direct influence over political decision-making.

The ladder highlights the inherent resistance to a wider power distribution that may be present, and the paternalistic attitude of the government that may exist. This would seem to imply that the mechanisms for representative democracy do not work. Arnstein states:

The fundamental point is that participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless. There is nothing new about the process, since those who have power normally want to hang on to it. Historically, it has had to be wrested by the powerless rather than proffered by the powerful (1969: 219).

Whilst this is not under dispute, it is not always the case that those who hold power in one situation necessarily hold it in another. Indeed, as discussed earlier, influence in one area does not ensure control in another (Clegg, 1989; Foucault 1976). Burns, et al discuss these various power relationships as 'spheres of influence', identifying four spheres of potential
citizen power: the individual sphere, the sphere of the neighbourhood, the sphere of local
government and the sphere of national governance. Within each sphere, power fluctuates
depending upon the situation and there exists a 'constant negotiation and renegotiation of
power relationships' (1994: 159)\textsuperscript{19}.

The influence that citizens as individuals and groups have over decisions to participate,
and at what level to engage, is central to this fluctuating relationship with power (see
Figure 4.2). Citizens have a choice in their commitment or desire for involvement, and
even whether to participate at all. As previously discussed, society consists of a wide and
diverse citizenship and in order to discuss the differences in participation, this study has
developed a preliminary model of citizen 'ideal types' (based on readings including Sartori,
1987; Barber, 1984; Smith, 1981; Hill, 1974). It can be seen as a useful complement to
Arnstein's work in that it considers the issue of participation from the citizen rather than the
official perspective. It does not attempt to be exhaustive or try to force categorisations, but
aims to present/illustrate some of the main citizen approaches to participation.

\textsuperscript{19} Burns et al elaborate upon Arnstein's ladder by adding another four rungs but these remain within the three
main divisions, or 'zones', identified by Arnstein (1994:162).
Citizens involved in participation as a conscious decision can be described as *active citizens* who participate, beyond voting in elections, through protests, campaigns and demonstrations and so on, in an effort to broaden the democratic process as a whole generally or over a specific issue. (It is possible however, that some of these citizens would
not see themselves as ‘participating’ within the system, but as ‘protesting’ outside the system. Also, of course, many policy-makers do not recognise participants such as road protestors as participants, rendering them/their action illegal.) Such participation may be 'real' i.e. power-holders may relinquish genuine power and thus enhance democracy, or the participation of the active citizen may be 'false' i.e. power-holders permit participation whilst retaining any real power, in an effort to absorb citizens into the system and thereby, promoting participation spuriously.

The active citizen can also be divided into two distinct types: the altruistic citizen, who has a desire to participate in order to promote democracy at all levels and for everyone (normative), and the selfish citizen, who has a desire to participate in order to further their own particular interests and status at an individual level (instrumental). (It could be argued that the selfish citizen, in pursuing their sectional interest may achieve the same as the former i.e. broaden the workings of democracy; however, their interests may disadvantage other groups and therefore perpetuate inequality). The thesis will consider in chapter seven whether this distinction aligns with gender differences in attitudes to power, where 'men are interested in power over others [and] women have a liberatory understanding of power as something which is enabling but which does not have to involve the subordination of other groups' (Bryson, 1999: 95). While both types of active citizen participate as a result of a conscious decision to do so, there are also those citizens who do not participate. Non-participation does not just occur when the power-holders prohibit any real involvement, it can also result as a conscious decision on the part of the citizen; it is this form of non-participation which will be considered next.
There are two main types of non-participation which can be identified: non-participation as a nescient decision and non-participation as a conscious decision. In the former, non-participation may be as a consequence of ignorance - a lack of unawareness of the possibility of participation, or it may be the result of incomprehension when confronted with the system. To explain this more fully, the ignorant citizen has minimal awareness of the political environment. Such a position can be explained by the centralised nature of society where citizens are removed and remote from any decision-making processes.

The second form of non-participation as a nescient decision is the bewildered citizen. Whilst the ignorant citizen is unaware, the bewildered is confused: having made a conscious decision to participate, it becomes the reverse as a consequence of the difficulties found in attempting to participate. Difficulties may be found in the delivery of information, either too much or not enough; information could be biased and conflicting; could be in jargon or too technical; choice of issues may be alien and unfamiliar, and thus non-participation results. The lack of power that the bewildered and ignorant citizen may feel arises from a lack of resources necessary for effective participation. It can be argued that women are more likely than men to find themselves in such a position. For example, because of women's marginal position in the labour force, they may lack the ability to attend meetings when they are usually convened; they may work unsociable hours such as evenings and weekends in service sector jobs; or they may be expected to provide domestic and childcare services and so find themselves unable to attend PTA meetings.

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20 There is an interesting parallel here with non-decision-making (see Bachrach and Baratz, 1970); that is, where those in positions of power prevent certain issues reaching the public arena for debate, thus achieving the acquiescence of individuals as a result of non-decision-making.
council meetings or tenant meetings. They may also lack the resources to arrange effective, safe and affordable transport, enabling attendance at participatory sessions, and so on.

There is also an issue in political participation concerning the actual communication process. *Who* speaks and *how* they speak is as important as what they say and affects whether or not their words carry weight. Sexual stereotyping downgrades the validity of women's utterances in such procedures, and to this cultural and symbolic classifications such as ethnicity, class, sexuality and lifestyle can be added. Being able to speak in certain registers, being articulate and mastering technical vocabulary marks out utterances as more or less legitimate. Thus, differentials in material and cultural capital, such as education, may act as effective discriminatory mechanisms (Young, 1998; Randall, 1982).

The second type of non-participation is more complex as it concerns a citizen's conscious decision to avoid involvement. The first of these is the *contented citizen*, who does not participate as they are satisfied with their situation and environment i.e. "I elect/pay you to do the job whilst I get on with my life". Their stance or position may alter according to circumstances and could also be the result of the dominant ideology operating in society which can produce an 'undemanding acceptance of authority' (Hill, 1974:149; Bachrach and Baratz, 1970). As established earlier (see chapter three), patriarchy can be seen as the prevailing dominant ideology in society and, as such, female citizens may be 'content' as a result of their 'acceptance' of male dominance. The second type of conscious non-participant is the *apathetic citizen*, who is aware of the political environment but uninterested, rarely considering political issues and not even bothering to vote. This is hardly a new phenomenon - an argument for introducing universal suffrage was that
people would learn to vote by voting. After it became apparent that this was not occurring, poverty and illiteracy were identified as the problem. However, whilst voting has been practised at more than sufficient length [and] ... ratios of poverty and illiteracy has dramatically altered and reduced. Yet no heartening improvements have followed; apathy still looms large (Sartori, 1987: 104).

There is evidence however, that whilst it remains valid, not all non-participation is the result of ignorance or apathy. A further explanation is cynicism. The cynical citizen is inactive due to a belief that nothing or little can be gained through participation; that is, a belief that agencies will not respond and, therefore, there is little point to participation. There is also a perception that it can lead to an unhealthy absorption into the system to the extent that the original goals are lost and that as individuals they possess little influence or power. But it is a 'calculated response rather than a manifestation of apathy' (Parry et al 1992: 8). The perception is that social and political life is dominated by administerial and bureaucratic structures and by vested interests and that the individual has no agency. The cynical citizen could be considered by some as pragmatic, rather than uninterested (Hill, 1974: 149).

The final type of non-participation is the most radical: the conscious decision not to participate because of what I have termed here as the 'system' 21. Anti-system citizens can be seen as closely allied with cynical citizens but they believe that certain goals could be won and certain aims could be achieved in the system, but see little point in fighting for these when the ultimate goal to change the system is unachievable. It is the whole decision-making structure that they should be fighting against, as they perceive that it acts

21 Defined here as the 'system' of liberal democratic and capitalist structures and ideologies.
fundamentally against their interests. It is this belief that prevents their participation. (Many radical feminists would consider themselves anti-system citizens).

Individual citizens cannot often be identified as a single, or distinct 'type' of citizen, as described above. They may adopt different citizenship positions, or stances, on different issues and at different times. Yet 'type' of citizen is important in any discussion of participation, and the real question is, does it matter if citizens choose not to participate? Perhaps not if they are content; however, as already mentioned (see the discussion concerning hegemony in chapter three) it may be manufactured contentment as a result of the dominant ideology in society, i.e. the 'happy robot' who consumes pleasures in place of autonomy, agency and sense of self-determination. It could be argued that non-participation does matter on two levels, the first, (allowing for citizens who actually support 'the system') that inaction could be perceived as condoning the system. Indeed, as Pateman observes, 'apathy and disinterest of the majority play a valuable role in maintaining the stability of the system as a whole' (Pateman 1970: 7). Secondly, non-participation matters because participation has possibilities and potential for change, not just at a minimal level but beyond, to the development of a new system. This is unlikely to occur as a result of revolution but the establishment of a more equal and democratic society is a possibility from the bottom-up, gradualist approach.

To summarise then, citizen approaches to participation are as diverse as citizenship itself, ranging from complete involvement in an effort to broaden equality, to a conscious desire not to become involved in the belief that any participatory activity is limited. Outcomes
also vary but one consistent claim made for participation is that it possesses an empowering quality or element (Davey, 1999; Cochrane, 1996; Croft and Beresford, 1992).

4.4.3 Women and participatory action

It is argued that feelings of empowerment experienced through participatory action, at both the individual and the group level, can increase independence and personal development. This can encourage involvement in other groups and enable participants to take greater control over other aspects of their lives (see the earlier discussion on empowerment dimensions). The greatest hurdle for women is often the initial step towards participation - attending that first meeting or demonstration, not being threatened by the male dominance of the system.

Whilst female tenants, in local authority accommodation, may feel intimidated by the official procedures, it can be argued that such intimidation is lessening. Three explanations for this can be identified. Firstly, the increase in female-headed households, and women's involvement with each other as friends suggests an informal network in place. Secondly, an increase in female employment (even where it is mostly part-time and low paid) can give women skills and abilities which they previously lacked and were the prerogative of men. Thirdly, women have always played a role in tenant participation albeit often at the lower levels. Due to a combination of concern for their neighbourhoods and an increase in community skills, women can be seen to be in a better position to now realise their objectives as instigators of change. Phillips suggests that an increase in women's
participation at the local level is actually occurring because there is now less power at this level than previously, that

the feminisation of local government has coincided with its most marked period of impotence and decline, and that if the power of local councils were later restored (or even increased) this might well remove women's relative advantage (1996: 116).

It follows that if power at the local level again increases, women may find themselves pushed out as men re-enter. (Although for any gains in tenant participation to be seriously challenged, an increase in the number of male-headed households in the social sector housing would be necessary.) It can be argued, then, that women should utilise current opportunities to gain experience and knowledge of local government. Female tenants in local authority accommodation may be in a strong position to put into place the 'mechanisms' for change, which Young calls for (1998: 409) and to promote equality from the bottom-up.

This debate is central in achieving equality in decision-making processes in both the domestic and public spheres. They are directly related and empowerment at the private level may be a necessary condition before it can filter through into the public arena. It can be a two-way process, for example: women may feel angry that their children have no play area and so unite in order to resolve the situation, and campaign to have one. In addition to achieving a facility for the community, successful participation may also have a great and positive influence in the sphere of domestic life; the advantages of an enhanced confidence in oneself and in one's abilities can have an obvious positive effect in the home. A useful distinction is offered by Putnam who distinguishes between the external and the internal
benefits of participation, that is, personal benefits to the individual, such as education and self-confidence and collective benefits to the community (1993: 109).

There are however, many obstacles to increasing women's participation in the present climate, such as time: women still remain the primary carers and carry out 70% of domestic chores whether in paid work or not (United Nations, 1995). The amount of time available then to attend meetings and become active participants or citizens is short; however, Phillips has argued that feminism and participatory democracy have formed a tentative alliance, 'based on their common disquiet with the public/private distinction and cemented by their enthusiasm for discussion and talk' (1991: 45). Despite problems, women are often at the forefront of local action and campaigns, sometimes motivated by the very problems that face them. It is also sometimes the case, however, that whilst women are the instigators and originators of action, it is the men who hold the formal and leadership positions as male dominance is effective and pervades in all aspects of society (Wadhams, 1996; Gilroy and Woods, 1994). The challenge is for women to see the potential of their participation, to overcome the obstacles and really begin to challenge the present status quo.

4.5 Conclusion

The analysis in the last two chapters places participation within the context of feminism and local democracy, that is in the subordination of women to men and the subordination of tenant groups to local government. From the analysis in this chapter, participation has
been identified as having an 'educative' effect upon citizens, who learn about the processes of decision-making and the arena in which it takes place. However, it may also have a 'controlling' effect, as local authorities promote participation as a way of directing, or channelling, citizen opinion to comply with the viewpoint of the authority. This chapter has argued that effective participation is subject to power relationships and its distribution amongst the actors involved. The motivation or characteristics of the citizens involved are also considered fundamental to the feelings of empowerment experienced.

The thesis can now move forward to the detailed study of tenant participation via an analysis of primary research data. The focus can be narrowed to examine more closely the specific ways in which participation operates, i.e. how the various actors function, how they interact with one another, how different tactics and strategies are used; and how obstacles are overcome. As a result, the extent to which participation is gendered and the extent to which participation empowers can be critically evaluated in the final chapter. Before proceeding to this more detailed study and by way of introducing it, the following chapter outlines the methodological process within which the research was conducted.
Chapter 5

Research Design and Methodology

5.1 Introduction

The research propositions, identified in chapter one, focus upon the role of women and tenant participation, considering the gendered nature of tenant participation and the potential of participation to empower female tenants in local authority accommodation. These propositions provided the point of reference when constructing the framework for analysis. In order to investigate the research questions, relevant data for analysis was identified. The data needed to provide information concerning the nature and style of tenant participation activities, as well as an understanding of the action motivations and outcomes of the main actors (tenants, housing officers and councillors) involved. This chapter identifies the methodological processes used in this research to collect this data. As this study is concerned with gender issues, it is important to state that this research has been conducted from a feminist methodological perspective, which is fundamental to comprehending the choice of methodological processes and techniques applied. Whilst there is no one agreed 'feminist' research approach, there are particular aspects of a feminist approach to research which this chapter seeks to clarify. This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first presents an analysis of the 'feminist' research approach; the second, details the methodological processes used in this research; and the third reflects on the research limitations of the study.
5.2 Feminist methodological approaches

The male dominance that is prevalent in society, and which has been discussed in chapter three, has had a commanding influence upon the way in which social science research has been conducted. It can be argued that social science research has traditionally been conducted from a male standpoint; methods used and analyses of results have reflected the male bias inherent in society. Research has largely been conducted by men whose preconceptions and assumptions about women are often reproduced in their findings (Eichler, 1988; Stanley and Wise, 1983). Much research by men has ignored women or made generalisations across the genders. It can be argued that the conclusions of such research are likely to be inaccurate and to serve to confirm and emphasise male superiority, marginalising women. As feminists have challenged the position of women in society, so a body of literature has developed challenging such traditional male research methodology (Mies, 1993; Finch, 1991; Stanley and Wise, 1990, 1983; Harding, 1987; Hartsock, 1983; Oakley, 1981). This literature argues, *inter alia*, for the recognition of subjectivity and for the recognition of power relationships in research in an attempt to construct a feminist approach to research methods.

Such an approach criticises the viewpoint which advocates complete objectivity when conducting social science research. All research involves some form of relationship between researcher and researched, however tenuous, objective or value-free research is a fallacy. Every individual researcher possesses a set of values which will inevitably determine how a certain situation is perceived. Every individual possesses consciousness,
and so is unable to avoid placing meaning and interpretation upon everything that is experienced. In essence then, the research process can be seen from two angles: first, from that of the researcher whose gender, age, class, race and personal history will inform their view (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Secondly, the relationship between the researcher and the researched will inform the process (Oleson, 1994).

Feminist 'standpoint' epistemology (Hartsock, 1987; Harding, 1983) emphasises the importance of experience, suggesting that women 'have a distinctive set of experiences which provides them with a privileged vantagepoint from which to understand reality' (Randall, 1991: 522). It is argued, then, that women, by virtue of their gender, possess certain innate insights that elude men. Some feminists believe that only women can do feminist research as only female researchers can understand a woman's position and situation (Stanley and Wise, 1983).

One of the main aspects of a feminist approach to methodology is the proposal that researchers should have an involvement with those being studied; 'subjects' should have parity with the researcher in order to avoid an hierarchical relationship between researcher and researched. Feminist research seeks to allow the 'subject' to become an equal 'participant' in the study, indeed, to become a 'co-researcher' (see Olesen, 1994). It rejects the theory of no emotional involvement with those being researched and that researchers should maintain a purely formal relationship. Adherents of feminist research argue that such distance and aloofness is unnecessary. Feminist researchers have pioneered more informal methods, whereby the researcher is prepared to enter into a relaxed relationship with the subjects (Oakley, 1981; Finch, 1991; Mies, 1993). This may remove the distance
and break down certain barriers, such that the subject may be inclined to be more co-operative. Oakley claims that, 'a feminist interviewing women is by definition both “inside” the culture and participating in that which she is observing' (1981: 57). Whilst by definition this may appear so, it could be argued that this approach is rather superficial; beyond the facade of being within and participating, there are many differences amongst women. For example, I have never experienced local authority accommodation as a tenant, nor experienced local politics as a councillor, nor experienced employment as a housing officer; however, I believe that this lack of experience did not negates my research in this area. I experience life as a woman, as do many of the participants in this study, and as such we share some experiences as a result of our shared gender. However, there are many other experiences that we are unable to share as a result of our differences, both as women and as researcher and researched.

An awareness of the potential bias of the power relationship of both the researcher and the researched is fundamental to conducting research. Mason (1996) promotes a reflexive standpoint as vital to developing an understanding of the research process. In the context of this study, every effort was made to maintain an awareness of the power relationships; for example, prior to each interview, a brief profile of the interviewee was prepared22 in an effort to identify potential bias in relation to gender, class, age, ethnicity and political affiliation (May, 1993).

22 Where possible information such as age, ethnicity, position in tenant group, political affiliation, etc. was collected prior to interviews.
There were some difficult interview moments, for example, when one interviewee attempted to persuade me to agree that teenage girls became pregnant in order to secure local authority accommodation. In such situations, the researcher is in a dilemma: to disagree and risk alienating the interviewee, to terminate the interview, or to agree in the hope of eliciting further information, which may jeopardise the integrity of the interviewer.

In this study, I believe that individual personality was an important factor in determining the relationship between the researcher and the researched. As with any individuals, certain characters/personalities will 'get on' on whilst others will not. It can be argued that experiences make us who we are and thus shared experiences determine relationships; however, such philosophical debates concerning 'who we are' and how we interact are beyond the remit of this study.

The feminist approach is associated with the idea that research should be conducted with freedom from oppression as its ultimate aim. Whilst I agree with Mies that research 'must be brought to serve the interests of dominated, exploited and oppressed groups' (1983: 123) (indeed, my study is intended to contribute towards this), I disagree with some feminists and their 'guidelines' for conducting feminist research. Whilst I do not deny that women may possess unique insights, I oppose the view that this qualifies any female researcher to study any female subject. As stated above, the importance of personality is fundamental in any researcher-researched relationship. Their shared gender does not necessarily lead to an empathy with their situation, women are not an homogenous group - neither are men (Gelsthorpe, 1992). The extent to which the researcher can empathise with the researched can be difficult in certain cases,
There are situations where one can study those whose standpoint the researcher shares, and who can share in the theorisation of their experience, and others where the subjects' experience is divided from the researcher's by power relations, and subjects are theorised by feminists in ways in which they do not theorise themselves (Ramazanoglu, 1992: 210).

In this study tenants differ from councillors, who differ from officers and there are also differences within these groups in terms of class, race, political persuasion, differing levels of education and so on. Such distinctions make for an interesting study as a project that ignored subjects' various experiences would reveal little 'about the world that produced those experiences' (Hammersley, 1992:196). Relating to all or empathising with all would be an impossibility (Skeggs, 1992; for an opposite view see Stanley and Wise, 1983); however, this does not devalue the study as feminist research (Jayaratne, 1983). Whilst the involvement of the subjects in a study is inevitable to a certain extent as 'they, along with the researchers, construct the meanings that become 'data' for later interpretation by the researcher' (Olesen, 1994: 166), this study has involved subjects mainly at a basic level23 primarily due to the fact that as Hammersley observes 'research is usually a small and marginal part of the lives of the people being studied' (1992: 196). Whilst further participation from respondents would not have been unwelcome to the researcher, it was not forthcoming despite attempts to involve them.

The involvement of subjects was specifically sought at three stages:

i) In the questionnaire design, housing officers from the four case study areas were consulted. As a result of time constraints and the logistics of arranging suitable meeting times, two officers were involved in the design stage. These officers remained quite closely involved throughout the duration of the study.
ii) Accompanying the questionnaires was a cover letter inviting recipients to make contact if they wished to be further involved or desired more information concerning the study. This did not elicit a huge response and a great deal of follow-up work (sending letters, telephoning, using contacts) was necessary to obtain further contact and interviews. In hindsight, perhaps a brief presentation, delivered in person, at the individual tenants' meetings would have increased interest.

iii) After each interview was transcribed, it was sent to the interviewee for comment. Approximately two thirds were returned and almost all responses related to the rephrasing of certain comments and statements - not to alter the meaning but to improve the grammar and 'make it better English' (councillor).

Most of the respondents in the study had pressures from work and at home which restricted more in-depth involvement and made it impractical. It is possible that more proactive participation may actually have been dangerous, with some of the more dominant figures taking control. In any group there are characters who are more dominant than others; tenants' groups are no exception. Had I developed closer relationships with particular tenants, others may not have been so willing to talk to me, under the false impression that there was a hidden agenda. In the context of the tenants in local authority A, this point is especially pertinent. Because disagreements existed between different tenant associations in the area, extensive involvement from certain tenant associations may have meant that

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23There were a few exceptions with whom the relationship was more participatory and reciprocal than with other subjects, although they never merited the position of co-researcher.
some of the others would not have co-operated quite so willingly. There are, then, benefits from some researcher 'distance'; by not being seen to favour one group over another, access to other viewpoints is not compromised (Burgess, 1993).

A further component proposed by some adherents of the feminist approach to methodology is the superiority of qualitative methods over quantitative (Oakley, 1981). Qualitative research, they argue, better reflects the nature of human, and therefore women's, experiences. Indeed, Reinharz and Fox Keller argue that quantitative methods cannot convey in-depth understanding of or feeling for those being researched and that they often ignore gender differences (cited in Gelsthorpe, 1992: 214). There are differences, certainly, between quantitative and qualitative techniques, but the extent to which one is more valuable than the other depends upon the type of research to be conducted. Indeed, quantitative research can be as valuable to feminists as qualitative depending on the context:

The appropriate use of both quantitative methods and qualitative methods in the social sciences can help the feminist community in achieving its goals more effectively than the use of either qualitative or quantitative methods alone (Jayaratne, 1983: 140).

In my study, then, both methods are utilised and complement each other (the exact methods employed, and their merits, are discussed later in this chapter). Whilst it can be argued that a feminist approach to methodology can be perceived from research conducted by various 'feminist' researchers, a distinct feminist method has not emerged and indeed, it is doubtful that one will. Many of the concepts the approach advocates are not original to the feminist approach; for example, action research predates feminist criticisms of methodology (see Winter, 1989; Room, 1986). As feminists hold differing opinions on how research should be conducted, there is no one agreed feminist methodology.
Despite the difficulties documented in this chapter, feminist research has identified and raised awareness of women's oppression in many areas, which has in turn led to a greater understanding of the 'extent, dimensions, forms and causes of this patriarchal system' (Mies, 1993: 70). It is in this vein that the research for this thesis has been conducted. This study does follow a specific 'feminist' approach to methodology; it utilises quantitative as well as qualitative techniques, involves research subjects to a certain extent, and includes men as well as women as its subjects. Both women and men must be studied from a feminist perspective, it is fundamental that feminists should not be solely interested in women, but 'in the differentiation and interaction of women and men' (Randall, 1991: 527).

By adopting a feminist approach, the aim is for the research to be seen as part of the whole process in which women come to understand more about their own oppression in order to change it; to achieve this aim the research cannot just focus on women. However, by conducting research from a feminist perspective, the aim is to employ research methods which enhance the visibility of gender inequalities as, 'feminist research should be 'for' women' (Finch, 1991). Ultimately, this is a legitimate aim as long as guiding values are declared (Jayaratne, 1983: 142). In essence then, this study is 'feminist' firstly, in that it studies women's inequality and secondly, that it promotes the interests of women.

5.3 The research method

This section is divided into four sub-sections. The first sub-section considers the case study approach for conducting research; the second outlines the specific case studies used; the
third and fourth sub-sections describe the questionnaire, and interview methods respectively, and their application in this study.

5.3.1 The case study approach

Choosing the research design is dependent upon a variety of factors ranging from financial and time constraints to theoretical and ideological implications. The research design of this thesis is based on the case study approach within which several research methods were combined. A case study provides the framework and sets the parameters for the specific methods to operate within. It is an approach which investigates a phenomenon using a number of methodological approaches and is 'concerned with obtaining a rounded picture of a situation or event from the perspectives of all the persons involved, usually by using a variety of methods' (Hakim, 1987: 8).

The case study approach has been chosen because of its flexibility and the fact that it allows for a depth of understanding that other methods cannot provide. The value of this approach does not come 'from numbers, either of organisations studied or of people interviewed. Rather it gains what authority it has from the depth of insight made available' (Cockburn, 1991). The use of several techniques and 'the use of multiple sources of evidence .... makes the case study one of the most powerful research designs' (Hakim, 1987: 61). As Bloor explains: 'replication of the findings by different methods minimises the possibility that the findings may be the result of particular measurement biases' (1997: 38). Using various methods of data collection enables the researcher to validate the data via 'methodological triangulation' (Kane 1985).
Both qualitative and quantitative methodological techniques have been utilised in conducting this research; the choice of methods has been strongly affected by resources, finances and ideology. The questionnaires (quantitative) were distributed prior to conducting in-depth interviews (qualitative) in order to focus respondents on the topic and to provide information to a standard format (see Appendix III for copies of the questionnaires). Postal questionnaires were sent first to seek general information and characteristics of the tenants, officers and councillors involved in tenant participation, in order that a sample of respondents could then be identified for interview (May, 1993; Barry, 1991).

Qualitative research has the advantage of being able to obtain data not possible with quantitative methods such as surveys, which collect standardised information from each respondent. Quantitative techniques are ideal for research studies attempting to gain a great breadth of information rather than in-depth data. A distinction can be made between quantitative methods where: 'generally, a relatively small amount of information is collected from any one individual, contrasting with a case study where a great deal of information may be obtained from a 'key informant' (Robson, 1993: 49).

Quantitative methods are used to collect standardised information, but by its nature that information lacks depth when compared with information collected from qualitative methods. Thus, the use of qualitative techniques to develop a greater understanding of responses enriches the data generated from the quantitative because it is a 'direct encounter' (Blackman, 1993: 247). It produces greater depth as it obtains 'people's own accounts of situations and events, with reporting their perspectives and feelings' (Hakim, 1987: 8).
Qualitative research does not force responses into specific categories and allows for space to expand responses, not restricting answers to 'yes' or 'no' or tick boxes. Both have been used in this study as one complements the other; the aim was to use 'qualitative data, in conjunction with quantitative data to develop, support and explicate theory' (Jayaratne, 1993: 140). One method is not better than another *per se*; methods are chosen for the data they will produce. Quantitative methods can produce generalisations concerning whole populations (if statistically significant); qualitative methods can produce theoretical generalisations. The validity of generalisations from case study research is defended clearly by Yin:

Critics [of case study research to offer valid generalisations] are implicitly contrasting the situation to survey research, in which a 'sample' readily generalizes to a larger universe. This analogy to samples and universes is incorrect when dealing with case studies. This is because survey research relies on statistical generalization, whereas case studies (as with experiments) rely on analytical generalization. In analytical generalization, the investigator is striving to generalize a particular set of results to some broader theory (1994: 36).

The challenge is to select the methodological tools which will produce the appropriate data for the research study.

### 5.3.2 Case study outlines

Before discussing the specific methodological tools utilised in this project, a description of the particular case studies themselves and the criteria for identifying them is necessary. Fieldwork was conducted in four local authorities during the period from September 1995 to August 1996, which comprises the primary source of empirical material for this study. Some respondents and interviewees expressed concern over their identification and so were promised anonymity. In order to keep this promise, it was decided not to reveal any
place or individual by name. The local authorities, then, will be identified and referred to as: local authority A, local authority B, local authority C and local authority D.

The four local authority case studies were identified according to several criteria, to reflect the social, spatial, political and economic variety of tenant participation in local authority housing. Time and cost constraints were a major consideration that could not be ignored. Each had a different political composition representing Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat and Independent. A housing officer in each local authority was initially approached for a preliminary discussion of the study and to identify relevant councillors, officers and tenants. Other resources such as information booklets, leaflets, minutes from meetings, committee reports and so on were also gathered on each area in order to establish as comprehensive a picture as possible.

Local Authority A

Local authority A was the largest of the case study areas, representing one of the largest districts in England in terms of population, with a population of 270,493. It gained unitary status in April 1997. It is urban in character with over 29,000 local authority owned properties, housing almost one third of the city's population, mostly on estates. Tenant activity had been visible for over 20 years and a Tenant's Federation had existed since the 1950s, funded and resourced by the council. 27 tenant associations were identified using the local authority list, the only comprehensive list available, although some were found to have disbanded and others formed in the area.
Local Authority B

Local authority B is a relatively urban borough council with a large population of 141,200, and a large number of industrial villages. It has 7,200 properties, 59% of which are houses and bungalows and 41% are flats. Tenant participation had been rather ad hoc and contact between tenant groups and the local authority had been irregular until about 1994 when specific initiatives were promoted by the borough to develop participation. There were three tenant associations representing over one third of the tenants in the borough. In addition, the council was in consultation with the elderly in its sheltered accommodation and all those tenants affected by improvement schemes.

Local Authority C

Local authority C is a borough council, less urban in character than the other local authorities in this study; it has a population of 51,700. It is located within commuter distance to a large city which has led to extensive residential development since the Second World War. Of the four case studies, this area had the smallest amount of council housing stock, with 1595 properties, approximately half of which were houses and half maisonettes, bungalows or flats. The tenant participation and consultation record was poor. Tenant associations were supposedly monitored by the council but received no funding; the council protests its commitment yet there appeared to be little visible evidence. Addresses of the two tenants' associations that existed were given but, on receipt of questionnaires, one had disbanded.
Local Authority D

Local authority D is the smallest of the areas in terms of population size (32,500). It is a district council rural in character, comprised of two main towns and approximately 50 villages, many of which have little or no public sector housing. It has a housing stock of 1639 properties of which 30% are housing for the elderly and 70% are family houses. It voluntarily introduced competitive tendering for its housing management and maintenance in 1992. Tenant participation had not been strong in the area and only one tenant association was identified, although three were in existence at one point in the 1980s. The authority was aware that more had to be done to encourage involvement and saw it as a major issue to be addressed.

It was decided that all tenants' association within the four local authorities would be approached initially by questionnaire and then, if willing, tenants would be interviewed. The claim that a study of local authority tenant groups is applicable to the wider debate about equal citizenship and participation may seem rather bold. But tenants' groups demonstrate the possibility of equal citizenship and participation. The fact that tenant groups exist and are composed of 'ordinary' people who can possess some control in the policy-making arena, may represent at a micro level what is possible at a more macro level. In essence, a study of individual tenant groups reveals a working model which can be built on and perfected; it demonstrates an opportunity for increased involvement of people as equal citizens.
Access to the participants to be involved in the study was achieved relatively easily. A brief discussion with housing officer contacts identified the tenant associations, appropriate councillors and other officers to be approached. Initial and continuing reactions and attitudes to researcher access were important to note and should not be ignored as they form part of the whole research process. A diary was kept of all correspondence, attendance at meetings, questionnaires, phone calls and interviews with comments. It was useful to have recorded such reactions as it aided insight into the behaviour and culture of the groups and organisations (Lee, 1993). Access was a continuing process and developed as the research itself developed; indeed, I noticed that a growing familiarity with some of the groups involved led to a more informal relationship and thus, a greater willingness to divulge information.

5.3.3 The questionnaires

Informal discussions with academics, researchers and housing officers were arranged prior to the construction of four questionnaires. This was in order to evaluate and identify the importance of certain issues to be included for discussion. Questionnaires, as mentioned earlier, are a quantitative research technique, enabling the collection of standardised information from each respondent. Such methods are ideal for studies attempting to gain a breadth of information which was the aim of the first phase of the research, before using a qualitative method to provide more in-depth data.

24 Local authority C seemed a little hostile. Whilst agreement to participate was secured with little problem initially, once involved there appeared to be little interest from the officers and a defensive stance was taken on occasion.
Four questionnaires were constructed (see Appendix III), each varying slightly according to the respondents: elected members, housing officers, tenant association members, and non-tenant association tenants. Questionnaires were devised to elicit general information such as gender, age, attendance at tenant associations, political affiliation, current campaigns and priorities and so on. They were designed to be kept as short as possible with the majority of questions being 'closed' in order that respondents should not be discouraged by its length or complex nature, and for ease of analysis. The questionnaires were then compiled and piloted with relevant respondents in other local authorities (not involved in the study) in order to highlight any problems of comprehension and validity. A second pilot was conducted to further refine the questionnaires before a final version was decided upon.

The questionnaire intended for tenants who did not belong to tenant associations was rejected after the second pilot. It became apparent that the effort in time and resources in administering such a questionnaire might outweigh the possible contributions that such a questionnaire could make to the study (given the focus on participation in practice). The absence of this group did, of course, limit the scope of the research in terms of data concerning 'non-participation'; however, the views and opinions of this group were vocalised at many of the tenant association open meetings and AGMs. Whilst these were observed, no specific recording or detailing of their comments or involvement in meetings was noted. For most tenant associations it is the case that all tenants in their area become members automatically, merely by being a tenant in the defined area. They may not be active but, as members, are permitted to attend meetings if they wish.
Questionnaires were sent to (see Appendix IV for details):

- ten councillors on the Housing Committee of each local authority, chosen at random, stratified by political party, to include a cross section of political affiliations. All women on each committee were selected;

- 18 relevant housing officers across the four local authorities. Posts held by these officers included: Director of Housing, Assistant Director of Housing, Principal Housing Officer, Senior Housing Officer, District Housing Officer and Housing Officer;

- to the Chair of all 37 tenant associations identified from local authority lists, and to the Secretary and Treasurer where they existed. A total of 84 questionnaires were sent to tenants.

All questionnaires were sent by post first class, enclosing a covering letter and a pre-paid, pre-addressed envelope. After the initial posting, two reminder letters, the second with a further copy of the questionnaire, were sent in an effort to increase the response rate. The data from these questionnaires was then collated and coded and entered using the software analysis package SPSS, to enable analysis of the findings. The response rate of the questionnaires sent to the councillors was high; for local authority A, local authority B and local authority C it was 60%, and local authority D achieved an 80% response rate. Of those sent to the housing officers, the response rate from local authority A was 63%, 40% from local authority B, 100% from local authority C and 66% from local authority D. 49% of tenant questionnaires were returned from local authority A, representing 20 of the 27 tenant associations identified; 22% from local authority B, representing two of the three identified; 50% from local authority C, representing tenant associations in that district; and
67% from local authority D from the sole tenant association in the area. In total, a response rate of 46.4% was achieved from tenants.

The nature of the information returned by all groups of respondents was generally good. I attended Housing Committee meetings in each local authority several times and tenant association meetings and AGMs were attended in all tenant associations two or three times. Due to the size and number of council tenants in local authority A, three tiers of meetings exist:

- Tier III - tenants of individual tenant associations meet locally;
- Tier II - is area based and tenants from several tenant associations are represented, an Area Housing Officer usually attends and this level concerns regional issues;
- Tier I - is a meeting to which everyone concerned with council housing is invited including councillors, officers and tenants.

Attendance at such meetings enabled observations to be made and insights to be discovered. Such observations were important in establishing an understanding of how the systems and networks operated. Discovering particular relationships and connections between the various actors proved interesting and enlightening in many instances.

The questionnaires allowed for quantitative data to be collected from the three main groups of actors in this study: the councillors, housing officers and tenants. The observation of tenant meetings complemented this data. To build further upon this data, the methodological tool of interviews was utilised.
5.3.4 The interviews

There are several types of interview technique ranging from the fully structured interview, with a predetermined set of questions, to the unstructured interview where conversation is allowed to develop: 'The interview is a flexible and adaptable way of finding things out... asking people directly what's going on is an obvious short cut in seeking answers to our research questions' (Robson, 1993: 229). Interviews can provide a rich source of social, political and economic information. Within this study the unstructured depth interview was utilised with housing officials, councillors and tenants. This type of interview is not organised around a list of specific questions, but is loosely arranged around particular themes or guidelines for discussion and is more conversational in form, facilitating dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee. Such an interview technique allowed the interviewees freedom to express opinions on the topic in their own way, without the constraints of adapting their replies to the categories laid down by the researcher in structured interviews and questionnaires.

Interviews were conducted after analysis of the questionnaires, in order that information from the questionnaires could be used to steer and guide the interviews; thus, the data could be expanded and developed resulting in richer and deeper accounts. Candidates for interview were selected from those who had responded to the questionnaires; elected members were chosen to represent the political composition in each local authority and it was decided to include female respondents where possible. Interviews were conducted with housing officers who possessed the relevant knowledge and experience of tenant participation, as displayed from the questionnaires. Interviews with tenants were conducted with those respondents who replied positively to a request for further contact.
Any possible biases from self-selecting the sample of tenant activists was counter-balanced by the observation of tenant meetings.

Further interviews were sought in local authority B, local authority C and local authority D with tenants beyond those who had responded to questionnaires. However, meetings were arranged several times but were either cancelled or tenants failed to show up, messages failed to reach them and they were often unavailable on further contact. However, once contact was made, all interviews with tenants lasted anywhere between one and two and a half hours. Elected members and housing officers allowed much less time ranging from 20 minutes to an hour. Interviews were conducted in a variety of locations which were usually suggested by the interviewee: councillors mostly in their homes or before and after meetings at the council buildings, officers were interviewed in their offices, and tenants mostly in their tenant association properties or at their homes.

All interviews were confidential and relatively unstructured in character. As discussed above, such a format allowed the respondent to explore issues at length that had been raised using the questionnaire. In many cases a good rapport was established and interviews became more of a dialogue which enhanced and enriched the quality of the data collected. This unstructured method is clearly advantageous in providing an in-depth understanding of the officers', councillors' and tenants' views. Interviews were also conducted with the Chair and two members of the management committee of the Federation of Tenants Associations in local authority A, and also with the National Tenants Organisation (NTO).
All interviews were recorded, which proved invaluable in the final analysis when clarifying and emphasising specific points. It relieved the task of taking copious notes and ensured that nothing was forgotten, highlighting the significance of voice intonation, pauses, sarcasm and irony which may otherwise not have been recalled. Although it was a time consuming procedure, the benefits outweighed the lengthy process of transcribing. Immediately after each interview any additional information was noted, such as 'off the record' comments, and similarities or stark differences that were apparent compared to previous interview data. The interview tapes were transcribed as quickly as possible after the interview had been conducted, together with the field notes in order to present / collate as comprehensive a picture as possible.

The interview data was analysed in the first instance, according to the questions asked in the quantitative survey. The data from each interview were broken down into separate paragraphs which were each coded, corresponding to questions or categories from the questionnaires. Any information which overlapped was noted and given two, or in some cases three, codes. Information which did not conform to these questionnaire categories was coded according to additional specific themes; any remaining information was coded under 'other'. Such a procedure is known as 'analytic coding' or 'unitising the data' (Denscombe, 1998: 211). The inclusion of an 'other' category ensured that all data was coded and every effort was made to avoid 'filter[ing] out the unusual, the serendipitous' (Marshall and Rossman, 1989: 113), or the minority or alternative viewpoint.

There were several instances when the interviewee asked for the tape to be turned off at points when they divulged certain information. Every effort has been made in recalling these instances faithfully.
The categories that emerged from this process were then analysed according to the general overall propositions of the research (the gendered nature of participation and the potential of tenant participation to empower) and to more specific, detailed themes. As a result, the ways in which these categories differed or linked together were explored; that is, by identifying 'the patterns and processes, commonalities and differences' (Miles and Huberman in Denscombe, 1998: 211) arising from the data. This analysis was then used to structure the findings of this research study, which can be found in the following chapters six and seven.

5.4 Limitations of research methods

Several limitations have been highlighted throughout the previous sections; however, this section considers the limitations of the methodology in more detail. Every effort was made throughout the research process to be aware of and acknowledge any potential bias arising from the researcher/researched relationship. Researcher presence at group meetings appeared to have little effect upon participant behaviour at the larger meetings where my presence was soon forgotten or ignored. However, there were a couple of occasions at smaller group meetings where I would be asked my opinion and attempts were made to involve me in discussions. Some tenants believed I could help solve certain difficulties or had information, asking if I'd spoken to a certain councillor or discovered what was happening concerning a specific issue. Expectations were sometimes high that issues that had been raised and discussed during interviews would be reported back to someone at the local authority and resolved. The difference between academic research objectives and those of policy makers is highlighted by Wenger (1987), who identifies the aim of
academic research as wanting to understand the process and the aims of policy makers as wanting to solve a problem. As discussed earlier, greater involvement in the research process and interview feedback was offered to interviewees. However, it should not be assumed that interviewees always understand the nature and constraints of academic research.

The power relationship between interviewer and interviewee varied according to the three main stakeholder groups involved in this research and also with respect to age and gender. Generally, it was the case that councillors were considerably older than me and perhaps more experienced in an interviewer/interviewee situation. As a result, it was at times difficult to keep the discussion centred on my research issues and not on their own agendas. Treatment of the research topic from several male councillors was in many instances rather patronising. My relationship with the tenants, both female and male was generally more relaxed; this was perhaps due to more regular contact and a shared interest in the subject of participation. At times, however, I was perceived as someone with the ability to achieve certain demands. Such treatment altered the power dynamics of the relationship between the research subjects and myself, as discussed above. With many of the officers, a relatively 'equal' relationship developed and there was a sharing of information between interviewer and interviewees. In most cases, it was the officers who were my first contact within the local authorities and, without their support in identifying tenant groups, conducting the research may have proved more difficult. However, the relationship I developed with officers from local authority C was less co-operative and they appeared to be rather defensive about their tenant participatory initiatives.
Just one of the case studies had a large ethnic minority population. As a result, the views and opinions of tenants tend to express the views and opinions of mainly white tenants. Further work in this area would be necessary to consider the role of racial inequality as a barrier to equal participation. Further research could also address the concerns of tenants not involved in any tenant participation groups. Contact with tenants not involved in participation groups was initially considered in this study, in order to identify reasons for their non-participation. However, as previously stated, the collection of this data would have been costly and time consuming and, as such, may have hindered the collection of other data which was necessary for the research focus on participation in practice.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter, then, has addressed the issues concerning feminist methodology and discussed the methodological processes used to conduct this research. Whilst this research has been conducted from a feminist methodological perspective, it argues that one 'feminist method' does not exist. The empirical data in this study were collected using a variety of different methods outlined in detail above: literature review, questionnaires, and interviews. Whilst each can be individually criticised, together they allow for a process of methodological triangulation which enables the validity of the data to be checked and, the limitations of the methodology to be addressed. The information collected from the case study research provides the empirical data from which to address the main research questions: Do female and male tenants participate differently? What is the power relationship between the main actors? Is there potential for power sharing and/or power transfer? Does tenant participation possess the potential to empower women? Can female
tenants challenge present cultural and ideological views? The next two chapters present the findings of this study in depth.
Chapter 6

The Gendered Nature of Participation

6.1 Introduction

This chapter has two main themes around which the findings of this study are analysed. The first addresses the gendered experience of council housing. Establishing differences in experience between female and male tenants informs the second theme which is concerned with the gendered nature of participation. Details from the in-depth interviews that were conducted are inter-woven with the questionnaire findings. By considering interview comments in conjunction with the questionnaire results allows for a broader, more balanced and more comprehensive picture to be presented rather than a discussion of each in isolation.

6.2 Gendered experience of local authority housing

The importance of housing to an individual was established in chapter two, where it was suggested that an individual's experience of housing often differed according to tenure, gender, age, disability, ethnicity and sexuality. From the empirical research conducted, it was found that the majority of tenant, officer and councillor respondents believed women's experience of council housing to be different from men's. There were important differences in views according to respondents' own gender. The questionnaire findings presented in Figure 6.1 show that female respondents were more likely than male respondents to believe that women experienced local authority housing differently.
Interviews with tenants, officers and councillors revealed four key themes concerning the relationship that women and men have with local authority housing: the stereotypical roles of women and men; accommodation type; support networks; and the stigma of residing in local authority housing. The first three themes explain the gender differences in experience whilst the fourth explains why gender difference was not considered relevant.

6.2.1 The role of women and men in the public and private arenas

Firstly, differences were based on stereotypical views of the role of women and men in the private sphere: 'Women look at the surroundings in which they are raising their families whereas men look to the political side of housing policy' (male tenant). Women tended to be seen as the primary homemakers spending more time in the home and surrounding environment. One councillor suggested that whilst the home,

is a kind of nest for women to feel safe, for men it's a place to come to after a hard day's work.... I mean it's the same in a way, the man likes to come home to a comfortable place but for the woman that's all she's got, the man's got work as well, so it's bound to be different isn't it? (Conservative male councillor).
When it was suggested that women worked in the house and may also have paid employment, he stated, 'Yes, of course, but the man is usually, I mean probably, the main breadwinner isn't he?'. Most officers thought that differences were 'obvious' as illustrated by the following comments: 'women are far more attached to the place they live, and as carers they spend more time there' (female officer); 'Women spend more time in the home with the children and home making and men spend less time in the home (male officer).

Differences in experience of local authority accommodation were largely perceived in terms of negative experiences for women: 'many women can't get out of it like the men, men don't spend 24 hours in it like we do and let's face it, it's not exactly luxury housing, sometimes it's depressing' (female tenant); 'A greater percentage of women are homemakers and are in the home most of the days and problems and imperfections are more noticeable to them in this instance. Council workers will often deal with women in this instance' (Liberal Democrat councillor). Discussion also centred around the fact that men had less to do with the council as the landlord as it was usually the task of the women to negotiate paying the rent, reporting repairs and so on, which it was believed, also increased dissatisfaction with their housing situation. ‘Men are less experienced with housing issues because being mainly at work the paying of rent, reporting of repairs, etc is usually left to the woman’ (male tenant); 'Men are usually the breadwinners and out at work all day and may not have to carry the shopping or amuse children as much as their wives' (Liberal Democrat councillor).

The ascription of gender specific roles in terms of the tasks undertaken in connection with the household was also found by both Stockman et al (1995) and Saunders (1990).
as discussed in chapter three. A further observation made in this research referred to an 'outside-inside' distinction, whereby men were more associated with the exterior and women with the interior of housing: 'men design, plan and build, and men put up with the difficulties. Women do not, they want them ironed out at the beginning' (female tenant) and 'As long as the houses look all right from the outside, what's inside seems irrelevant to men, I don't know why but it doesn't seem to matter as much you'd think what's inside would matter more' (female tenant). This echoes Saunders and Williams' (1988) inside/outside division of tasks where men were more likely to be involved in tasks performed on the exterior of the house whilst women performed tasks on the inside. Women, then, appear to be located in the home sphere which can be attributed to the existence of patriarchal dominance prevalent in British society, which sets women's place in the home as the 'norm' (Lister, 1997).

6.2.2 Accommodation type

The type of accommodation that one inhabits has been shown to have an effect on relationships both inside and outside the home. This is particularly germane for people residing in local authority accommodation, much of which has been described as 'poorly designed, inefficiently managed, and oppressive' (Cole and Furbey, 1994: 149). Respondents to this study highlighted differences in the type of accommodation occupied. Officers stated that of the properties within their authorities, it was women who were predominately represented as head of families and therefore occupied family accommodation, whilst men were more likely to be found inhabiting single person flats. The case of single men was also raised by tenants, who reflected that being single could
affect their chances of moving up the housing list, which as a result may affect their experience and attitude to housing.

Whilst differences between genders were emphasised, elements of the different experiences of women were also recognised. Women are not an homogenous group and being single, elderly, disabled, or from an ethnic minority can also affect one's housing experience:

...most of the single parents here are women which is harder work than for married women. Well, I suppose it depends what your husband's like doesn't it!.... I mean, I can leave the kids with Andy while I pop round to a friend's, if he's not working you know, and I know when he's coming home if he is working so I can do it then (female tenant);

I'm waiting to have my hip done ... it's difficult to go upstairs so sometimes I sleep downstairs and I keep asking for a railing outside the door but they don't do it. My daughter in law comes round with my dinner and my next-door neighbour makes me a cup of tea at four o'clock and I come here with my friend to see what's going on now. But it's hard for old people when you live on your own here, I'm glad I've got this really (female tenant).

Such comments highlight differences between women beyond their experience of housing. Being single or having a partner will not only or specifically affect one's housing experience; however, single parents in local authority accommodation are more likely to be in poverty than households with two adults and single parents in local authority accommodation are more likely to be receiving benefits than single parents in other accommodation (Social Trends, 1999).

6.2.3 Support networks

The third area identified focused on the capacity provided by gender differences and centred around the 'community feeling' found on estates: 'I would say that the women
know each other more than the men and because of the kids running in and out of all our houses and then I'll look after [name] while she goes to the shops and then she'll look after mine...' (female tenant). Research suggests that women's access to local networks are stronger than for men (see Russell, 1999); Dominelli, in her work on women and community action states,

> Women's life in the community is immersed in social relationships aimed at meeting the needs of others and mediating with state agencies on their behalf. Family life is central to these activities, so it is not surprising that women who undertake community action organise around issues such as day care facilities, housing, school closures, road widening schemes, rights to incomes and rights to jobs, which facilitate their obligations as grandmothers, mothers, wives and daughters (1990: 3).

As well as such informal support, several women in this study, had also organised together to campaign or raise money for play areas or youth clubs and consequently support networks had evolved. 'Women on the estates, mothers, single parents, they tend to have or feel more akin to the estate because they want more out of it for their kids and more out of it for themselves as young mum's or single parents and so on; where they can have a coffee morning with other parents to talk about the social problems, that sort of thing' (male officer). Another officer reflected that, 'men seldom look for a community spirit and women search for that fellowship'. That female tenants predominate on many estates was also acknowledged, 'On some of the estates there are more female tenants than male' (male officer) and that as a result many were really quite 'woman friendly' (female officer) with activities and opportunities to become involved in estate life which was considered to have a positive effect on the whole experience of residing in council accommodation.
6.2.4 Stigma

In contrast to tenant and officer respondents who in survey and interview responses believed women to experience council housing differently to men, most councillors denied any difference in experience as Figure 6.2 shows. More male councillors (53%) were of this opinion than female councillors (17%).

Figure 6.2 Is women's experience of council housing different to men's?

![Figure 6.2](image)

A common view among councillors was that individuals, and their experiences of housing in the local authority sector, did not differ according to gender: 'Whether male or female, ... I should imagine there's little difference in actually living in a council house or flat' (male councillor). Many councillors spoke on several occasions of the stigma attached to residing in council housing and it was felt that such a shared experience outweighed any differences in gender that may exist. One Conservative representative stated that, 'Council housing is council housing, whether you're a man or a woman the experience is the same.... the stigma attached is shared, is the same'. Another Conservative councillor believed the main similarity to be the stigma attached to those that resided on council estates and considered the increasing residualisation of the sector which:
has a very important effect on tenant activity. This is reflected in the fact that very high proportions of TA activists are pensioners. The middle aged skilled workers who in the past were the backbone of TA activity are not the people in the 1990s who become council tenants. Increasingly, social housing has disproportionately large numbers of young people, single parents, people on benefit and elderly. This has implications for the level of support required by TAs (male councillor).

The residualisation of local authority housing (defined and discussed in chapter two) has forced tenants into this sector where they often have to live in unpopular areas with poor access and facilities. 'Psychologically, owner occupation is seen as a mark of success' (Gilroy, 1994: 34) and conversely, living in local authority accommodation is often perceived as failure, as the tenants in Box A confirm.

Box A

I believe that they [tenants] are devalued because of the stereotypes, but there's nothing you can do is there? I blame the '80s thing – buy your own house – that's where a lot of it comes from because there must be something wrong with you if you don't own your own house. ... It's strange, I lived in my house [on the estate] for 25 years and I've been in my new house for five weeks and the house was beautifully decorated and I'd done it so that it looked really nice and pretty, etc. and this is just a house of horror! And yet, my daughter said to me the other day, she works for a solicitor, she said, 'Do you know mum, I know this sounds awful but somebody said to me, a visiting solicitor, 'where do you live?'. And she said for the first time I felt a sense of relief that I didn't have to say [name of estate], isn't that awful?'. I said, 'No, not really, because unfortunately that's the world we live in'. And a lot of people didn't know where [name of estate] was because it's small, and they'd say, 'Oh, where's that? Is it across the road from [name of another estate]? which has got an horrendous reputation and you'd say 'Yes'. So straight away you're categorised. But people live in council accommodation for all sorts of reasons, you can't generalise about anything and a lot of people in these houses are decent, hard working people who never do anything wrong but just have this terrible label put on them (female tenant).

I don't run anyone down, but many people in these houses, how shall I put it? Council houses have got a stigma, it doesn't matter where you are,
they have. My wife ran a small business from home and some people would look and say she can't be any good, etc. But both my wife and I have been professional people but due to circumstances we're here and we make the best of it and there are some very very nice people here. There are equally some who are on the rough side but deep down they're human beings and must be acknowledged as such. It is how you treat these people that matters (male tenant).

Summary

Emerging from the empirical data and the earlier literature review, then, it is evident that the home, domestic affairs and a caring role are predominantly considered the responsibility of women. The domestic sphere is considered to be primarily a female domain and, as such, the experience of local authority housing can be said to be gendered. This finding echoes the results of other research which concludes that women's experience of housing, not just council housing, is different to men's (Madigan and Munro, 1997) and that tasks in and around the house are gendered (Darke, 1994). Specific to local authority housing is the increasing number of female-headed households and the stigma that many associate with residing in the sector. That differences are considered by some to be positive and others to be negative highlights the complex relationship that many women have with the home. It can be a place of safety and relaxation where one feels supported and secure (Egerton, 1990) but it can also be a place of work and, at times, violence and abuse (Sexty, 1990).

Whilst women's disadvantage has been demonstrated by respondents, what also emerges is the supportive networks that women have established, and which (formal or informal) women depend upon. With the residualisation of the local authority sector and the
increasing number of women now in council accommodation, it is possible that such networks could grow and become increasingly important to women as a valuable method of organising. Participation in tenant groups can be seen as an extension of women's role in society and as a potentially empowering experience. The following section considers this, exploring the nature of female and male participatory involvement.

6.3 Gendered nature of participation

Based upon questionnaire and interview data, this section analyses the gendered nature of participation. It begins with an analysis of the different reasons why women and men participate, and is followed by an investigation into the composition of tenant groups and an examination of the ways in which these groups organise.

6.3.1 Stimulus for participation

Whilst the majority of tenants and councillors in this study were of the opinion that there was no gender difference in the reasons for tenant participation, officers, in contrast, believed differences did exist, as is clear from the questionnaire data presented in Figure 6.3.
Interview data showed that those who did not acknowledge gender difference in participation as pertinent, tended to believe that both men and women participated from a genuine desire to be constructive in their environment and to present a united force against the council. Gender was not considered to be a factor as any problems that were encountered on the estate were encountered by both sexes, who equally desired the resolution of problems. Tenants were perceived to act as an homogenous group who participated to improve their homes and home environment generally, 'usually to get things done around their homes and estate' (Conservative councillor). The desire for the enhancement of housing and housing conditions was considered to be gender neutral and that it was an aim towards which both sexes strove: 'Men and women are different of course, but not when we get involved with the council, not really. I mean we’re all out for the same thing aren’t we?’ (female tenant). That gender was considered to be an irrelevant factor in participation, was articulated coherently by one councillor (echoing what he had said about the gendered experience of housing) who stated that: 'Participation
is participation, whether it be by a man or a woman. They want the same thing, to improve their housing, faster repairs, etc. I don't see it as a gender issue' (Liberal Democrat councillor). Another councillor, while not wholly convinced, was aware that a greater number of women were probably involved as a consequence of their role and of the tasks that they generally performed in the domestic arena, although he commented that such a situation 'doesn't mean that men don't want these things either' (Conservative male councillor).

Whilst a minority of tenants and councillors believed women and men to participate for different reasons, it was the dominant view amongst the officers in the study. Women's and men's motivations were broadly classified into two categories:

a) Women participate out of a concern for their local environment and inhabitants; they were thought to be more concerned with the domestic arena, the condition of the estates, childcare and play provision, women's safety issues, violence and vandalism and the provision of a stimulating area in which to rear children.

b) Men regard participation as an opportunity to exercise a degree of power and consider it as an arena in which to command a certain status.

The following quotes from respondents in Box B support these views of gendered tenant participation.
Very few men are interested in tenant participation I think. Women have more of an interest because they mainly run the homes they live in and are usually the ones complaining to the TAs or the council (Labour councillor female)

Women are interested in the environment and the community and men are more interested in the administration and power, like the committee work and so on (male tenant)

Women want better facilities and more safety, etc., and with men it's a status thing for credibility (female tenant)

With women they're concerned about the estate and the children, and with men they're concerned about being in charge of it (female tenant)

One woman even suggested that the male motive was to silence women: Women tend to want their homes and neighbourhood to look good and function properly, they're more concerned with a safe environment and fair play. And men want to shut the women up as well as some concern over problem estates (female tenant)

Men always want to be in control of whatever's going on, it makes them feel better, you know, I suppose they feel more respected or something (female officer)

Men seem to enjoy attending high-powered consultative meetings, it's a kind of status thing (male officer).

An opinion was also expressed that men, once they are retired or become unemployed, had a desire to replace that activity and often saw participation as a route to achieving that (see Hood and Woods, 1994): ‘Quite simply, there are a lot of men here who are out of work and I think find a sort of purpose in their participation (female officer). Such comments were not suggesting that men were unsympathetic to the causes of tenants but, on the whole, it was felt that their involvement was driven by a need 'to be in charge' and to
experience an element of power. Whilst men express a need to replace their employment activities by participation, they do not appear to have a similar compulsion to take on more domestic activity within the home (Jowell et al., 1998). This may emphasise the argument that participatory action for men is about seeking some control and not simply about time use or involvement in a new domestic interest.

A widespread perception amongst respondents was that women's participation was 'more genuine' and of a less selfish nature, and women were believed to have a greater interest in the social aspect, and in working collectively as a team. Men, on the other hand, were considered to be far more self-oriented than women and participating from a 'much more selfish and self-centred position' whilst 'women do what's best for them and their children, they are less selfish than men, although is selfishness to a degree in both cases. What I'm trying to say is that women see the wider picture which involves the estate and its facilities and so on' (male officer). This is reiterated further, with women more likely to be concerned for children's welfare whilst men's primary motive was often to improve their social status (How far these views are in themselves informed by existing stereotypes could make an interesting further study:

Men, I think, are more prone to need self-respect from others and participation is a way of achieving this... Women find the time to participate as they want improvements for their child's safety or play facilities. I think men also want these things too but it's not their first thought that goes through their head, I don't know, but I think it's not quite so genuine? (Liberal Democrat councillor).

Participation was seen by some as a vehicle to get something done rather than an end in itself:

Women are more community minded as they spend more time in the community, and men, men want positions of responsibility, many are retired and seeking retirement activities or Trade Union members still in employment and following this through into community life (male officer).
An equal amount of commitment is given by both the men and women in the TAs I support. Both try very hard to better the living conditions of tenants. However, some men find it a problem to have a female officer, such as a Chair, as a power base' (male officer).

It is not that women and men ultimately participate for different reasons - both are aiming towards an improved environment in which to live. The difference is that men appear to see involvement as an opportunity to exercise power and to gain credibility, enhancing their social standing within the community. Such views were expressed directly by a minority of female tenants and, whilst men were more reluctant to subscribe to this view directly, they made several indirect confirmations: 'Involvement is good, it gets you known around the estate as a 'do-er' (male tenant) and 'Participation keeps you in touch with what's going on and you get to know people and they get to know you as someone who's trying to help and someone who the council will listen to and they come and ask you things' (male tenant).

6.3.2 Composition of tenant groups

In order to establish the composition of tenant groups, tenants were asked in the questionnaire to identify the gender make-up of their groups and to classify the leadership positions according to gender. By a breakdown in this way, it was possible to ascertain who predominated within the groups, first in terms of numbers and, second, in terms of leadership positions. Following on from this collection of basic information, several questions were designed to elicit more personal perceptions of group dynamics which were followed up in interview discussions.
From tenant responses across the survey population, the perception is that more women hold positions of leadership than men\(^2^6\) (see Figure 6.4).

**Figure 6.4 Gender of leadership positions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>N/R</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-Chair</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-Treasurer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-Secretary</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Figure 6.4 above depicts, women are perceived to predominate in almost all (the exception being Vice-Treasurer) positions\(^2^7\). One Tenant Federation worker (from local authority A) reflected, 'we must be one of the only organisations where there are a lot of women involved, you know nationally. Whether you include Trade Unions, political parties, the whole gamut, I think TAs are perhaps unique in that' (female Federation worker). In five tenant groups all the leadership positions were held by women; there were no cases where all were held by men.

\(^{26}\) Due to the absence of documentary evidence regarding leadership positions in the tenant groups surveyed, it was not possible to compare tenant perceptions with 'official' data.

\(^{27}\) Many of the groups in which the tenants are involved do not have 'vice' leadership positions, which explains the high non-response here.
Reasons for the high levels of female leadership were similar to those given for gendered participation more generally, that is, that the home and family has been constructed as predominantly a woman's place (Chapman, 1995), and was attributed to the fact that women were more concerned with events in their neighbourhood, which led to their greater involvement. Some tenants believed age to be a significant factor: 'It is mostly women in our group and older women who are the Chair and Vice Chair. They're retired, well one is and the other is say, 50 plus, and their families have grown up and they've got the time to put in' (female tenant).

6.3.3 Gendered membership

Tenants had varying opinions of how they saw their role within their group (see Figure 6.5). Whilst the majority of male respondents regarded themselves as leaders, the highest responses from female tenants were shared almost equally between leader and team member. This is interesting as from the findings presented in Figure 6.4 men were perceived to be in leadership positions to a lesser extent than women. Both female and male respondents generally saw leadership as an opportunity to 'unite the estate' and 'give people a measure of control over their own lives' (female tenant).
Of greater interest are the categories of 'agenda setter' and 'team member' (an agenda setter was defined as an individual who was often involved in the conception, planning and organising of issues). That a greater proportion of female respondents than male consider themselves to be team members may reflect their style and may be attributed to the way in which women organise. As Dominelli states, women 'have tried reducing the power that stems from having formal positions within groups by eliminating positions of power, or by sharing them, so that all women gain the skills of the job and no one holds a post long enough to form a clique bolstering individual power' (1990: 48). The role of an agenda setter could be considered to be a leadership quality, which may explain why a greater proportion of male respondents than female respondents identified with it.

Female dominance was evident when membership of tenant groups was examined: 41% of respondents from across the survey population believed that there were higher numbers of
women involved in their group, this was closely followed by the 38% who thought that the gender distribution was equal, whilst 17% thought there were more men.\footnote{Again, these figures are based on respondent perceptions; there is no official data with which to confirm them. Thus, responses are obviously reliant upon memories and personal interpretations of tenant groups which may be affected by their most recent experience and/or attendance of a group meeting. However, from the observation of tenant meetings, female presence was noted as high in most cases.}

Figure 6.6 Gender composition of tenant groups

Whilst the difference between female and male responses to this question is negligible, when responses are analysed according to individual local authority, clear differences are apparent (see Figure 6.7).
Respondents from local authority B believe that there are more women involved in tenant association activities than men; local authority A respondents are more divided between 'more women' and 'about the same', whilst the majority in local authority C believe the gender make-up of their groups to be equal. Local authority D responses clearly perceive their groups to be male dominated and, in interview, one officer explained that the men involved in this area are particularly strong characters: 'the thing is that they're not scared of us or the members, they're usually ready for a fight even when we're all in agreement! That's not to say that the women can't be aggressive and as demanding, but I'd say the men have the edge if I had to' (male officer). There appear to be no other relevant differences between the local authorities in this study and thus, the main point here would appear to be merely that different places have different clusters of personalities.

The character and individual personalities of tenant activists was raised by several respondents as fundamental to participation. Many believed that without a strong leader who 'keeps everyone going' (female tenant) and 'inspires people to get involved and be a
part of what is going on' (male tenant), groups would function less efficiently or would fold altogether. As a result of women maintaining the leadership positions in tenant groups and with an increasing number of women entering the local authority sector, a focus on the ways in which women organise may lead to positive developments beyond the tenant arena; that is, others may adopt their ways of organising and structuring as they are recognised as successful. As Edwards states in her discussion of 'power over' as male and 'power with' as female: 'if the majority of men and male dominated institutions do operate in a power-over way, then they are capable of changing to operate in a power with way when it is demonstrated that this is desirable' (1995: 86). Previous research on participation has suggested that a particular issue around which there is a strong emotion is often the catalyst for group formation and, when that issue is resolved, maintaining active interest can be difficult (Goodlad, 1991). A dedicated and determined leader can often make the difference. (The problems with retaining and recruiting members are discussed in greater detail in chapter seven). Leadership can be a huge undertaking as the leading members in Box C reveal:

Box C

As hard as I tried, if I said 'Well, this is the issue now what do we want to do, 'a' or 'b'?", people would say 'What do you think?' I'd say 'a' and 'a' would be voted in. So it did often come to the point where it was really a one-man band (sic). I found that very difficult, stressful and difficult (female tenant)

The problem was that everybody on the committee is very, very committed. If you're not committed then you can't do it and you end up giving absolutely hours and hours. I was giving more to it than I was to my job sometimes! (female tenant)

I get really frustrated sometimes as it's too much for one person because if you say organise an ordinary TA meeting, it sounds easy, but then there's Tier
one and Tier two meetings, which increase the workload. You have to be dedicated, this is the trouble with sincere activists they feel guilty if they don't attend all the meetings linked to it and you get overloaded (female tenant).

We went to meetings in the rain, snow, sleet, everything and you still get the hassles ... it can be extremely depressing but you must remember, you've got to be in it, to win in it! (female tenant).

In several tenant association groups where men predominate, not just in terms of holding the leadership positions but also as tenant members, they are aware of the bias and attempt to rectify the situation. At some Annual General Meetings (AGM) of tenant groups when elections of the management committee occur, greater gender representation, together with age and ethnic diversity, was actively encouraged. For example, at one AGM where tenants stood for election to the management committee, only one woman volunteered, so other women were encouraged to stand and not 'feel intimidated'. A suggestion was then mooted to admit the women onto the committee directly; however, this was considered unconstitutional and so it was left to the vote, with heavy emphasis that people should vote for the women. This particular tenants' association, in a predominately Asian area, had experienced difficulties recruiting women to positions of responsibility. At the meeting, the majority of women sat at the back of the room, possibly to be close to the crèche situated there. It is a fairly active tenants' association and, whilst men predominate in the elected positions, there are active women members too who 'would rather go to the tenants'
association than the council because of language problems, ease and friendliness' (female tenant).

Summary

All tenants involved in this study are from tenant groups that are fairly well established, having been in operation from five years to over 30 years. Women in this study have played a large role in initiating tenant action and the majority of the leadership positions have been retained by women. This is in contrast to Hood and Woods' observation that 'in a tenants' group ... a man is more often seen as the spokesperson and especially the Chair (1994: 72). Hood and Woods also argue that the more a group is involved in decision-making processes, the more likely the spokesperson is to be male. Whilst the results from this research have not found the opposite to be true - male headed groups in this study are still involved in decision making structures - a female spokesperson does not appear to lessen this involvement. It can be argued that other criteria also come into play such as the character, personality and charisma of a group leader, which is more likely to determine their position as a spokesperson, beyond their gender. However, that is not to discount gender; it can be argued that gender is important because women dominate, rather than being marginalised, in leadership positions. Tenant activity is concerned with issues in the private sphere and carried out largely within the domestic or neighbourhood arena. As evidence from this research has shown, respondents strongly identified women's place as

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20 Tenants' associations may be seen as a particular route of empowerment for women without English as a first language, as well as a user-friendly conduit for service delivery. Ethnicity, gender and tenant participation could be a useful further area of research, which this study did not have the opportunity to fully develop.
the home sphere; it is perhaps unsurprising then, that women should dominate in tenant
groups. Female involvement is discussed in greater detail in the following section.

6.3.4 Organisation of tenant groups

This section seeks to illuminate further the question of gendered participation by
identifying, first, how tenants' groups in this study are structured, and second, by
exploring female and male input in the initial formation and ongoing activities of the
groups.

6.3.4.1 Group structure

One of the criticisms often made about tenant groups is that they are either too formally
or too informally structured (Smith, 1992). For example, meetings can be too formal if
they are run 'as though they were "normal" council committee meetings, subject to the
usual procedural rules but, worse still, with discussion based on lengthy officer reports
in bureaucratic jargon' (ibid.:12). Conversely, problems of informality can arise from the
belief that 'because these are "community" meetings … they require no structure, no
papers and no servicing beyond posting notices of date, time and place' (ibid.:12).

There are also debates in the literature which argue that women and men organise
differently, as was discussed in chapter three (Ianello, 1993; Lovenduski and Randall,

Respondents were asked whether they thought their groups were organised formally or
informally. The questionnaire data presented in Figure 6.8 below shows tenant views on
the structure of their groups.
From Figure 6.8, it can be seen that men in this study perceive a more formal organisational structure, whilst women appear to be more evenly divided. The questionnaire also asked tenants how they would prefer their group to be organised and the majority, representing more than three-quarters (76%) of respondents, preferred the structure to remain 'about the same'. The interviews revealed that those who preferred a more formal structure feared that a less formal approach would lead to the local authority not taking them so seriously. It was felt they needed a certain level of organisation and hierarchy in order to communicate with the authority. Some tenants clearly felt that organising in a more formal manner would impress upon the local authority their commitment to participation and, as one tenant clarified, 'they can work with us more easily if they know how we work and who to talk to...' (female tenant).

This highlights the reasons behind the way in which a group is organised and raises the issue of 'ownership' of groups and meetings, and who is in control. Several factors, including the organisational structure of the group may inhibit participation. For example, the location of meetings: should they be held in oak panelled committee rooms, in the local community centre or school, or in someone's home? Access is also relevant: is it too far for
people to come? What time should meetings be held? How are meetings conducted? Is an agenda circulated prior to a meeting? There are no real correct or incorrect answers and each tenant group will operate and organise differently; however, in order to limit non-participation, consultation with tenants concerning these matters is fundamental. From observation at tenant meetings, it is possible to classify the groups in this study into two main categories:

a) groups that were relatively independent of local authority input

b) and groups that were relatively dependent on local authority input.

Those in the first category usually had strong leadership and were usually found on large estates with a high degree of local tenant support. Groups in the second category, whilst they may have strong leadership, often had low membership and low turnout for meetings. As a result, these groups often relied upon local authority input and enthusiasm, which was not always considered to be a positive move by tenants:

The present Chair comes in here a lot and talks to me, and he makes these statements to me and he's being led by the nose straight towards what they [the local authority] want. ... he allows himself to be side-tracked, I mean he is the most lovely person, but he's not strong enough to challenge them and because he's not got a grip of the concept still, they're just pointing him in the direction they want him to go' (female tenant).

By developing according to local authority expectations, tenant groups may be subject to 'isomorphism', as discussed in chapter four (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991), that is, they organise their group according to local authority structures either by mimesis, coercion or normative processes (Hood, 1998), as the following remarks illustrate:
I think the tenants look at it that a councillor is in authority and see them as an authority person and what they say goes, they know best. They are not looking at it on their own side like I've done (female tenant)

We don't want to be responsible for collecting the rent, managing the money, deciding what to spend it on etc. [talking about an Estate Management Board]. The council have got people to do that, that's their job, I wouldn't want to take on a responsibility like that. That needs to be people who know about things, we don't really know about running things like that, we couldn't do that (male tenant)

One tenant claimed that housing managers and elected members were more interested in tenant participation in her group than were her fellow tenants. The local authority had asked her to become a "tenants' rep." for the council which entailed attending

... certain meetings when they bring other councils in and sort of sell them the council! We're under a private company, not actually council anymore and they asked me if I'd put a quiet word for them to these other councils in their favour. But I won't lie to them, I'll tell them exactly what I think, but there's a thing going on at the council now where they take my word, my word goes, I don't stand no messing from any of them(female tenant).

Other members in this group supported this tenant in her role with the authority, believing that such a move on the part of the authority gave credibility to their group. Indeed, the tenant group may gain from the arrangement. However, such a role for individual charismatic tenants in promoting or legitimising the local authority could also be seen as rather exploitative by the authority. The structure of a tenant group and its interaction with the local authority, then, is important in influencing the independence of a group. The following section examines the roles of women and men in the organisation and structure of their groups.
6.3.4.2 Gendered involvement explored

Previous research suggests that women play an important role in the setting up of tenant groups as founding members (Hood and Woods, 1994). The findings from this study would appear to clarify this aspect of their research as the majority of respondents across the tenant survey population believe women to have been more active than men in setting up tenant groups. As Figure 6.9 shows, however, that when these questionnaire responses are broken down by gender, the prominent role given to women is less clear:

Figure 6.9 Who was most active in setting up your tenant group?

The majority of female respondents attribute the initiation of groups to women, whilst male responses are more evenly distributed, identifying the task of setting up tenant groups with 'both' men and women, and solely 'men'. Such a response may be explained by the fact that tenants who responded to this survey were predominantly tenants who held leadership positions within their groups and who often had been an original founding member. However, interviews revealed that many officers felt that women played a large role in tenant activity; the research also identified several groups which had initially been
set up by men had become inactive, or dormant, for months and even years, before they were re-started - often by women. As a male officer explained:

I know that going back eight, nine, maybe ten years, that prior to that stage it was a male dominated environment, but because there are more women on the estates, they can have a coffee morning to talk about problems, that sort of thing. Because of the obvious need you found that they became involved in the TA. [Name of TA] is a marked example where one lady set up a new one, that was the turning point, men couldn't get a peek in! That shows how much the movement has changed from the male dominated environment of involvement in TAs to female' (male officer).

Women's involvement was also emphasised by many tenants:

Ladies' participation in the group has been paramount. I must say they have taken on a major role. Ladies' participation has been excellent, I am one of only two men on the committee. Ladies' participation has been excellent yes, we had one dear lady who actually went back to college and she stopped the secretary role. She did a tremendous amount of work on the surveying project and too-ing and fro-ing and it was due to her efforts that brought this to fruition' (male tenant).

Four main themes emerged from the interview discussions concerning the high levels of female involvement, both in the initiation and continuing activity of groups, which are discussed under the following headings: a) stereotypical gender specific roles; b) support networks; c) the 'determined' nature of women; and d) male involvement.

a) Stereotypical gender specific roles

Interviewees overwhelmingly appeared to regard the position of women in the home as central to their role as the originators of participation initiatives. There was a strong belief that women have inherited, whether by nature or nurture, the home and domestic environment as predominately their domain and, as such, become obvious candidates to instigate participation activities. The quotes from respondents in Box D highlight this point:
It's women who are in the home every day and all day on the estate, looking after the children or granny, with no break really, well except when they go and get the shopping or something. But they talk to each other, usually moaning about the estate and things and a TA is a natural progression to try and get things done and make things better (female tenant).

Women are usually the people at home mostly and realise about the problems happening in the home. Also, things that are needed, like a playground and things for the kids, youth, old people and things on estates for everyone, how long they have to wait for repairs to be done and lots of other things (female tenant).

It is women who are the most dissatisfied with council maintenance and repairs and they are usually at home when these are carried out. Looking at this estate and looking at how many people who've been here a long time you would say that the women have always been at the forefront (female tenant).

Women see to problems in the house more than their husbands and single men (female tenant)

Being at home most of the time they tend to see and hear more about the things that are happening around them (male tenant)

Because of bad housing situations and most women are in the home and can see the need for modernisation and tenant consultation with the council (female tenant)

Women are more concerned about their homes being fit to raise families in, not the hovels some of them were (female tenant)

Tenant women are usually the economic catch-all in families and find themselves in the front line of problems (male tenant)

It is the woman, generally, who has the problems to put up with, especially where there are single parents or where there are young mothers trapped at home. They wish to see change for their children (male officer).

Women are perhaps more optimistic about what they can achieve on an estate and often identify problems sooner than men who may be at work all day (female officer)

I believe that women generally spend more time in the home than men and as such instinctively want to keep it in order and this also affects the area around where they live too. It's only natural isn't it to want to change things for a better way of living? (Independent female councillor).
It would appear then, from the responses to this study, that women are motivated to act as a consequence of their discontent with local authority accommodation and its environment. It is argued that their familiarity and experience of this accommodation qualifies women to become involved in participation activities.

Other aspects of stereotypical gender roles were also evident from the research. Whilst the identification of the domestic sphere as a female domain was the predominant view expressed to explain high membership in tenant activities, female and male interviewees were divided over who was more at ease in participating once the groups had been established.

Figure 6.10 Who is more at ease in participating?

From the questionnaire data presented in Figure 6.10 above, it is clear that female respondents were more likely to think women were more at ease, whilst male respondents were more likely to think men are more at ease. Reasons given in

30 There were a large number of non-responses to this question, particularly from male respondents, which can probably be attributed to the fact that the question did not have a third option of 'equal', from which respondents could choose. On reflection, this may have been an error in the questionnaire design, as no distinction can now be made between missing responses and 'equal' responses.
interview for this 'ease' were similar for both men and women. Most of those who considered that men were more comfortable believed this was a consequence of their familiarity with public speaking: 'Men are used to speaking in front of others'; 'Men are more accustomed to speaking out'; 'Men are less afraid to speak what is on their minds'; 'Men are not afraid to speak out'. Those who considered women to be the most relaxed thought so for similar reasons, which is interesting; indeed the last quote noted above was also made several times of women: 'Women are not afraid to state a point'.

Interviewees also referred to the fact that women were more at ease as a result of their position within the domestic sphere, which enabled them to contribute confidently and knowledgeably upon issues debated, as illustrated in the following comments:

**Box E**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women spend more time in the home so are more able to comment on things in and around the home.... they know what's going on so they can talk about it. Really they know more in the community (female tenant)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women know each other socially through their children and spending a lot of time on the estates. I also think it's more interesting to them (female tenant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women together seem more at ease and maybe some men feel intimidated (female tenant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In our group, the women hold the most leadership positions which helps us, because then they know most of the information and details because they're the Chair, or the Vice-Chair or whatever, but the men do get a look in of course and we are all in it together trying to achieve whatever the problem or cause is at the time (female tenant).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These findings, then, suggest that it is the roles ascribed to women and men in the domestic and public arenas that affect their involvement in, and experience of,
participation. Questionnaire findings concerning the contribution of women and men at meetings clarified this; that is, female respondents were more likely to think women were more vocal, whilst male respondents were more likely to think men were more vocal. Of interest here is those tenants who considered there to be no difference between women and men's contributions. So it would appear that even when women outnumbered men, the perception was that men still vocalised to an equal degree. The dominance of men was attributed, by the majority of respondents, to their assertiveness and familiarity with the public arena and was summed up by one officer as: 'speaking in front of others is something men are more used to doing' (male officer). The dominant perception across the survey population was that whilst women were able to chat informally within their networks, when it came to vocalising concerns within a more formal arena they were often inhibited. This view was elucidated by one officer, who referred to women's 'lack of experience in standing up in front of a large audience … which is pretty daunting. That's unfair to say of all and there are women, very strong women, who can be equally as loud at getting their point across with no inhibitions, but I'd still say that generally it's the men who have the edge if I had to choose' (male officer).

Some tenants admitted that certain housing managers and councillors could be patronising in their attitudes towards tenants, which made them more reticent. That is, they spoke in a certain register, or used particularly technical vocabulary which alienated individuals, as illustrated by the following comment from a female tenant: 'the Director, a horrible man, dreadful, came down here for a meeting. Wafted in a silk suit and a cloud of Armani and
proceeded to talk to the small group of tenants that we'd got here, immediately started to use big words ...'.

Officers who attributed outspokenness to women suggested that their perception may have been altered by the greater degree of contact they had with female tenants generally. Women came to them with repairs and maintenance requests and problems and thus, whilst men may have been as vocal at tenant meetings, the perception of the officers had been altered by circumstances outside of this arena. It can be argued, then, that whilst the majority of both female and male tenants involved in this study feel comfortable in the participatory arena, their confidence comes from different sources. It is thought that men do not feel inhibited because of a familiarity with public speaking and a lack of fear in articulating their views; whilst women are confident because of their familiarity and knowledge of the issues discussed.

b) Support networks

The existence and importance of support networks were recognised again (see this chapter) in the discussions concerning the high level of female involvement. Women were considered to have greater access than men to informal networks, which generally involved other women with whom they could discuss problems and difficulties. Consequently, women were seen to be in an advantageous position to organise support for the resolution of any difficulties or problems, as illustrated by the following remarks: 'Women are often more organised and tend to network locally, also they tend to be more concerned about the home' (Liberal Democrat male councillor); 'Women, particularly women who are carers and do not work, have better networks for discussing local
problems. I also think,... that there are more women in council accommodation which may account for women setting them up' (female officer); 'Women see tenant groups more as social events than men, they have coffee mornings with each other and chat about social problems, that sort of thing....they want more out of it for their kids and more out of it for themselves (female officer).

Women, then, were considered to be more active in the community in general and one tenant described them as 'the real backbone of tenant participation' (male tenant). Women were perceived as being more 'community minded', desiring change not merely for themselves but ultimately for the whole estate; such altruism was not generally ascribed to men, as the following quotations from tenants illustrate: 'Having families to bring up, they [women] are in contact more with other mothers, with shopping and school, etc., and therefore are the natural creators of community spirit' (male tenant); 'Women have the community more in mind, as men often are out at work and have less dealing with it' (female tenant); 'Women realise that a number of voices do help to achieve' (male tenant) and 'Women want a more safe, settled environment which fulfils a modern, comfortable, pleasurable way of life' (female tenant). Differences in the motivation of female and male tenants are interesting and are discussed in greater depth in chapter seven.

c) 'Women are more determined'

A further explanation accounting for women as the chief originators of participation had more to do with their being female per se and not simply as people who spent more time in the home and on the estate. Many tenants made reference to women's greater conviction and greater pursuit of issues: 'women are more determined to get things done, their
determination is stronger than men's' (female tenant): 'women are more capable and more aware ... the push and shove in men is not so great' (female tenant) and, simply, 'because they are the best workers and they can argue effectively without resorting to violence' (female tenant). One female interviewee, asked if she felt dominated in the group, replied 'No, not really, we wouldn't let them!'.

What is being articulated here is that due to the male dominance of British society, it is women who are in the home more, and participation is perceived as a natural result of wishing to improve everyday surroundings. But beyond this, there is the belief that women possess a greater ability in this area than their male counterparts. This belief is expressed despite male familiarity with the public sphere (as discussed above). This may of course be connected to the first point - that women spend more time in the domestic sphere - and so will work harder towards achieving a goal in an area that is more directly related and closer to their interests. But some interviewees were convinced of a superior female ability over the male in this sphere, for example:

It's us women who really seem to badger the council in fighting for what we want (female tenant)

We have a high level of unemployment on the estate and lots are men, so they're around on the estate all day and at home too and whilst they are willing to be involved they don't have the same drive as we women do (female tenant).

This sounds a bit sexist but women will pursue something more than what a man will, but having said that we do have a couple of men at the moment with very strong characters and will fight for what they think is right you know, but sometimes they tend to give up a bit too easy (female tenant).

Whilst the majority of female and male interviewees identified the role of women in the domestic sphere as central to their role as initiators of participation, interestingly those who
considered women to possess greater determination and greater capability were all women. Several male interviewees did not accept that men, once involved, were any less committed than women: 'We all live on this estate together and are equally working towards making it better' (male tenant); 'On our estate it was both men and women who started the association' (male tenant). However, female achievement in participation was also acknowledged, as the following comments reveal:

Many women involved have a wide knowledge of council or social housing and relevant services. This achievement has left their male counterparts way behind' (male officer).

Women are coming on very strongly now... they are no longer taking the back seat, sitting there agreeing or disagreeing. They are in fact, using this atmosphere of emancipation which has crept into social housing for women and women are finding their place in that (male officer).

I've been to TA meetings where women have literally stood up and demanded that their voices be heard because they want to change and be part of the whole situation of decision-making. At the moment there are some very strong female participants, very strong, which you never really saw before, going hell for leather for what they want (female officer).

d) Male involvement

The final theme of this discussion focuses on the involvement of men in participatory activities. Not all interviewees agreed that the level of female involvement in tenant groups was high (see Figure 6.9) and argued that men also had a high profile in tenant participation, often holding leading positions within a group (see Figure 6.4). This view was particularly prevalent amongst male elected members. One male Conservative councillor, whilst acknowledging the role that many women play in setting up groups, suggested that male leadership was a result of 'human nature' and that men were 'bound to take charge as women are soon reduced to tears'. Others based their comments on the process of socialisation rather than biology, attributing male leadership to the wider
experience of men in the arena of employment and with Trade Unions, for example. It was stated that men, 'especially men who live on council estates like to be in charge' (Liberal Democrat councillor) and they 'think they have more clout with the authorities' (Labour councillor). Such attitudes, these councillors believed, accounted for men being, 'more forceful about getting their requests and demands across than women' (Liberal Democrat councillor); 'Men like to be in control and the women may be made to feel they can't be in main positions and they may find it difficult to attend evening meetings' (Liberal Democrat councillor).

Some believed that men saw it as their role to lead; as head of the family it was considered only 'natural' that men should also head other groups. The 'natural order' and 'basic need of men' were phrases used to explain male dominance in the participation arena: 'Men become the leaders as a consequence of nature' (Conservative male councillor). Other respondents were a little less patriarchal and whilst not denying the force of the 'natural order', were less prepared to accept its permanence: 'It's human nature, the family leader progresses to the community leader. Generally, men feel stronger and sometimes wrongly they might think that they can make a better job of it' (Liberal Democrat councillor). Male councillors predominated on the Housing Committees in each case study authority, which may explain their attitude and opinions towards women in the tenant participation arena. Such attitudes also echo earlier comments regarding the stereotypical roles attributed to women and men.

An increase in male participation was predicted by several officers in this study, who suggested that an effect of rising male unemployment may be greater tenant activity by
men (see also earlier discussion in this chapter proposing unemployment as a stimulus for participation). It was argued that such a rise in male unemployment may increase the number of men willing to assume voluntary positions, at least in part to enhance their status and credibility:

I suspect that in some areas this is in fact the case and this is bringing perhaps a bit of pressure on the female leaders who now see this as, if you like, a male threat. But my concern is whether they're going to whimper away (the women I'm talking about) and allow male dominance to come back into focus or are they going to stand up and be counted, don't just fritter away, because if it just fritters away what it means is they have demonstrated the ability to accept the status quo and that would be a terrible and dangerous thing to do and reflect badly on the involvement of women in the TA' (male officer).

Just as many women value paid employment in increasing their self-esteem and access to full citizenship (see Lister, 1999), so men may feel that the loss of paid work devalues them as full citizens and may try to replace that status by becoming involved in local activities. As one female tenant noted: 'Unemployment in the area is quite high and there's one particular chap who's been involved for a few months and he's getting involved, been very helpful and come up with some good ideas. But obviously if a job comes along, he's going to go for it'.

6.4 Conclusion

The findings from this study then, suggest that women predominate in tenant groups - both in terms of leadership positions and more generally as group members. Women are more likely than men to have been founding members of their groups and to have retained these leadership positions, not relinquishing them to men. Gender difference in participation appears to be associated with stereotypical perceptions of the division of labour. Women
are ascribed to, or associated with, the domestic sphere and men to the public sphere, which influences their differing roles in the participation arena. Women are more likely to participate in order to improve the condition of their local neighbourhood and, whilst men ostensibly participate for the same improvements, they may also be interested in exercising control and power per se.

The observation that men were more self-oriented than women can be interpreted in terms of the typology of citizens developed in chapter four, which classified participant and non-participant citizens according to several common, or 'ideal types'. The active citizen was divided into two distinct 'types': the altruistic citizen and the selfish citizen. Using this 'ideal type' model, men might be characterised as the 'selfish' citizens who participate in order to further their own interests, whilst women may more readily fit the 'altruistic' category. Women may not be engaged in a conscious effort to promote democracy, but in participating, for example, to secure improvements on their estate, they act to expand the involvement of individuals in decision-making processes. Such a view can be attributed to the male dominance operating at almost every level in society (Mumm, 1992). The prevailing patriarchal ideology is so pervasive that it becomes accepted as the conventional standard (Bryson, 1992) and women's involvement in participatory activities at the neighbourhood level is seen as an extension of their role in society.

A further difference appears to be in the way in which women and men organise. Findings show that men in this study tend to perceive their groups to be more formally structured than women. Explanations for this may be two-fold: firstly, that men have a greater experience of the (generally) hierarchical nature in which places of employment are
structured, and thus they imitate this as a structure they recognise. Secondly, whilst women's experience of organisation in employment may also be of formal structures, women also tend to recognise a more informal way of organising in their support networks. Thus, it could be argued that women, in effect, are exposed to two examples of group structure from which to draw from. The perceptions of gender difference in group structure may account for the fact that male respondents consider men to be more comfortable, whilst female respondents believe that women are more at ease when participating within their tenant groups. Many respondents also described women as being more determined and as possessing a greater commitment to participatory activity.

The female support networks in place were considered fundamental to women's attraction to, and position in, tenant groups. Indeed, tenant participation was often seen as an extension of these networks; that is, a tenants' group often gave weight or impetus to a certain issue that had previously been discussed informally - it provided a more formal basis around which to organise. From further analysis of the interview and questionnaire data, the following chapter considers the attraction of joining a tenants' group in more detail. It explores the motivations behind tenant involvement in participatory activities and examines the potential for tenant participation to empower women.
Chapter 7

Participation and its Potential to Empower Female Tenants

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the potential of participation to empower female tenants in the local authority sector. It analyses the empirical data according to the 'dimensions' of empowerment established in chapter four, in order to discover whether participation empowers female tenants. Whether women are engaged in top down or bottom up initiatives, several key aspects, or dimensions of empowerment can be identified: the skills gained as a result of their participation and the extent to which these have led to activity beyond the tenant participation sphere; the benefits experienced from activities both at a community and a personal level; and their effective involvement in decision-making.

The findings are arranged in three main sections. The first section addresses the gendered motivations of tenant activity and considers how and why women and men become involved. This section provides the context within which participation is seen by tenants and the value that they attribute to it. The second section analyses the participatory experience, exploring the effects of involvement upon female and male tenants. It analyses the gendered acquisition of new skills as a result of involvement in tenant activity, and the utilisation of these skills by women and men both within tenant activity work and beyond, into the community and other areas of tenants' lives. The third section investigates the
power distribution among the actors involved in tenant participation and explores the relationship between tenants and the local authority in the decision and policy-making arena. Analysing the relationships and power dynamics that exist between the main stakeholders in this manner highlights the ways in which participation may be considered to empower female tenants.

7.2 Motivations for involvement and levels of activity

There are various motivations behind participation which can be broadly categorised into two perspectives and which were explored in chapter four: i) the official (top-down) intentions (see Arnstein’s ladder, 1969) and ii) the individual citizen’s (bottom-up) motivations. The channel through which tenants initially become involved in participation may affect their future involvement in several ways. Those who become involved over a specific issue, for example, may fade away once that issue is resolved, raising issues of commitment; those who become involved as a result of local authority publicity may be reliant upon local authority management of the group, raising issues of partnership/stakeholder equality; and those who become involved as a result of official tenant association publicity or informally, from a member of a tenant group, may have different attitudes towards working with the local authority. A male officer reflected on the various motivations for tenant activity thus:

Some tenants are more committed than others. There are those who would participate to the full to achieve the main objectives of the TA. Others would see the Association as a vehicle through which they can achieve personal pursuits. Although there isn’t anything wrong with the latter, but too often this could affect the task of the TA if tasks are not identified, defined and allocated.
There was a variety of ways in which tenants in this study first heard about tenant participation, as Figure 7.1 shows.

**Figure 7.1**  How tenants first heard about tenant participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>tenant respondents</th>
<th>publicity by TA</th>
<th>publicity by council</th>
<th>member of the TA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(n=39

Those tenants who selected the ‘other’ category included respondents who had been the founding members of a group; respondents who had been elected members on the council and thus had knowledge of tenant participation; and respondents who became involved as a consequence of events which were causing considerable problems or anxiety at the time. Female respondents were more likely to have heard about participation from tenant association publicity (29%) than male respondents (7%).

There were several reasons for tenant involvement as Table 7.1 presents below.

**Table 7.1**  Reasons for tenant involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for involvement</th>
<th>Female respondents</th>
<th>Male respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Felt strongly about an issue</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A friend asked me to join</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to be involved</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From Table 7.1 it can be seen that more than half the female, and more than half the male, respondents across the tenant survey population attributed the main motivation for tenant activity to the 'importance' of involvement. It was considered significant to be able to contribute to debates on issues that related to their homes and their home environment. One female tenant summed up this stance rather powerfully:

They've [the council] got no conception of what it means to live in a council estate or to be on the dole or have three kids under five and no money. And they make all these judgements about you and not only that, they make decisions that directly affect your life and I felt that with other tenants that it was time that people took responsibility for their own lives because that is what is lacking.

Others became involved initially as a result of campaigning around a specific issue, usually facilities for the children or improving conditions on the estate: 'There was no facilities for the children you know, so we decided to get involved and it helped us to be successful too' (female tenant). More women than men had become involved through this route whilst a more popular trigger to male involvement was being 'asked by a friend'. Such a finding lends weight to the argument that women participate in order to change a situation, whereas men do so to attain a certain status and credibility in the community, as discussed in chapter six. Some tenants saw their involvement also in terms of a 'guardian role', participating on behalf of others who were unable to do so:

I actually joined over all the vandalism and mess and stuff, but I also believe in a need to protect the elderly and others who are incapable of defending themselves, we have to stick together, it's better (female tenant).

If we didn't have our group, we wouldn't be able to do anything, we wouldn't have a leg to stand on if every time we had a problem we had to write to the council individually and not in our group. The TA is important for our status you know?... our credibility with the council. If we didn't have one we wouldn't be able to have a say in anything (male tenant).
An association carries far more weight as a body than an individual. Things get done quicker if say, it's the TA, rather than as an individual. It's an interesting point because if you speak as an individual you are an individual, if you speak as a body you carry some weight. This to me has been a good asset to have on your side (male tenant).

Such comments clearly reveal the importance to tenants of participation as a means of uniting together. A confrontational attitude among tenants was also identified by respondents, revealing an antagonistic relationship between the official figures of the local authority and tenants. Respondents believed the relationship to be an unequal one, where the local authority possessed all the power and where there was little opportunity for equal partnership:

Sometimes the officers say 'you have to let us attend otherwise we won't give you any money', but it's not true (female federation member)

They [the authority] are crap! You have to jump through hoops before they'll let you do anything, cross all the t's and dot the i's. This one woman [housing officer], she sabotaged would be a bit strong but she wasn't committed, not at all, and so that didn't work. I'm not saying that anyone in the council is expressly told, 'Let's make sure it doesn't work', but you know I think things were made pretty clear (female tenant).

In chapter four training was considered to be an essential component of tenants' participation experience. Whilst none of the tenants involved in this research had studied for the National Certificate in Tenant Participation\(^{31}\), some had been on training schemes:

They asked us questions and we said what we thought about the things and all sorts of things like that, how to deal with tenants and all the various aspects and where to go if we couldn't deal with it, etc. (female tenant)

\(^{31}\) A Chartered Institute of Housing qualification which was launched in consultation with the DoE in 1992.
Been on lots of training, for example management courses, tenants courses, counselling, all sorts. Some of them we'd like to go on though, like the benefits one in London is something like £200. Besides travel. If we're going to send anyone, we'll send [the worker] (female tenant).

However, tenants recognised the value of experience and the importance of an awareness of the issues involved if success was to be achieved. One male tenant identified three factors which he believed led to an effective Tenants' Association:

A successful TA depends on ... who is appointed to do the negotiating, it depends on facts and how much knowledge you have over and above the stuff the council can use to pull the wool over your eyes, and they try, no two ways about it, they try. And it depends on the people who are living in the area, there are people willing to participate and willing to put their ideas forward and some quite intelligent people.

Involvement in tenant groups was considered to be a valuable experience in which much could be gained, both at a personal and at a group level, as the following section explores.

7.3 Analysis of tenant experience

This section examines the effects of participation upon tenants under two main headings. The first identifies the gains that can be achieved as a result of involvement, considering the potential of participation to empower. The second, looks at tenant activity beyond the tenant participation groups.

7.3.1 Participation as empowering

The majority of tenant respondents considered their membership to be a worthwhile experience and there appeared to be three themes that emerged from these findings: first, that membership was worthwhile as an opportunity to bring together members of the
community around a central topic which affected them all: 'It is good to get together and get things done' (male tenant); 'To share ideas and problems' (female tenant); 'It's a chance for us all to act together on the estate' (female tenant) and 'Seeing the community get together is definitely worthwhile' (female tenant). Sentiments of solidarity were expressed: 'It's good finding out that others have the same grievances as yourself' (female tenant) and camaraderie, 'It's good to be part of a helping team’ (female tenant). One male tenant illustrates the importance of the Tenants' Association for many respondents:

Our TA was formed in 1985 because of inadequate and poor housing facilities. We campaigned for modernisation and were very successful and in 1987-88 modernisation started to take place and was finished in 1990. This upgraded our area and gave us more pride in our homes. People in the community started meeting more for social activities and outings etc., and not just for TA meetings. We have our own community building and youth club, bingo for tenants and residents, family nights with kids and adults meeting together, craft night meetings for our own TA. Without the TA none of this would've taken place.

Secondly, group membership was seen as an expression of citizenship and was considered to have an educating effect upon tenants who were keen to keep up-to-date with the recent developments in local housing issues: 'I feel that by joining in I have a say in issues which affect me'; 'you know what's happening in your area like community relations and social events etc.'; 'To feel a sense of being in charge of your own destiny because you know what's going on. It's not just letting the council do things to you or for you' (female tenants) and 'It gives me a sense of achievement' (male tenant); 'It is important to fight for your rights and what you're entitled to and to challenge the local authority' (male tenant). The high value that tenants place on their involvement, then, is evident and the experience of this involvement could be said to be furthering democracy. As Mill (1963) argues, it is through local participation that people 'learn' to be citizens, even leaders, within the wider, national, polity.
Thirdly, many tenants felt it personally gratifying and at times enlightening to be able to help others as a result of the knowledge they had gained through their participation; that is, many felt a personal worth and an increased self-esteem, as the following quotations illustrate:

It helps me to meet the tenants and get involved with their problems and gives me authority to liaise with council officials (male tenant).

I can now help people more effectively and I get a sense of achievement for myself in participating to get things done (female).

Being Chair of the TA has given me an insight of how other people run their lives, be they Indians, Africans, Welsh, Irish, every culture is different, so yes it is a worthwhile experience (female).

It is a very worthwhile thing to do ... and I think it's a positive thing for council estates, that's the best thing about it that you are giving power to people who, under normal circumstances, haven't got anything (female).

The implicit assumption here is that, through being involved in a tenant group and actively participating, personal gains are made in self-confidence and independence (see chapter three).

From these findings, it can be argued that tenant participation has an empowering effect in two ways: firstly through education – tenant knowledge increases as a result of tenants' participatory experiences which, in turn, results in an increase in tenant confidence. Through this learning experience, tenants gain the skills and confidence necessary to participate, that they previously lacked. Many tenants revealed how they had learnt the ways in which the local authority functioned and gained the knowledge of how, and through which avenues, the authority should be approached in order to achieve a certain outcome. In essence, through participation tenants had become more competent at recognising and dealing with the power of the authority, from identifying straightforward
coercion through to manipulation techniques (Clegg, 1989), as the following quotations illustrate:

We are quite successful and the best approach to adopt, especially with our council, is not one of bull at a gate attitude but one of a reasoning approach. In other words, 'we understand that nowadays you can't command things but do you think you could go any way towards helping?' (female tenant)

They'd [the authority] get visits from the DoE to see where the money was going and I used to show them around and then he [housing officer] and I did come to an understanding and I used to let him use me, and then the next time we had a meeting I made damn sure we got a concession that they'd been fighting (female tenant)

Tenants, then, may have realised through experience that outright antagonistic confrontation does little to advance their causes and that they may achieve a higher degree of success when they play according to the rules, which they have learned to manipulate to their advantage.

Secondly, tenant participation can be seen as personally empowering the individual; that is, through the participation experience, personal development grows. Female respondents in this study attribute their greater self-confidence and self-development to their participation. For most women this increase in independence and self-assurance can be directly related to their involvement, as the following quotations in Box F confirm:

**Box F**

At that time I wouldn't say boo to a goose.... After years of bringing up kids and being at home, I wouldn't have had the confidence to talk to you or stand up in a meeting or anything. It got me out, it got me interested in the area and I thought I'll get involved. At one point I'd never have dreamt of standing up in a meeting at the council and saying my piece, I'd have shrunk at the back and listened, but it builds your confidence up, which is good for women (female tenant).
To directly confront your landlord and challenge him and say 'No, I'm not having that...' is difficult because I think at the back of their minds they [tenants] think 'Oh my God!, it's my home and we're challenging our landlord..' but once they've done it once, they see it isn't that difficult (female tenant);

Sometimes I think they think that we're just a little group and think we won't notice if they're only pretending to listen to us but volunteer doesn't mean amateur though. We've had to deal with all sorts of high up professionals from the council and all over, and in my opinion they're not professional at all, certainly not all of them' (female tenant);

We had one woman who couldn't go anywhere without her husband's permission. He actually stopped her coming to TA meetings at one point as he thought she was getting too independent! But the roles have reversed now, she's the more dominant one which is interesting (female tenant);

I've probably definitely become stronger because of the TA involvement. Previous to that, anyone clicked their fingers, I'd do it and I thought, 'No, no more, I'm not going to bow down any more (female tenant);

There are women in TAs here who, once upon a time they were the backbenchers, not playing an active role. They came and they had their little toddler sitting on their knees, or would just peek in and were off again. That has now gone, it's a thing of the past and many many women who have been involved over the past few years will tell you how timid they were and now they can stand up and be counted. They can talk about housing, they can talk about going to meet people like the Director and other Assistant Director's and so on and the estate managers and they can say their piece without fear (male officer).

Active membership of tenant participation, then, can be defined as an empowering experience for women. Personal development gains are also emphasised by other studies concerning women's community action (see Lowndes, 1996; Dominelli, 1990; Mayo, 1977). The empirical research found that women's empowerment could be a direct result of participatory activity in tenant groups, as the following case history illustrates:
... the fact that I’ve lived on the estate and then when I moved into the house I had one daughter, then I had two more children and I became a grandmother and I still lived in there. So I had quite a lot of affiliation and stuff. We were the original tenants to move into the house and it was you know, I think that was the main thrust of why I wanted to do it. I saw so many women out there, and men but the majority are females, who were just sitting there doing nothing and more importantly the children were doing nothing because there was no stimulus for the children in the house which bothered me. I thought, you know, this could really be something good because a lot of TAs have wonderful spin-off’s from them, you know women’s groups and all sorts of things. It’s also a sense of worth quite often, belonging to something like that. Not making them get up in the morning exactly, but at least, ‘oh, it’s Monday, I’m going to the meeting’ and getting out of the house and contributing and talking about something other than the kids and what have you. My belief was that if we could get people to come in it would give them a sense that ‘yes’, they were in control of their lives and act off this (female tenant).

A minority of male interviewees also mentioned an increase in the level of their confidence as a result of participation; one male tenant commented that: ‘I used to think they [official authorities] were ‘up there’ and couldn’t be challenged but they’re not, they’re just ordinary like us’. Thus, participatory activity can be seen to contribute to enhancing community relations, increasing housing knowledge, and developing a sense of empowerment through enhancing personal worth and merit. The effects of this empowerment prompted some tenants to engage in activities outside the housing arena, which is discussed in the following section.

7.3.2 Activity beyond tenant participation

The increase in self-esteem and self-awareness, which resulted from participatory activities, enabled tenants to take advantage of the growth in personal confidence to motivate themselves in other areas, beyond the tenant participation sphere. Respondents
often saw this further activity as a direct result of the skills, abilities and confidence they had attained and acquired in tenant participation, as the following quotations illustrate:

I'm a school governor and that's through confidence I've learnt here (female tenant);

From being in the TA, I definitely became more extrovert and realised that I could do things that I thought I'd never do, that I've never done, and that really gave me an incentive to go back to school, as it were, and get some exams. I did an Access course and then did an HND at university, which I never imagined I'd ever do (female tenant).

Figure 7.2 shows respondent activity in areas beyond the tenant participation arena.

**Figure 7.2  Activity outside tenant participation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female Tenant Respondents</th>
<th>Male Tenant Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>no reply</strong></td>
<td><strong>other</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=27)</td>
<td>(n=14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>school governor</strong></td>
<td><strong>no reply</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>political party</strong></td>
<td><strong>school governor</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>neighbourhood watch</strong></td>
<td><strong>political party</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings reveal a large non-response from female respondents and suggest that the men in this study are more involved in representing other interests in the community. However, from the interviews conducted it became evident that other categories should have been included in this question as several tenants (female and male) mentioned other areas in which they were active, such as their role on management committees of community centres and youth centres and crime reduction committees:

We set up the Employment Initiative next door, which has now left us and become a limited company (female tenant)
I've been on a Crime Reduction Committee which was a Home Office bid... were successful for a year but then funding closed, so it had to cease (male tenant).

Some women raised the time consumption of these activities as preventative of involvement on further committees, or indeed standing as a councillor:

Not now, maybe years ago I'd have stood but not now. We're involved in too many other things, up at the community centre, the adventure playground, things to do with the kids, you know? (female tenant).

I'd love to but have no extra time as it is being involved in the TA, my kids are already telling me I spend too much time on it, it's so time consuming (female tenant)

Similar comments concerning time pressures were not found among the male respondents who were generally either more open to the suggestion of further commitment as something that they may do, or something that they were considering. When asked specifically about standing as an elected member, some saw it as a distinct possibility whilst others considered it better to be 'on the outside, as you can have more say as when you're on the inside you become one of them and have to conform to the majority' (male tenant). There was no mention, however, from the male interviewees about being too busy to acquire new responsibilities.

Also mentioned by some women was a sense of intimidation about being involved in arenas or groups that they were unfamiliar with or which constituted 'new territory', as illustrated by these remarks: 'I wouldn't even know how to become a councillor even if I wanted to' and 'I think I'd just feel out of place, like I shouldn't be there' (female tenants). Generally, therefore, these women seemed to limit their involvement to neighbourhood and community issues. As one female tenant explained: 'I'm involved in the children's
scheme and the neighbourhood centre, so have fingers in other pies and its rewarding when stuff works'. Women's limited involvement beyond the domestic sphere appears, in some instances, to be their choice, but it may also be influenced by the dominant ideology which exists in society which is responsible for maintaining women's interests close to the home. There is a failure to validate women's activities within the domestic and neighbourhood arena as they are outside the public sphere; that is, they are not seen as 'public' in the way that men's role on, for example, governing bodies or political parties are seen as 'public'. As a result, the private / public split is further emphasised. The recognition of 'women's' activities in the private sphere to be valued in a similar way to 'men's' activities in the public sphere, is highlighted in the discussion concerning social capital, which calls for 'a consideration of gender dynamics' to brought to the debate (see Lowndes, 2000). Men, albeit not consciously, may be instrumental in preventing women from involvement beyond this home sphere, as a result of the prevailing patriarchal ideology (Cockburn, 1991; Bryson, 1992).

An analysis of the findings from this research raises the question whether tenant participation results in 'true' or 'false' empowerment of tenants. Was the empowerment women experienced genuine, or were tenant successes a result of being incorporated or controlled by the more dominant stakeholders? If positive empowerment results, does it matter if the agenda is being controlled? In order to answer this, it is necessary to look in more detail at the relationship between the main stakeholders in this study and to determine their approaches and attitudes to tenant participation.
7.4 Stakeholder relationships and power

This section examines the power distribution among the main actors involved in tenant participation and explores the tenant/authority relationship in the decision-making arena. The ways in which participation empowers women are highlighted by the analysis of the power dynamics that exist. The section is organised in three main sub-sections. The first sub-section addresses the issue of 'true' and 'false' empowerment by identifying the presence of either a 'partnership' or a 'paternalistic' relationship between the main actors. The second sub-section considers the power dynamics which exist among the stakeholders to establish whether they facilitate tenant empowerment or reinforce tenant dependency. The final sub-section considers the relationship between participating and non-participating tenants and the effects of this upon empowerment.

7.4.1 Paternalism or partnership?

The relationship between tenants and the local authority can be complex and may vary along a continuum from a situation of outright conflict to a constructive partnership arrangement. Presented below, Figure 7.3 shows how the stakeholders in this study rated this relationship, along a continuum from 'one', representing conflict, to 'six', representing partnership. Data analysis indicated that gender was not a significant factor in determining how respondents characterised the relationship- as conflictual or one of partnership.

32 Whilst Likert Scales are a useful method for obtaining levels or degrees of opinion along a continuum, the danger is that respondents will select the middle value. This has been avoided to some extent in this study as all scales have an equal number of points making it impossible to select a middle value (Burgess, 1993).
If these findings are divided into two halves (see dotted line on Figure 7.3), it is clear that there is a greater tendency for respondents, from across the survey population, to experience a constructive partnership rather than a conflictual relationship (although most responses are grouped around the centre values). Councillors, in particular, perceived a fairly high degree of partnership, as this comment illustrates: 'Personally, I think the relationship with our tenants is rather good, I was speaking to a couple of my fellow councillors when I knew I was meeting you and they agreed with me. We meet them and listen to their recommendations and suggestions and see what we can do' (Labour male councillor).

Whilst none of the officers in this study rated the relationship a truly harmonious 'six', many thought that tenants generally understood both their own role and the role of the council, and tried to work in conjunction which, as one male officer put it: '... is, of course no easy ride and of course, not always successful but what relationship is?'. Another
female officer commented that: 'It's a good atmosphere as far as councillors and tenants are concerned. The councillors need to hear the problems from both sides as quite often it's six of one and half a dozen of the other. Although we are subject to so much scrutiny because of the monitoring process sometimes you can't do right for doing wrong or wrong for doing right!'. From Figure 7.3 it is evident that the majority of tenants also saw the relationship as rather positive:

We have a good relationship with the council and with the local MP, we tell them what we think. Same at the housing office, some we get on with, some we don't. One of our local councillors saying the other day that since we've been here he hasn't had nearly so many problems to deal with as they come here (female tenant).

Officers, in particular, considered the establishment of an effective working relationship to be fundamental: 'Working in co-operation with your landlord and not constantly against them is a two way process' (female officer). However, officers admitted that such relationships took time to build and time to maintain; insufficient time and effort, therefore, could result in a poor relationship between tenants and the local authority.

The following male tenant noted that:

They [councillors] are busy and often have meetings that clash. So can't say they're exactly ignoring us but not as quick as they might be to act, it's all a question of their priorities and ours really, I think they don't do things as quickly as they might but there are priorities.

Financial priorities were also revealed as a topic of potential conflict, as this male officer noted:

They [tenants] are always making demands and demands which are usually not too unreasonable and it seems as if we are always saying 'No' or 'Not yet' or 'Perhaps when we have some more money'. Really, it's all about money and they can't have what we haven't got the resources to do.
Several respondents highlighted the authority's paternalistic approach (see chapter three). One councillor from local authority A reflected:

I think that we, as councillors, see the relationship as less conflictual than tenants themselves, probably because they see us as the ones with the power. I'm sure tenants feel much more like they're doing battle with us to get us to agree to this or sort that out...... It's rather an old-fashioned approach and rather paternalistic them always coming to us (Liberal Democrat female councillor).

The general view amongst respondents from local authority B was that councillors in this authority were considered to be, 'very paternalistic. That's what the attitude has been with this council, paternalism. They're not interested, or haven't been, things are having to change slightly because of the importance now placed upon participation' (male officer). One female officer, also from local authority B, spoke about the promotion and high profile of participatory issues, but argued that: 'the councillors don't really seem to want to change the relationship with the tenants. Now we have to produce leaflets and newsletters etc. on participation and try to increase involvement, but don't think they take it that serious really'. This officer also confided that she had initially been a little apprehensive about working for a Conservative council but admitted that the politics 'up there' had minimal consequence 'down here'. She explained that the action at ground level was not greatly affected: 'obviously, it is there, we're not ignoring the policies, but the councillors are not involved on a day-to-day basis, it might be different if they were'.

Officer respondents from local authority D also suggested that the elected members in their authority were not particularly in favour of tenant participation, although in interview one officer stated that: 'Councillors do quite like them [tenants] and usually, actually come to the meetings which is very encouraging'. Officers in this authority explained that they
would generally advise tenants to resolve urgent problems through individual channels: 'I do think that anyone who wants something done fairly quickly, their best approach is through their councillor and it'll be done'. Such statements are hardly positive advertisements for tenant participation and demonstrate the authority of councillors in this area. Such attitudes are unsurprising when it is taken into account that it is only eight or nine years ago that councillor involvement in the allocation of local authority properties ended; councillors' attitude to tenant participation in this authority could be described as rather tokenistic (see chapter four). Whilst leaflets and newsletters may be published and circulated, little control in decision-making is divested to tenants (see O'Conghaile and Anderson, 1993). It could be argued that these councillors would agree with Schumpeter (1942) in believing they should not relinquish any decision-making powers as they were elected to make those decisions, as illustrated by the following quotation: 'They've voted us in, so should be content to let us make the decisions - that's how democracy works. If they're not happy then they can stand next time' (Independent male councillor). Thus, the relationship is not an equal partnership, but one in which tenants appear to be placed in a subordinate position.

Despite the paternalistic attitude of elected members in these authorities, councillors in local authority A and local authority C considered tenants to be fairly influential and were keen to express this: 'We, the council, always heed the tenant voice, we'd be stupid not to. It is not in our interest to ignore their grievances and their influence is evident when making our decisions' (Labour male councillor); 'we all have our own agenda on things tenants included, and what they have to say does bear upon what we do, of course. Although their influence may have come directly through housing officers' (Liberal
Democrat councillor). It may be argued that the differences between the local authorities here could be attributed to their political composition. Tenants in the Labour and Liberal Democrat led authorities of local authority A and local authority C respectively, were considered to have a greater influence with the council than was the case in the Conservative and Independent authorities: local authority B and local authority D.

Officer opinion of whether elected members are generally in favour of tenant participation would seem to confirm this, evoking a unanimous 'yes' from 100% of the officer survey population. One female officer stressed the importance of elected member involvement:

They act as tenants' representatives when they go to Housing Committee so when they understand what the needs are, what the objectives are, of tenants at this level, when they get to committee and the report comes... at least they're involved from the beginning so they are in a more commanding position to support them. So it is vital that they are involved from the beginning.

Officers also believed that genuine contact and listening to tenants was 'essential' and was recognised as a valuable activity by the majority of respondents: 'Always, always. It is important to know their problems and grievances and occasional thanks ...' (male officer). That tenants were considered to be valuable participants in housing discussions was also reflected in officers' conviction that is was 'always' worthwhile to listen to tenants who 'often have valid points ... and they should listen to them more. I think generally they do listen to them and take on board their suggestions and comments'.

From an analysis of the survey results, then, there was no significant difference between female and male respondents in their perception of the tenant/authority relationship. Data from the interviews confirmed this. However, several of the officers interviewed
commented upon the greater competence of women on housing issues than men, which affected the relationship. The following quotation reflects officer responses on this topic:

There is one lady, which is a classic example, who's involved in tenant participation and because of the knowledge she'd developed about social housing through the tenant's movement, has decided to go to university to read for a degree in housing. This is a fact, not fiction, a fact, and there is very little we can tell her about social housing. So when she's in consultation with us we know she's not 'iffing' about, we know she has very good information and is fully aware of what is happening right across the board (male officer).

Tenant competence in the participatory arena, focusing on their ability to 'play the game', was also recognised by respondents across the survey population. Reference was made to the different methods, or 'tactics', used by tenants to achieve their objectives, such as securing the discussion of a specific topic, through to ensuring its favourable outcome. Sympathetic councillors were singled out by tenants to promote particular causes or to represent them on specific issues. The importance of tenants' 'tactics' and their personal contacts was articulated by councillors:

Tenants, really, have limited powers, really their power is whether they can get a member to be influential on their behalf as then that member can use his or her power to get others involved and call in favours and so on, you know how it goes? (Liberal Democrat councillor)

Tenants do have direct influence especially when they can persuade sympathetic councillors to become conversant with the issues they want brought up, or measures they want put in place although I think it would be true to say that, we might not have time at meetings to discuss every item on the agenda, items are carried over to subsequent meetings for debate and the tenant voice is important to us (Liberal Democrat male councillor).

The value of personal contact was emphasised by tenants: 'Mr [councillor], he's pretty good, and that one that passed away, he was on our side. One that never says anything, I've never heard her say anything ... Mrs [councillor] now she listens and [councillor], he always talks to us, you know you can always talk to him' (female tenant). Such comments
reveal examples of tenant ability to exploit their knowledge of the decision-making processes and work them to their advantage. (It should also be recognised that councillors and officers may themselves need tenants to help legitimise their decisions or to justify their policies. This is further developed in the following section\textsuperscript{33}). Through their participation, tenants have become educated into the processes and procedures of decision-making in the housing arena, enabling and empowering tenants to capitalise on this knowledge (see chapter three). However, there may be scope for greater exploitation of influence as these comments suggest: 'I believe that TAs could have more influence, if they chose to exert it (male councillor), 'Many tenants do not know enough about it [tenant participation] and what they can or could achieve. Tenant participation is good for all concerned'.

7.4.2 Reinforcing dependency or genuine empowerment?

Whilst councillor and officer opinion considered tenant influence in the decision-making arena to be fairly high, tenants themselves were less certain of the impact of their voices and believed much local authority attention to be tokenistic. 79% of female tenants and 71% of male tenants in this study were of the opinion that the council listened to them 'always' or 'nearly always'\textsuperscript{34}. From the interviews carried out, it would appear that whilst most tenants agree that the council listens, the premise is that often it is only the act of listening that they perform with little resultant action (see Lowndes \textit{et al}, 1998, for

\textsuperscript{33} See also research by Barnes \textit{et al} on community care user groups, where playing the 'user card' was seen as 'a source of legitimacy for the official managerial role which frequently spilled over into micropolitical manipulation. ...[it was seen as] a resource to be employed [by officials] in attempts to secure their own ends' (1999: 119).

\textsuperscript{34} It is interesting to point out here that tenants who belong to the same tenant groups are not necessarily in agreement over this issue.
similar findings concerning a lack of responsiveness from local authorities). Despite the survey results above, such a view was more likely to be voiced by the female than the male tenants in interview, as the quotations in Box H illustrate:

**Box H**

I think a lot of lip service is given to TAs and I think when people make a commitment to go to meetings when its pouring with rain and they'd rather be sat at home, I think its very unfortunate that 'Oh, yes, fine, yes, we've heard that, we'll make a note of that... and nothing comes of it' (female tenant)

Oh yeah, we can always get the councillors to come out and listen to us. But they usually fail to get in touch with us again to tell us what's happening, if anything. One women had all this water coming through her garden and reported it and reported it and nothing was bring done, so I phoned them and they said it wasn't very important and disagreed. It was very important to that woman and so they said they'd sort it out and they did, so I think we have a bit of power, if we shout loud enough. It does depend what it is and when too, just before an election, they're pretty good and chase things up for us (female tenant)

It's always us phoning the housing office, never the other way around and so we feel we're not getting support from them (female tenant).

In some cases, I'm on first name terms down there [at the council]. They know where they stand with me, and that helps. If I disagree with something I tell them and they listen to what I'm saying. Now if they do anything about it that's a different matter, but you can tell they are listening. For instance, I've been trying to fight now for the majority of tenants on [name] Road. They are tenants who've done their own properties up: fitted kitchens, extended bathrooms, etc. Now why is it that [the council] took into account an old house, built in 1935 and ... got it up to 1990 standards and they're paying exactly the same rent as me? And why is it that my neighbour this side of me has done nothing, I've done all that and we're still paying the same rent? You're given, say 15 points to modernise properties ...but how about five, ten, 15 points knocked off for tenants who've done their own work, because on council records a 1950's house is still 1950's standards, [even though] the tenant's brought it up to 1990s standards. The tenants feel that they're paying out twice, once to do the work and then the rent increase as well and the council listened to all this but don't answer. So we've tried to help the tenants at every aspect (female tenant).
As councillors and officers recognised, personal contacts and personalities also appeared to be relevant to tenant impressions of the council. There were certain councillors and officers with whom good relationships had been established, and it was considered 'good to have your contacts to speed things up now and again' (male tenant). However, a minority of tenants were reluctant to take credit for any successes and believed that objectives were generally achieved only when they happened to coincide with local authority objectives and, therefore, the process was followed through from 'listening' to implementation. The general feeling about the local authorities was summed up by a member of the Federation management committee from local authority A: 'If they're on your side they won't mislead you, if they're not, they can make things very difficult (male member). In local authority B, tenants felt the relationship had recently improved and that the council appeared to be 'making more of an effort'. They attributed this to central government promotion of participation yet stated, despite this realisation, that they did appear to be genuine reflecting that the authority 'always' listened and considered tenant views. Perhaps the comment made by one councillor in this authority about everything being so perfect that there was no need for tenant participation, should be taken seriously after all!

Recognition of the valuable contributions that tenants can make was expressed by one female councillor: 'In the past, I believe councils have generally not taken into consideration tenant views which has resulted in a waste of money. Now we actively encourage them and take views into consideration on major improvement areas'. However, tenant anxieties that local authority attention was at times tokenistic appears not to be misplaced:
Well, yes we listen, of course we listen to them, we have to listen because we
represent them, but to be honest, whether we actually hear what they say... there is
a difference between just listening and really hearing you know... ' (Labour male
councillor).

Being there to listen to tenants and their various gripes is one thing.... being able to
act upon them is another. The listening is part of the procedure that works at
present - they come to us and we see what we can do. That this contributes to
policy-making is rarely true (Conservative male councillor).

Sometimes you can tell by the tenants' questions that they have little idea about
how it all works. That's certainly not true in all cases and I don't want to say they're
ignorant or anything but sometimes they just don't grasp the situation and keep on
banging on about it when we've and the officers too have explained to them why
such and such can't be done (Liberal Democrat female councillor).

Responses to tenant involvement in decision-making corroborate these findings (see Figure
7.4) as the extent of tenant involvement in decision-making processes with the local
authority elicited different responses from the three stakeholder groups (Responses have
been grouped into two categories: i) very involved and involved and ii) not very
involved and not involved).
The majority of tenants believe they are 'very involved/involved'. In contrast, the division of councillor responses is almost the opposite with the majority considering that tenants are 'not involved/not very involved'; whilst officers are more evenly divided. It is possible, therefore, that tenants suffer from a false perception of involvement, as suggested by this female tenant: 'It’s hard to envisage if you’re on income support and you live in council property, there are very few decisions that you actually make for yourself, and you think you're making them but you're not because you're controlled'. When responses to tenant involvement in decision-making (Figure 7.4) were analysed according to gender, no significant gender differences could be determined. It can be argued that this confirms earlier findings: that female dominated
groups do not receive different treatment from male dominated groups when dealing with local authorities (see chapter six).

Councillors appeared to be divided between those who denied that any further participation in decision-making beyond elections was necessary (in the spirit of Schumpeter, 1942) and those who considered involvement to be fundamental to a healthy democracy (as suggested by Barber, 1984), mirroring the theoretical debate discussed in chapter three. Those who considered tenant involvement to be an advantage believed that: 'tenants would benefit from being more involved in decision-making processes, if they could see that their opinions mattered to us, we must pay more attention' (Liberal Democrat councillor); ‘More involvement can only be a good step, a positive step towards ensuring the right decisions are taken. The higher the involvement of those recipients of the outcomes of the decisions, the more...the higher the success of those decisions should be’ (Labour male councillor). Those who object to further participation questioned the legitimacy of tenant involvement:

I don't think any further involvement is necessary, it is our task to set the policies and make decisions, that's what we were elected for (Independent male councillor).

Personally speaking I'm not convinced that they make any difference to what the authority decides to do anyway. It has been known for a decision to have been made and decided upon and then, whether tenants like it or not, it has already been decided and what they say won't change it (Conservative male councillor)

We are their elected representatives, they choose us so we are involved on their behalf (Independent male councillor).

Councillors' approach to tenant participation could be described as tokenistic, reflecting the desire of those already in possession of decision-making powers to retain them (O’Conghaile and Anderson, 1993). Tenants themselves may believe they are involved, yet in reality their input holds little value and may ultimately be 'falsely' empowering.
However, it can be argued that such empowerment is still a positive experience at the individual level, as growth in personal development confirms (see discussion above).

In this study, tenant desire for involvement pivoted around the fact that decisions concern them as residents and their participation should be paramount at each level of decision-making. This appeared to be the case for both female and male respondents, as one male tenant explains: 'Why shouldn't we be privy to all the debates affecting us?'. However, a gender distinction according to the altruistic - female, and the selfish - male citizen was again evident from tenant responses (see chapter six). The male motivation behind involvement in the decision-making process was more likely to relate to exercising power and gaining credibility within the tenant community, as well as with the local authority. The female motivation tended to be less personal, with involvement in the decision-making processes often desired as a means of increasing success in specific activities and campaigns.

Officers, in this study, emphasised the importance of effective consultation between tenants and the authority. However, this appeared to be dependent upon a certain process being adhered to. Ad hoc participation was not highly regarded, but a process whereby meetings could be arranged and co-ordinated around specific issues was considered 'the way forward'. Positive steps to encourage this were visible in the Tier 1, 2 and 3 meetings in local authority A (for description of tiers, see chapter five). Observation of these meetings revealed that there was participation, but it tended to be organised by the local authority and to follow its agenda. Tier 3 meetings were more informal as there were usually fewer people involved at the most decentralised estate level. However, several of
the Tier 3 meetings also reflected the way the larger meetings operated, following the style and format set by the council. Thus, comments in interview discussion such as: 'Tenant participation helps if it's done right' and 'Participation can help to achieve effective policy-making if they [the tenants] are organised', demonstrate officer opinion that if groups desire serious consultation and involvement, they should adhere to local authority structures and guidelines and organise themselves accordingly. This is a clear example of the coercive process of isomorphism (discussed in chapter four and chapter six).

Both officers and councillors acknowledged the importance of the tenant voice, whether female or male, and most advocated the promotion of participation - 'Tenants are the ones in the houses and flats, their experiences should be what policies are made on' (female officer). However, tenants' 'voice' was rarely loud enough to result in altering many policy decisions, as these comments from councillors illustrate:

**Box I**

Really, tenants are fairly predictable, what they say and so on is things we usually know about already or we do through the officers who tell us, so we don't really make policy any differently because of them, although I suppose they tell the officers who tell us which may have the same effect I suppose (Liberal Democrat councillor)

They can't actually be that helpful in my opinion as there are so many things to be taken into consideration when making decisions and they only have their point of view understandably. It's hard for them to see the whole picture I think. I agree with participation and think it's a good thing but to satisfy them we'd need unlimited funds to play with! (Independent female councillor)

Listening to tenants can be positive for policy-making but, the problem is that the ideal policy that all parties might agree on is the ideal policy more often than not can't be implemented because of money. So much is down to finance and allocation of funds to certain projects, you know? …..Whilst tenants'
comments can be effective, they can also become angry or disillusioned when a discussion leads nowhere. I can understand that anger, I can understand how annoying that is and it looks sometimes like, and I suppose it is a bit, it looks like we're just stringing them along to be involved (Labour male councillor).

Tenant involvement was also considered valuable at another level: 'Having tenants involved in policies which will affect them means they can be made and implemented more easily, although sometimes, such involvement at times can slow up certain processes' (Liberal Democrat councillor). One Conservative councillor, who believed in the efficacy of participation in policy making, qualified his answer rather candidly:

Of course, we could probably make decisions more quickly without their [tenants] input but nine times out of ten we'd probably have to re-think as that policy had failed - so yes, it's worthwhile to get their points of view. Also, having them on board not only increases the chances of policies working, but if they do fail, is then not just us that is responsible, ultimately yes, but psychologically because they've been involved they can't blame us so much.

In the light of such comments, is this genuine participation or is it chiefly participation as incorporation? That is, is tenant input effective or does tenants' involvement merely enable the rubber-stamping, and legitimisation, of policies? Both 'real' and 'false' participation may be valid participation, and both depend upon stakeholder interest. However, whether 'real' or 'false', both place a responsibility upon tenants for the outcome of implementing certain policies.

One Conservative male councillor discerned problems with the actual logistics of greater involvement,

It would no doubt mean a great deal more work in terms of meetings, etc., I mean a great deal, and there is little spare time as it is. I do think more involvement would be of benefit but not at the expense of more meetings, which could prove counterproductive in the end.
Other interviewees were more concerned about the representativeness of tenants who negotiated with the authority, anxious that they should represent tenants as a whole and not some minority group: 'More involvement should be promoted and greater collaboration in making decisions is no doubt very positive, there is a worry however, that we will end up dealing with a small faction of tenants and not the whole body' (Labour male councillor).

Officers blamed councillors for not encouraging a more participatory environment, despite officers’ efforts to promote a greater level of co-operation as beneficial to both tenants and elected members. The blame was not wholly attributed to the councillors, however, and officers mentioned the apathy that existed among tenants in many areas. (Recent research on public participation more generally within local government, also found that apathy was cited as a common concern among officers and councillors, Lowndes et al, 1998: 64.) A general proposition, shared by many officers, was that a greater effort and contribution from both sides should be striven towards and that a greater degree of involvement would be a positive measure: ‘There are plenty of examples where decisions made without the involving of tenants, has in the end, led to a waste of money’ (female officer). However, the commitment of tenants was considered fundamental and is discussed in the following section.

7.5 Commitment

There are various gendered motivations for tenant involvement in participatory activities as discussed earlier in this chapter, and whilst some groups appear to have a high level of committed members, others are less fortunate. Whilst not denying outright the value and
potential virtues of participation, some tenants in this study felt that, due to general apathy, participation in their areas was rather an individualistic affair:

Most of the work falls on me. I suppose we are active as a group but only because of me, I do the most and organise everything and everybody (female tenant);

They all come to the meetings and they sit and listen, and then I ask a question about what we should do about such and such and nobody agrees or disagrees but ask me what I think and then 'oh, yes, you're right' or whatever, agreeing with whatever I think (female tenant).

One leading female tenant had decided to leave her Tenants' Association because she felt there was a lack of appreciation for all her efforts:

You never ever get bouquets but you get plenty of bricks! That's what enraged me, I used to think well, you know, you do something for somebody and they never come and say thank you. I think that's the final thing, well, why I've decided to go and word has got round I'm leaving and people have said 'Oh, we'll really miss you' and I think well, you're telling me now but if you'd said to me at the time 'Thank you ever so much, etc.' I'd really appreciate that but you see people don't, they leave it to other people.

A female member of the management committee of the Federation of Tenants in local authority A explains the extent of the commitment that some tenants make to participatory activities and how feelings of resentment towards those who are less active can evolve:

Some of them get really frustrated sometimes if they seem to be the only ones doing anything as it's really too much for one person. Because if you, say, organise an ordinary TA meeting, it sounds easy but then there's Tier 1 and Tier 2 meetings which increase the workload. You have to be dedicated, this is the trouble with sincere activists they feel guilty if they don't attend all the meetings linked to it and you get overloaded.

The demands placed upon tenants are high and many respondents criticised the number and length of meetings they had to attend and the amount of information they were expected to digest in order to participate effectively. Active members were frustrated at the apathy of others, as the comments in Box J illustrate:
You need new blood moving in because otherwise it becomes very stale and that is a huge problem. People as a whole are very lethargic about that sort of thing, you know, 'well, what's in it for me?' is the prevalent attitude. Well, there is nothing in it for you, because myself and [tenant member] who's the vice-chair was going to two or three meetings a week, day and evening meetings, running up and down and it's all voluntary. There comes a point when you start to, you become so engrossed in it that I was putting it before my family (female tenant);

Some people just don't bother. People come here if there is some specific thing bothering them, for example, complaining about car repairs in the road, terrible neighbours, you know 'problem families' who'd wrecked the house, disgraceful, noisy neighbours etc. They will come while all that sort of thing is going on, once its resolved that's it, they're not bothered ... you get people willing to be involved in things, something which affects them directly and they'll show up. (female tenant);

The main problem is no young blood, and we're all going to get to the stage that before all that get involved, we'll be too old. There aren't any people coming up behind us, and it's more important now than perhaps a few years ago. There's so much going on, the government decrees this, that and the other, that really they need to be part of a body to fight various things, and they're not. They'll get to the point where something drastic happens and they'll all weep and wail and say, 'oh, we didn't want this' and 'what can we do?' and it'll be too late (male tenant);

It is hard to get people interested though. If they've got a problem they'll come to a TA meeting in force, but as soon as you've dealt with their problem well that's it 'till next time. It's very hard because people won't commit themselves to the time. A lot of people are convinced that we get paid for it. Someone even tried to shop me to the Social Security for undeclared earnings! (female tenant).

Many tenants recognised the difficulties in motivating people, as illustrated by this comment: 'It's very difficult to get a female who's got a couple of kids, no money, their book's not turned up on the social, all they do is watch Tele all day and the next thing they know it's six o'clock and they've not done anything. How do you motivate people like that? (female tenant).
That apathy was present amongst tenants is evident from these comments, however what also emerges is that whilst some tenants never become involved, the activity of others is merely dormant and may be awakened when confronted with a particular issue which motivates them (see also Lowndes, et al, 1998: 73 - 76). Such a situation is not unique to tenant participation but is also found in many other areas where activity is only stimulated by a selfish desire to improve one's situation. Non-participation is not only attributed to apathy (see chapter three); indeed, tenants may not feel any need to involve themselves as they are satisfied with all aspects of the local authority accommodation – the 'contented tenant'. However, a further explanation may be cynicism, as the following tenants suggest:

people not coming forward as think nothing ever gets done - so is pointless (male tenant)

there is a despondency amongst tenants, they get together to try and get things done and are continually being told now that we've not got the money to do things. So I think part of the thinking is 'well, what's the good if we can't get anything done'? (LFTA member).

They don't always seem to want our opinions but we always give our full penny's worth. We are here in their housing so we must be able to help by telling them how it is, what's good, what's bad, you know? Usually the problem is money, 'We would like to do this, but unfortunately lack of sufficient funds prevents us..blah.. blah..' I'm not saying it's not true, I know they're always having cut backs, but sometimes it makes you wonder about their priorities (male tenant).

Thus, non-participation results from tenants ('cynical citizens') who are disillusioned; that is they believe the individual has little power to alter circumstances. Whilst the empirical research found that tenant apathy, cynicism or contentment could result in non-participation, such reasons for the lack of involvement were not believed to be gender specific. However, other obstacles were identified which were perceived to impede tenant commitment which were different for female and male tenants. The most commonly cited
obstacle concerned time availability; that is, the amount of time tenants were prepared to commit to participatory activities.

There seemed to be some disagreement over who had more spare time available to devote to participation. Some interviewees observed that women were more active as they had more time to be involved: 'Younger women may have more time to spare, they tend to spend more time, maybe with kids, in their home and on the estate and are therefore more aware of the facilities and more concerned for facilities, or lack of them, in the area' (female officer). Others agreed, explaining high levels of female involvement as a result of women having more time on their hands to be active within the local neighbourhood and also attributed their activism to the 'fact' that they were 'noisier' and made a greater 'fuss' than most men (Independent male councillor), and that: 'Women have 99% more time and an urgent need to get things done' (female tenant).

However, others who believed that men had more time available for participatory activities, contradicted this:

Men have more time to attend meetings (Labour councillor)

Men have more time on their hands than women (Liberal Democrat councillor)

Men are able to attend more meetings and therefore, because they're able to go to more meetings, they're showing commitment and so voted in as chairman by the residents (Labour male councillor).

The irony here is that the reason for these conflicting views appears to be based on the same stereotype: that women have more time as they are perceived to be in the home all day with time to become involved in other activities, especially in connection with the domestic sphere; whilst men have more time than women for the same reason - that
women are in the home all day with little time for other activities after their domestic and caring chores.

Literature on the constraints prohibiting individuals to participate effectively identifies the timing and frequency of meetings held, the location of meetings, physical access and transport, and action between meetings as some of the factors which can limit participatory action (Holmes, 1993; Smith, 1992). Evening meetings are considered to be particularly unfavourable for women who may have domestic and care responsibilities or may be uncomfortable with travelling to and from meetings in the dark. However, whilst the majority of tenant groups in this study held evening meetings, female attendance was high. However, there was a general feeling amongst respondents across the survey population that attendance could have been greater and action had been (and was being) taken to achieve this. Some groups had, or were trying to attract, funding for a nursery or crèche (one group even offered to pay baby-sitter fees) and others organised transport to and from meetings.

7.6 Conclusion

The relationship between the main stakeholders in this study can be seen in several ways. The relationship can, on the one hand, be described as a partnership with actors working towards the same goal: improving the conditions of those residing in local authority accommodation. The majority of tenants considered their involvement to be worthwhile for several reasons: it provides an opportunity for working together to achieve a common aim; it offers experience and is often a learning process, which
provides new skills and abilities which are advantageous to tenants both within the tenant participation sphere and beyond.

From the empirical data analysed in this chapter, it can be argued that the motivations for involvement in participatory activities are gendered. Whilst the majority of tenants (both female and male) believe it is 'important to be involved', more women were found to participate in order to change or challenge a specific situation; and more men were found to be involved in order to enhance their social status by achieving a degree of power in the decision-making arena.

A major outcome from participation in this research has been its empowering effect upon female tenants in terms of the personal development women have experienced and in terms of its wider contribution to citizen education. The increase in self-confidence has come from developing and exercising 'patterns of reasoning, discussion and socialising' (Young, 1998: 403). Such findings would seem to support Barber's argument that citizens are made and not born (1984: xvii). Tenants, through their participation, have gained experience and an awareness of the social housing field. This increase in tenant knowledge and understanding of the processes of the system and how it operates has resulted in tenant empowerment, fulfilling the criteria set out in chapter four: Women have been found to be engaged in a high level of tenant activity, which has been initiated by both bottom up and top down initiatives; the skills that women have gained as a result of their participation have been found to empower them in other areas (although this was found to be in further domestic and neighbourhood activities, rather than in the more 'public' sphere), and the benefits experienced from activities both at a community and a personal level were found
to be high. Tenant participation also appeared to empower men involved in participatory activities. However, the actual processes of participation, the learning and 'educative' effect, and the empowerment experienced were found to be gender-specific; that is they were different for female and male tenants.

Tenants were perceived to have an influence in the decision-making arena with their views and opinions listened and acknowledged by the local authority. However, this acknowledgement was found, at times, to be superficial, owing more to tokenism or paternalism than a genuine participatory arena. The effect of this led at times to 'false' empowerment and could explain the attitudes of non-participatory tenants towards active involvement, as in the case of the 'cynical tenant'. Tenants were involved and their views appeared to be endorsed by the authority, yet in reality, the impact of tenant views upon final decision-making was limited because elected members and housing officers had little intention of widening their power base; tenant participation was often seen as a threat to their control, despite rhetorical support for wider involvement (see O’Conghaile and Anderson, 1993).

Thus, the relationship between stakeholders can also be described as antagonistic, as varying degrees of importance are placed upon tenant participation and the significance of its role in the wider social housing sphere differs. However, the power of tenants should not be underestimated here; as a consequence of the knowledge gained through their experience in the social housing field, many ‘learned’ how to achieve their desired outcomes by ‘playing the game’. The local authority may have written the rules, yet the tenants were often as adept at playing as either the officers or elected members.
From the empirical research, then, tenant participation was found to result in female empowerment through a combination of personal self-development and knowledge of the decision-making processes. Thus, tenant participation can be seen as a route towards empowerment for women in the local authority housing sector. However, the capacity of this empowerment to impact upon the wider gender inequalities in society was limited. Whilst the experience of tenant involvement and resulting empowerment led to increased female activity beyond the tenant sphere, this was generally restricted to activities carried out in the domestic or neighbourhood arena; women rarely ventured into participation in the wider public sphere (such as standing for council office). Explanations for this, *inter alia*, may range from a lack of interest, to time constraints, to the existence of the patriarchal dominant ideology in society.
Chapter 8

Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

In the first chapter of the thesis, it was stated that the main purpose of this research was to explore the role of tenant participation from a gendered perspective. The research investigates whether involvement in tenant participation has the potential to empower some of the most deprived and marginalised women in British society, and lead to greater levels of equal citizenship between women and men. It was not the purpose of this study to state how (specifically) an equal society could be constructed but, by exploring tenant participation as a route to empowerment, to analyse its potential as a means to that greater end. This has been done by locating the study within the wider context of women's continuing inequality and the unequal nature of the relationships between central government, local government and tenants' associations. It is the task of this concluding chapter then to demonstrate first, the validity of the gendered nature of tenant participation and second, to test the accuracy of the claim that tenant participation can empower women.

In chapter two, a review of housing policy established the significance attributed to owner-occupation during the period 1979-1997. It identified the effects of housing policies upon those unable to purchase their own homes. Conservative housing policies led to the residualisation of the local authority sector and, linked to this, it became a
sector in which women were increasingly predominant. It was argued that these women were oppressed as women in a male dominated society and, beyond that, as women with little option but to reside in local authority accommodation.

Arguments exploring the subordination of women in contemporary society were reviewed in chapter three. It was argued that women, in effect, have full citizenship rights denied to them because, as Phillips argues, 'the crucial building blocks of liberal democracy… are themselves male' (1991: 33). As a result, and despite policies designed to increase equality, women's subjugation persists. The distinction between formal and substantive rights was made; it was explained that the establishment of formal citizenship rights does not equate to meaningful citizenship status - that is, fair rules do not imply fair outcomes. This was explored in relation to the differing relationships women and men have with the home and the domestic sphere.

Having thus established that women in local authority accommodation are an oppressed group in society, it was argued that this disadvantaged position should be recognised, challenged and overcome. Chapter three described the role of women in participation and the potential of participation to lead to increased equality. The validity of this claim is explored in the thesis by examining how far involvement in tenant participation activities actually empowers women; that is, how far are women able to 'gain some control over their lives by taking part with others in the development of activities and structures that allow people increased involvement in matters which affect them directly' (Bystydzienski, 1992)?
This concluding chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section addresses the gendered nature of participation and reviews the differences between female and male involvement that are revealed by the research. The second section considers how the main actors in tenant participation used their influence to 'play the game' of participation. It also reflects on participation and non-participation according to the model of citizen 'ideal types', established in chapter four. The third section returns to the main proposition of this thesis, namely, that participation can be seen as a potential route to the empowerment of female tenants. It considers the success of tenant participation in empowering women both in the private and the public spheres. The concluding section highlights the main developments in tenant participation since 1997 and raises questions for a future research agenda.

8.2 Gender difference in participation

The distinction made by respondents in the empirical research about female and male participation in this study appears to be based largely on stereotypical views of the female and male roles in society. Female and male respondents tended to associate women with the domestic sphere and men with the public sphere. Despite women's increasingly active position in the labour market, caring for the home, and for children and others, was considered predominantly the responsibility of women. This gendered perception of social reality can be attributed to the dominance of the patriarchal ideology present in British society, which perceives women's role as different from and subordinate to men's (Davies, 1999; Cockburn, 1993). As a consequence of this prevailing ideology,
modern citizens soon grow accustomed to defining themselves within the categories that the state uses to regulate them and their relationships with one another. Each citizen's sense of her or himself as a unique individual comes imperceptibly, to be shaped by the methods and techniques that the state uses to shape its administration of the social body as a whole and as the social bodies within that whole (Reid Mandell and Withorn, 1993: 223).

In British society, women's place within the private sphere, then, has tended to be considered the 'norm' (Lister, 1997). By locating women in the domestic sphere, it can be argued that, through the experience and familiarity gained, women are more likely to become involved in issues that affect 'their' domain. In effect, women identify with the domestic and neighbourhood sphere, which shapes their involvement and attitude to participatory activity. As this study has shown (see particularly chapter six) the stimulus for female involvement in tenant participatory activities usually arose from a concern regarding their immediate environment, such as the recognition of the need for a play area for children or to take measures against vandalism and graffiti. This is in contrast to the male attraction to participation, which was more likely to be attributed to an opportunity to achieve a certain standing or status within the local community. Whilst the outcomes were the same - that is, both female and male participant action often led to a new play area or arrangements for speedier repair work - the reasons for their involvement can be said to be gendered.

From the research conducted, the reasons behind male participation were generally considered to be 'more selfish' than those for women. Male participants were considered to be more self-oriented in their approach to participatory action, whilst women were perceived to take a more 'holistic' approach to their involvement. Findings suggest that women were more likely than men to become involved as a result of campaigning
around a certain issue, such as faster repair services or improved play areas for children. Whilst men also became involved in such campaigns, the majority were stimulated less by a specific issue and more because they considered it 'important to be involved' per se (see chapter seven). It could be argued, then, that whilst women saw participation as a tool to achieve a certain end, men saw participation as an end in itself (although it will be argued later that women too benefit from participation in itself - through personal empowerment).

The observed gender differences can be analysed in terms of the model of citizen 'ideal types' developed in chapter four. It is with the division of the 'active' citizen into two distinct types - the altruistic citizen and the selfish citizen - that parallels can be drawn in respect of male and female tenants in the participatory arena. Within this framework, the male participant can be seen to operate more at the instrumental level and can be presented as the 'selfish' citizen; whilst at the normative level, the female participant can be characterised as the 'altruistic' citizen. The promotion and extension of democracy may not be a conscious determinant in many women's involvement, yet active participation in local issues such as estate improvements results in an increase in the individuals involved in decision-making processes. It can be argued that male involvement, in pursuing their sectional interest, also broadens the workings of democracy. However, their interests may disadvantage other groups and so perpetuate inequality.

This thesis argues that an expansion of individuals in decision-making processes can be seen as a positive factor. Empowering a greater number of citizens to articulate their
'voice' can lead to a wider understanding among citizens of the society in which they live. This understanding and experience of the political system may, in turn, precipitate greater involvement, enabling citizens to participate as 'full' or 'whole' members of the society in which they live. In effect, participation can be seen as a premise for increased democracy (Beetham, 1996; Barber, 1984). Through the confidence and skills learnt, citizens develop a sense of responsibility and are more able to assert power and challenge policy decisions in areas where they previously lacked influence (Pateman, 1970).

The evidence from the research conducted in this study confirms this claim for 'participation as education' (Mill, 1963, in Pateman, 1970). As a consequence of their involvement in participatory activity, tenants gained knowledge and insight into local authority decision-making processes. The benefits of tenant involvement can be seen at three distinct, yet interrelated, levels. First, involvement was valuable in augmenting tenant knowledge of housing and associated issues; many tenants felt that the information they acquired concerning their homes and environment enabled them to understand how and why certain decisions were taken in the wider policy-making arena. Second, involvement not only increased tenant knowledge of housing issues but also increased knowledge of decision-making processes. Tenants learned how to interact with the local authority, both with officers and elected members (with whom personal relationships were often established), and with fellow tenants in order to achieve a certain outcome. Third, involvement was found to enhance tenant self-confidence and independence. This was particularly found to be the case for female respondents in this study (see chapter 7) who developed a sense of empowerment through their
participatory activities and interaction with others, both in their dealings with the 'authority' figures of officers and councillors, as well as with other tenants, both female and male.

As a result of this increase in self-confidence, many tenants felt empowered to become involved in other areas of their lives, for example, as school governors or as members of community centres. From the findings, there appeared to be gender differences in the type of activity tenants were willing to become involved with outside the tenant participatory arena. Women seemed to stay close to the home or neighbourhood sphere, for example, in children's schemes and neighbourhood watch groups; whilst men were more likely to venture beyond the domestic sphere into the public arena, for example standing as local councillors, or joining political parties.

From the empirical research, the reasons articulated by female respondents for the disparity in female and male activities beyond the domestic sphere varied. Reasons ranged from women's feelings of intimidation and unfamiliarity with both the 'public' environment and the issues they may be expected to discuss, to a lack of time and even a lack of concern for further participatory commitments or responsibilities beyond the private sphere. In contrast, such inhibiting factors were not mentioned by men in this study and, indeed, several appeared to relish the opportunity for increased responsibility and enhanced status that further activity would bring (see chapter seven). In summary, whilst women acknowledged a sense of empowerment as a result of their involvement in tenant participation activities, any further participatory activity was generally limited to issues in the domestic or neighbourhood ('private') sphere. In contrast, it was found
that further male participation often went beyond the boundaries of the neighbourhood and into the more 'public' arena.

By referring to the model of citizen 'ideal types' (in chapter four), it can be argued that such a finding adds weight to the gendered division of the active citizen: men as the 'selfish' citizen and women as the 'altruistic' citizen. Parallels can also be drawn here with feminist definitions of power which distinguish between 'power-to' and 'power-over' models; that is, women tend to see power as empowerment or power-to, whereas men tend to see it as domination or power-over others (Dukes, 1993). The challenge is for women's use of power to be recognised as appropriate, and as Edwards reflects:

If the majority of men and male dominated institutions do operate in a power over way, then they are capable of changing to operate in a power with way when it is demonstrated that this is desirable (1995: 86).

One question to be asked here is: why is female tenant involvement beyond the domestic sphere limited? It is argued that participation at the domestic and neighbourhood level is more accessible to women in terms of their caring and employment commitments and as such,

represents an important form of public participation for those whose situation, resources, preferences, temperament or organisational style rules out more conventional political forms, it also frequently arises out of women's domestic and family responsibilities (Bryson, 1999: 92).

Findings from this research appear to confirm Randall's argument that, 'the under-representation of women in "formal" and over-representation in "informal" politics is the result of both constraints and choices' (Randall, 1982). In this study, women identified time, indifference, and unfamiliarity with the issues as prohibitive to wider participatory activity. As a result of these 'constraints', their choices for participation
were limited. That women 'choose' or are content to participate only at the
neighbourhood level can be challenged, given that such choices are restricted by the
prevailing ideology and patriarchal dominance of society (Davies, 1999). Bondi and
Peake (1988) believe the gendered division of participation between formal and
informal activity to be a result of 'role continuity'. That is, roles associated with women
and men in the private and public spheres persist in participation, determining the levels
of their activity. This was further evidenced by the findings in this study, which
suggested that men perceived a more formal organisational structure than women. This
may be attributed to the male experience of the workplace which tends to be structured
hierarchically and thus leads men to reproduce this as an organisational structure they
recognise. Women may also encounter a hierarchical employment structure, yet they
also recognise an alternative, more informal, style of organisation in their support
networks, which they know to be effective and which they feel comfortable operating
within.

Women in this study, then, may not 'choose' to be active in the more formal, or public,
arena of participation for the reasons outlined above, but are involved in what Yasmin
Ali (1996) has defined as 'a system of parallel politics' (cited in Bryson, 1999). This is a
system of informal networks and community activities in which women are involved
and from which political knowledge and skills are learnt. The experience and
understanding that female tenants gained from their involvement in informal and
community based tenant groups (see chapter six) can be recognised as a positive and
alternative approach to public participation. Within the social capital debate (Lowndes,
2000) there is also a growing acknowledgement of the contribution of informal
relationships to public life and democracy. It can be argued that the way in which this
'parallel' system functions may add a positive dimension to the more conventional
approach to politics. It may, potentially, lead to a more gender equal democracy through
a more equitable policy-making process. It is possible to advocate this possibility from
the findings of the research and to concur with Cooper who believes that:

Small-scale initiatives [in tenant participation] may provide the seeds of a wider
consciousness-raising process and future calls for wider participation in British
social policy-making (Cooper, 1996: 31).

However, in order for this 'wider participation' to take place it is necessary for
participants and non-participants to recognise the positive aspect of empowering
citizens to contribute to the decision-making processes. Such recognition is dependent
upon the relationships between the main stakeholders involved and upon the shifting
dynamics of power and influence between them; these issues are discussed in more
detail in the next section.

8.3 Influences on participation and non-participation

There were three main stakeholder groups involved in this research: active tenants
residing in local authority accommodation, housing officers, and elected members.
Within each stakeholder group there were those who desired more tenant participation
and those who did not. No discernible trend, allowing neat categorisations according to
the division of these three groups, could be ascertained from the data. But rather, as the
empirical research revealed, tenant participation was seen by the various actors involved
in several contexts:
• as a partnership between the local authority and the tenant group;
• as a means of compromise between the various actors involved;
• as an education for tenant activists in the ways of decision-making (Barber, 1984; Pateman, 1970);
• as a method used by the local authority to incorporate the tenant view;
• and as a mechanism of control used by the authority over tenants (see Blackman, 1995; chapter four and chapter seven of this thesis).

These perceptions of participation were not fixed and altered according to individual and group circumstances and stakeholder interaction, that is, individual (and group) interests, demands, and priorities could shift the power dynamics operating between the various groups involved, changing the context in which participation was seen at any one time.

The empirical data has shown how the different actors utilised or manipulated the power and influence available to them to 'play the game' of participation (see chapter seven); for example, tenants utilised their knowledge of the processes of decision-making to achieve their own ends. Indeed, it may be argued that female tenants played the game even before they were fully aware of the 'rules'. For example, women who are not active in any tenants' group decided they wanted a new play area for children on their estate. They discussed this in their informal networks, and either joined or founded a tenant group in order to realise this objective - thus 'playing the game' of organising according to a structure or format which they know the authority has to acknowledge as it is within
the 'rules'. It can be argued, then, that unwritten local authority 'rules' may actually structure the context for women's decisions on collective active.

Officer and councillor respondents were also aware of how the system worked and how to operate within it to control participation activity. Participatory success was often determined by the influence one actor held over another. It was also evident that whilst tenants had learnt to play the game, they had not created the rules and as such were often at a disadvantage. Furbey, Wishart and Grayson note that:

..... Structures, institutions and practices deriving from state authority and action, while they may be 'drawn upon' by tenants to produce outcomes unintended by the state, still confront tenants in the first instance with a set of rules and routine assumptions which constrain and channel the immediate development of tenant participation and training (1996: 253).

As a result, the views of the various stakeholders were not always given equal weight and the concept of stakeholder equality in participation was revealed as a myth. Thus, dominant group control and manipulative behaviour often marginalised the tenant voice and reproduced existing oppressions (see Young's analysis of oppression, 1998: 410 - my chapter three).

Shifting or 'circulating' power relationships can be found at each level of stakeholder interaction, as was suggested in the review of theoretical approaches to power (chapter four, Figure 4.2). However, within this 'circulation', the hierarchy of power from local authority to tenant activists is still much in evidence in the sphere of tenant participation (Figure 4.1). That such a hierarchy exists may be attributable to the dominant capitalist and patriarchal ideology prevalent in this society. Female tenants, then, may be said to experience disadvantage at two levels: first, as women in a male dominated society and

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second, as tenants in a marginalised sector, where wealth and resources determine power.

From the empirical research, then, it was possible to state that the degree of tenant involvement was dependent upon tenant perception of the role of participation; that is, for example, whether they considered it to be a partnership to achieve shared goals, as an education into the rudiments of decision-making processes, or as a means of local authority control. It was not possible to fit all tenants 'neatly' into the 'typology of citizen participation', outlined and discussed in chapter four. However, several general 'types' could be identified according to this framework. The gendered division of the active citizen into the selfish and the altruistic participant has already been discussed above. Whilst the inactive or 'non-participatory' tenant was not specifically targeted in this research (see chapter five), interview data was collected which elucidates the rationale of non-participation, and which can be analysed according to the framework of citizen 'ideal types'.

Apathy was the most common justification for the lack of tenant participation cited by respondents, from across the survey population (i.e. tenants, officer and councillors). Many described tenants as 'lethargic' or as individuals who could 'not be bothered' to involve themselves in any participatory activities. However, in this context respondents also mentioned the time that participation demanded, and the in-depth knowledge and understanding that was required in order to participate effectively. Thus, it can be argued that reasons for non-participation may be more complex than mere indifference (Similar conclusions have been drawn by research on local public participation more
generally, see Lowndes et al., 1998: 73-76). Certain 'constraints' may be identified which restrict tenant choice to participate. It is possible to assume that some of the reasons given by female respondents in this study for their lack of enthusiasm for participation beyond the domestic sphere, may be shared by women who do not 'choose' to participate in tenant groups. As previously established, such reasons may range from intimidation and unfamiliarity to a lack of time and the existence of a dominant patriarchal ideology. Pearl sums up this perspective rather succinctly:

Apathy is often an excuse used to explain a lack of tenant involvement. While many tenants do not wish to be involved actively in determining services, others are effectively marginalised due either to personal or domestic constraints, or because available mechanisms of participation prevent them from becoming involved' (1997: 89).

Further research may be needed, then, on how these constraints can be overcome in order to maximise tenant involvement. A further explanation behind tenant non-participation evidenced by the empirical research, is tenant cynicism. Tenants were described as 'despondent' and 'disillusioned' with participation that appeared to result in little change, confirming research findings on local participation in general (Lowndes et al., 1998). Many were frustrated at the lack of success despite considerable input. Such scepticism results in tenants who are unsympathetic to the view that direct engagement with the local authority can be productive and thus, they choose not to participate.

Cynicism, however, was not the prerogative of non-participants but was also identified among active participants. Tenants were often wary of their treatment by the authorities which was found at times to be tokenistic; that is, the authorities appeared to involve tenant groups in decision-making processes yet, in reality, permitted little 'real' input in
the participatory arena (see chapter seven). The bureaucratic paternalism which was defined in chapter four, was also revealed in the empirical research, suggesting a reluctance on the part of officers and councillors to take tenant participation seriously and extend local democracy to the neighbourhood level. It can be argued, then, that the recognition of the 'active-cynical' citizen adds a further 'ideal type' to the model of citizen participation for any future analysis.

The model of citizen 'ideal types', then, has proved a useful framework for a discussion of the differences in tenant participation. By considering participation from the perspective of the individual citizen it has been possible to identify the motivations, or lack of motivation, that inspires tenants to become involved in tenant participatory activities. It has also been possible to identify gender distinctions from the empirical research, by referring to the 'active participatory citizen' type. However, gender distinctions were less visible when reasons for non-participation were analysed. Given the findings from this research, a revised model might include more gender-specific characteristics, which could more fully explain the lack of participation according to gender. These might include, for example, citizens who lack the confidence to participate; citizens who may be intimidated; and citizens who lack the resources, such as time and money, to become involved. As with the other citizen types identified, these are 'ideal' types, but by including such types in any further analysis, a more gendered explanation of citizen non-participation could be developed. By better understanding the different motivations behind citizen participation and non-participation, it may be possible for practitioners to design and channel participatory initiatives to take account of these differences and increase citizen empowerment through participation (see the
discussion in Lowndes et al, 1998). The following section returns to the main proposition of this research and reflects upon the success of participation to empower female tenants

8.4 Empowerment through participation

From the theoretical discussion in chapter four it was established that empowerment from participation could be related to two main positions: the 'bottom-up' and the 'top-down'. From the tenant perspective these viewpoints could also be described as proactive and reactive respectively. Empowerment results from the first position as a consequence of participatory action initiated by 'powerless' citizens who demand the recognition of particular issues, forcing them onto the agenda. Empowerment occurs from the 'top-down' approach as a result of the implementation of policies, which encourage participatory activity from 'powerless' citizens, and include them in decision-making processes.

In this study examples of both perspectives can be found; that is, the empowerment of tenants results from tenant-initiated groups as well as local authority-initiated groups. However, as addressed in the previous section, whether participation is proactive or reactive, tenants do not participate in isolation and the relationship between the local authority and tenants is fundamental to the 'type' of empowerment that results. Whilst the authority may promote participation, there may be a lack of any real commitment to the transfer, or redistribution, of power in decision-making. As Boaden et al argue:
... many of the opportunities for participation, and techniques and mechanisms used, have been devised by those who provide the services - by the governors themselves, and as such this participatory framework has very much been determined by the constraints under which officials and elected representatives have operated and by the ideological perspective they bring to participation themselves (1982: 16).

It may be argued that local authorities often advocate tenant involvement in order to achieve tenant compliance and, as such, the empowerment that results may be described as 'false' (see chapter seven for examples). However, if tenants become empowered through their participatory activities it may be irrelevant - from their viewpoint - whether the authority has a hidden agenda or not.

The personal development and increased independence that female tenant respondents experienced as a direct result of their participation suggest that it was the 'taking part' that led to their empowerment, rather than whether the specific objectives of the tenant group were achieved (see chapter seven). If the function of participation is to alter the environment, there will always be winners and losers. However, if participation is also considered as development of the individual, then the individual will always 'win' by being involved. In the context of this study, then, tenants may not always be successful in their specific campaigns or negotiations with the authority, and tenant 'victories' may or may not be dependent on local authority control or incorporation of their participatory action. Despite this, it can be argued that tenants will always be 'winners' as a result of the empowerment they may experience from the act of participation itself (Barnes and Warren, 1999; Lowndes, 1996). Participation at a normative level, then, can be seen as an end in itself: the empowerment of women. Thus, the claim made for
participation by this study - that it could be seen as a potential avenue of empowerment - was confirmed from the empirical evidence.

The linked proposition - that empowerment at the tenant participation level could empower women to become involved in other areas beyond the domestic and neighbourhood sphere - has not been so clearly established by the primary research data. Female empowerment appears to be limited in two main areas. First, even when tenants are involved in activities outside the tenant group, these activities are usually restricted to the domestic arena. The main explanation for women's failure to venture beyond this sphere may be attributed to the patriarchal ideology which maintains male dominance in society, and which 'is so universal, so ubiquitous and so complete that it appears 'natural' (Bryson, 1992: 185). It is clear from the research data that the majority of tenants (female and male) subscribed to a stereotypical view of gender roles both in the public and the private sphere (chapter six and chapter seven). Women were perceived to be obvious, or 'natural', candidates for tenant participatory activities as a result of their position in the domestic arena; this tenant articulates a common view:

Women are in the home every day and all day on the estate ... they talk to each other, usually moaning about the estate and things and a TA is a natural progression to try and get things done and make things better (female tenant).

The private sphere of the home and family has been constructed as a woman's place, whilst the public sphere of employment and politics has been recognised as a man's (see chapter three). As a consequence of this dominant perspective, female participation has been inhibited beyond the domestic environment. Male dominance persists despite the existence of formal citizenship rights for all, and this has been attributed to the fact that women suffer from a lack of the 'substantive' forms of citizenship rights (Barnes, 1997: 232).
As a result of their participation in tenant activities, the empowerment of women is often restricted because their substantive rights are denied by, for example, gender, low income, dependence, stigma, and employment (Lister, 1990). This is not, however, always the case; evidence from this research suggests that a minority of women 'progressed' from their activities in the domestic and neighbourhood sphere to the 'public' sphere (see chapter seven).

The second area in which tenant participation can be said to be limited is that of participation 'fatigue'. Tenants suffering from participation fatigue may also limit empowerment. This can result from their frustration with local authority bureaucratic paternalism which exists (see chapter four) and which may prevent or restrict tenant action, and which may lead to the non-participation of previously active tenants. Such tenants can still be described as 'winners' in terms of the personal gains made in self-confidence and independence through the very process of participating. However, the benefits may be short-lived, as tenants become wary or 'cynical' of involvement (see previous discussion concerning the 'active - cynical' citizen).

The time period for this research has been 1979 to 1997. Since the end of this period there have been several new developments in the arena of tenant participation that are worth commenting upon here briefly in the light of a future research agenda.
8.5 Developments in tenant participation since 1997

When New Labour came to power in May 1997, 18 years of Conservative government ended. The principles on which New Labour was founded were different from the old left and, from the new right principles of the Conservatives; New Labour identifies a 'third way'. Anthony Giddens (1998) argues that: 'third way politics looks for a new relationship between the individual and the community, a redefinition of rights and obligations' (1998: 65). It is argued that the Labour government brought with it a change of style in the processes of policy development and 'sought to engage in a genuine debate on the future of housing policy' (Brown, 1999: 2). The emphasis on strengthening the owner-occupied sector continued, but also centred on the social housing sector, focusing on working in partnership with the stakeholders involved, including tenants, in order to determine their needs. Hilary Armstrong, Minister for Housing and Local Government states that:

... the government will ensure that social housing tenants have far greater choice and power, self-reliance and personal responsibility. Tenants will be empowered to get involved in the management of their own homes and to work in real and meaningful partnerships with their landlord (Armstrong, 1999: 129).

The main policy to be introduced by the Labour government, which will affect tenant participation, is that of Tenant Participation Compacts. Introduced from April 2000, Compacts aim to increase tenant involvement through the negotiation of local agreements, at council wide and at local neighbourhood levels, between local authorities and their tenants. The government wants Tenant Participation Compacts (TP Compacts) to:
involve tenants in both strategic and local decisions on housing issues, with the role and ambit of council-wide and local TP Compacts clearly defined and complementary to each other. TP Compacts may be based on existing structures or arrangements where, following review, these are found to be capable of truly representing tenants' views (DETR, 1999a).

The TP Compacts form a key element of the government's agenda to modernise local authorities in order to improve services.

Authorities will have to review and improve their services according to Best Value legislation (Part 1, Local Government Act, 1999) (DETR, 1999a). The Best Value regime itself requires local authorities to consult with local residents and businesses on service improvement. The Labour government has also offered Tenant Empowerment Grants (under section 16 of the Housing and Planning Act, 1986) to promote and support greater tenant involvement on estates. Such initiatives promoting tenant participation can be seen in the wider context of the encouragement of public participation in local government, *per se*. Enhanced participation has been advocated by the Labour government as part of its more general concern with the 'democratic renewal' of local government (Pratchett, 1999).

The Labour government has also concentrated on social exclusion as a principal focus of social policy. It has been recognised that social exclusion often has its origins in residualised housing; it has also been recognised that the alleviation of social exclusion problems may rest in this area. With such acknowledgement, and emphasis on the

---

35 He identifies seven 'third way values': 'equality', 'protection of the vulnerable', 'freedom as autonomy', 'no rights without responsibilities', 'no authority without democracy', 'cosmopolitan pluralism', and 'philosophic conservatism' (Giddens, 1998: 66).

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participation, consultation and empowerment of tenants in the local authority sector, the
government certainly appears to have recognised the value of tenant participation.
However, as Clapham (1999) states:

There is no vision to guide policy towards the structure and role of the public
rented sector. Without this vision the likelihood is that it will continue its drift
into decline with the physical condition of the stock and the social and economic
infrastructure of the estates deteriorating. The public sector will continue to be
seen as a ghetto for those with no choice ... (1999: 196)

Clapham suggests community based housing organisations as the solution; however,
these will only work if competing influences and power struggles between the main
stakeholders can be resolved. As Gilroy (1997) argues, 'to create real opportunities for
empowerment, those in control need the confidence and humility to manage the process'
(1997: 38). Partnership approaches, and associated training for tenants, need to
recognise tenants' needs and their position of economic and social marginality. They
must also recognise the different, and gendered, motivations of tenants to participate. In
order to facilitate tenant participation and empowerment, there is a need for further
research concerning citizen motivations and characteristics. By increasing the
knowledge base regarding marginalised citizens in society, it will be possible to focus
more closely on support needs.

Female tenants have demonstrated their ability to overcome certain obstacles by their
participation in the local authority housing arena. However, it is evident that more
support is needed not because they 'lack confidence to participate in society, but
because people's participation is undermined by, or not part of, the dominant culture or
tradition' (Croft and Beresford, 1992: 39).
A genuine partnership is called for, between tenants, councillors and housing officers, which can lead to the development of a 'participation culture'; that is, a culture which recognises the importance and validity of each participant and where participation is not just seen as a 'bolt-on extra' (Pearl, 1997: 95). There needs to be a greater balance of power between those involved, in terms of relationships between the main stakeholders and at the level of personal interactions. Once effective tenant participation is achieved, it may 'bring a better policy direction, improved services, a new imaginative way of tackling an issue and a shared commitment to change' (Wadhams, 1996: 341).

In addition, for female empowerment to transcend the tenant participation arena, the substantive obstacles, which presently limit participatory activity, need to be overcome. Women need to be recognised as 'full' and equal citizens. Activities carried out in the private sphere need to be given as much emphasis as those carried out in the public sphere and '... caring for children and others unable to look after themselves [needs to be seen] as much a civic responsibility as paid employment' (Bryson, 1999: 94). The analysis in this study of some of the most marginalised women in society has demonstrated the potential of tenant participation to empower; it also identifies the potential for a wider public participation which might bring about change in the social, economic and political structures which sustain male dominance and oppress women's substantive citizenship rights.
Appendix I

Housing Legislation 1979-86
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Act/Act Description</th>
<th>Legislative Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Housing Act</td>
<td>Introduced Right to Buy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Restricted LA use of capital receipts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Introduced Tenants' Charter which made tenants legally secure and gave them rights to information and to be consulted about housing management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Local Government Planning and Land Act</td>
<td>Introduced CCT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Changes to local government finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Social Security and Housing Benefits Act</td>
<td>Established housing benefit system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>General Election</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Housing and Buildings Control Act</td>
<td>Extended and tightened Right to Buy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Housing Defects Act</td>
<td>Obliged LAs to act in respect of sold defective council dwellings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Housing Act</td>
<td>Gave LA powers to dispose of land and housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Required LAs to provide information and consultation on matters concerning their rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Building Societies Act</td>
<td>Enabled Building Societies to own and invest in housing directly and to compete with other financial institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Housing and Planning Act</td>
<td>Increased Right to Buy discounts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitated block sales of estates to Housing Ass or private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Required LAs to consult tenants over proposals to sell their homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Required LAs to consider the establishment of tenant management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Social Security Act</td>
<td>Introduced changes to housing benefit system</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix II

Housing Legislation 1987-96
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Act/Event</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>General Election</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Landlord and Tenant Act</td>
<td>Gave tenants right to transfer ownership to Housing Ass or approved landlord. Gave tenants rights to form co-operatives to manage own housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Housing Act</td>
<td>Introduced Tenants' Choice. Introduced Housing Ass Trusts (HATs). Reduced security of tenure by strengthening landlords powers to repossess.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Local Government and Housing Act</td>
<td>New LA rent and subsidy systems. Removed tenants right to vote or be full members of Housing Committee. Required LAs to produce Annual Reports on performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>National Health Service and Community Care Act</td>
<td>New arrangements for care in community as alternative to institutional care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>General Election</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Local Government Act</td>
<td>Extended CCT to housing management. Introduced performance measurement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act</td>
<td>Introduced Right to Manage. Introduced Rent to Mortgage scheme. Enabled Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) to manage LA stock. Required tenants to be consulted on issues concerning CCT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Housing Act</td>
<td>Extended Right to Buy to tenants of RSLs. Amendments to Tenants' rights, housing benefit and homelessness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act</td>
<td>Amendments to improvement and repair grant systems.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix III

Questionnaires
# Questionnaire for members of Tenants' Associations

Please answer the questions below by ticking the box that is right for you. If you cannot answer a question, just go on to the next one. All the information will be used anonymously and you will not be identified. It will only take about five minutes to complete. Thank you for your time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>What is the name of your Tenant's Association?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q2</th>
<th>How did you hear about the Tenant's Association?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>publicity by the TA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>publicity by the council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>from a member of the TA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Please specify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q3</th>
<th>Approximately how many members does your TA have?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 or more</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q4</th>
<th>Why did you become involved in tenant participation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>because I felt strongly about one or more issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>because a friend asked me to join</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>because it is important to be involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Please specify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q5</th>
<th>Do you find your membership a worthwhile experience?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q6 How would you say your TA is structured?
- formally
- informally
- neither formal nor informal

Q7 Would you prefer it to be:
- more formal
- less formal
- about the same

Q8 How do you see the relationship between your TA and the council?
Please circle the number most applicable to your view

Conflict 1 2 3 4 5 6 Partnership

Q9 Do you think the council listens and takes into consideration your views?
- always
- nearly always
- rarely
- never

Q10 How involved is your TA in making decisions with the council?
- very involved
- involved
- not very involved
- not involved

Q11 Would you like your TA to be more or less involved?
- more involved
- less involved
- about the same

Q12 In your opinion, should tenants' representatives serve as full members of the Housing Committee?
- yes
- no

Q13 Do you find the attitudes of council officers towards your group helpful?
- always
- nearly always
- rarely
- never
Q14  Do you think your participation helps policy makers to be more effective?
always ................................................................. ☐
nearly always .......................................................... ☐
rarely ................................................................. ☐
never .................................................................. ☐

Q15  Do you personally represent your TA on any working committees or advisory committees at the council?
yes ................................................................. ☐
no .................................................................. ☐
please give details ...........................................................

Q16  Do you see your role in the tenants group as a?
leader ................................................................. ☐
team member .......................................................... ☐
participant ............................................................. ☐
agenda setter .......................................................... ☐
other ................................................................. ☐
Please specify ...........................................................

Q17  Please tick any of the following skills you have learnt as a result of being involved in a TA:
typing ................................................................. ☐
computing ............................................................. ☐
public speaking ...................................................... ☐
dealing with official authorities .................................. ☐
other ................................................................. ☐
Please specify ...........................................................

Q18  Do you think that women's experience of council housing is different from men's?
yes ................................................................. ☐
no .................................................................. ☐

Q19  In your TA are there?
more women than men .......................................................... ☐
more men than women .......................................................... ☐
about the same number of women and men .......................................................... ☐
Q20 Could you please indicate the gender of the following positions held in your TA?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-Chair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-Treasurer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-Secretary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q21 Who do you think was most active in setting up your TA?

- women
- men
- both

Q22 In your opinion, who would you say is more at ease in participating in your group?

- women
- men

Q23 Do you think that women and men participate for different reasons?

- Yes
- No

Q24 At your TA meetings who, in your opinion, speaks the most?

- women
- men
- equal

Q25 Are you a:

- school governor
- local councillor
- member of a political party
- member of a neighbourhood watch scheme
- other
- Please specify __________________________

Q26 Are you?

- female
- male
Q27  How old are you?
    under 18 .................................................................
    18-25 .................................................................
    26-35 .................................................................
    36-45 .................................................................
    46-55 .................................................................
    56-65 .................................................................
    66-70 .................................................................
    71 and older .........................................................

Q28  Are you?
    White.................................................................
    Black African ......................................................
    Black Caribbean ...................................................
    Black Other ........................................................
    Indian ...............................................................
    Pakistani ...........................................................
    Bangladeshi ........................................................
    Chinese ............................................................
    Other ............................................................... Please describe

Q29  Any other comments


Thank you very much for helping with this survey. A prepaid envelope is enclosed for you to return this questionnaire.
# Questionnaire for council officers

Please answer the questions below by ticking the box that is right for you. If you cannot answer a question, just go on to the next one. All the information will be used anonymously and you will not be identified. It will only take about five minutes to complete. Thank you for your time.

## About Tenants' Associations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>Approximately how many Tenants' Associations do you have knowledge of?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>one ..................................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>two ...............................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>three ...........................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>four ..............................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>five ..............................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>six or more ..................................................................................</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q2</th>
<th>Do you ever attend TA meetings?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>often ..............................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sometimes .................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>never .........................................................</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q3</th>
<th>Do you find it worthwhile listening to tenant's?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>always ..................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sometimes ............................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>not usually .........................................</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q4</th>
<th>How do you see the relationship between the TAs and the council? Please circle the number most applicable to your view</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q5</th>
<th>How do you think the tenants see the relationship? Please circle one number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q6</th>
<th>Do you think the council listens and takes into consideration the views of the TAs?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>always .........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nearly always ........................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rarely .....................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>never ........................................................</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q7 In your opinion, how much influence do TAs have with the council? Please circle one number

Influence  1  2  3  4  5  6  no influence

Q8 In your opinion, are elected members in favour of TAs?

yes ........................................................... no ...........................................................

Q9 In your opinion, should tenant's representatives be able to serve as full members of the Housing Committee?

yes ........................................................... no ...........................................................

Q10 Do you think that participation helps policy makers to be more effective?

always ........................................................... nearly always ........................................
rarely ........................................................... never ...........................................................

Q11 How involved are TAs in making decisions with the council?

very involved ........................................................... involved ...........................................................
not very involved ........................................................... not involved ...........................................................

Q12 Do you think they should be more or less involved?

more involved ........................................................... less involved ...........................................................
about the same ...........................................................

Q13 Do you think that women's experience of council housing is different from men's?

yes ........................................................... no ...........................................................

Q14 In the Tenant's Associations that you know about would you say that generally there are?

more women than men ........................................................... more men than women ...........................................................
about the same number of women and men ...........................................................
Q15 At the meetings you have attended, in your opinion who speaks the most?
- women
- men
- equal

Q16 Would you say that the leading positions are usually held by:
- women
- men
- about the same number of women and men

Q17 Do you think that women and men participate for different reasons?
- Yes
- No

### About you

Q18 Are you?
- female
- male

Q19 How old are you?
- under 18
- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65

Q20 Are you?
- White
- Black African
- Black Caribbean
- Black Other
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Other

Please describe
Q21  Any other comments


Thank you very much for helping with this survey. A prepaid envelope is enclosed for you to return this questionnaire
Questionnaire for councillors

Please answer the questions below by ticking the box that is right for you. If you cannot answer a question, just go on to the next one. All the information will be used anonymously and you will not be identified. It will only take you about five minutes to complete. Thank you for your time.

About Tenants Associations

Q1 Do you have any knowledge of Tenant Associations (TA)?
   yes ...........................................................................................................  
   some ........................................................................................................  
   no ................................................................. Go to end of questionnaire

Q2 Do you find it worthwhile listening to tenants?
   always ...................................................................................................  
   sometimes .............................................................................................  
   not usually ............................................................................................  

Q3 How do you see the relationship between TAs and the council?
   Please circle the number most applicable to your view
   Conflict 1 2 3 4 5 6 Partnership

Q4 How do you think the tenants see the relationship?
   Please circle one number
   Conflict 1 2 3 4 5 6 Partnership

Q5 Do you think that the council listens and takes into consideration the views of the tenants?
   always ...................................................................................................  
   nearly always ........................................................................................  
   rarely .....................................................................................................  
   never ......................................................................................................

Q6 How much influence would you say that TAs have with the council?
   Please circle one number
   Influence 1 2 3 4 5 6 no influence
Q7 In your opinion, how involved are TAs in making decisions with the council?
very involved ................................................................. [ ]
involved ........................................................................... [ ]
not very involved .............................................................. [ ]
not involved ........................................................................ [ ]

Q8 Do you think they should be more or less involved?
more involved ...................................................................... [ ]
less involved ........................................................................ [ ]
about the same .................................................................... [ ]

Q9 In your opinion, should tenant's representatives be able to serve as full members of the Housing Committee?
yes .................................................................................... [ ]
no ....................................................................................... [ ]

Q10 Do you think that participation helps policy makers to be more effective?
always ............................................................................... [ ]
nearly always ...................................................................... [ ]
rarely ................................................................................ [ ]
ever .................................................................................... [ ]

About female and male involvement

Q11 Do you think that women's experience of council housing is different from men's?
yes .................................................................................... [ ]
no ....................................................................................... [ ]

Q12 In the Tenants' Associations that you know about would you say that generally there are:
more women than men .................................................... [ ]
more men than women ...................................................... [ ]
about the same number of women and men .................... [ ]

Q13 At the meetings you have attended, in your opinion who speaks the most?
women ............................................................................... [ ]
men ................................................................................... [ ]
equal .................................................................................. [ ]

Q14 Do you think that women and men participate for different reasons?
yes .................................................................................... [ ]
no ....................................................................................... [ ]
### About yourself

**Q15** Are you?
- female
- male

**Q16** How old are you?
- under 18
- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 66-70
- 71 and above

**Q17** Are you?
- White
- Black African
- Black Caribbean
- Black Other
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Other

*Please describe*

**Q18** Which party are you a member of?
- Conservative
- Labour
- Liberal Democrat
- Independent

*Please specify*
Q19 Any other comments

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Thank you very much for helping with this survey. A prepaid envelope is enclosed for you to return this questionnaire.
Appendix IV

Questionnaire and Interview distribution
**Questionnaire distribution and Interviews conducted**

### Questionnaire distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actors</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tenants</strong></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>41</td>
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<td><strong>Officers</strong></td>
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### Interviews conducted

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<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Officers</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td><strong>Councillors</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
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Appendix V

Interview schedules
Interview Schedule

Councillors

- How is your own / councillors in general *relationship* with tenants?
  - Would you say that you / councillors value tenant opinion?
  - Do you think that you / councillors listen to tenant views?
  - How involved are tenants in making decisions?
  - How much influence do tenants have?
  - How useful is their input?

- How are the tenants groups *organised*?
  - formally, informally?
  - is there a clear leadership?
  - how are the meetings run?
  - do local authority officers or councillors dominate them?

- Do you think that women's *experience of local authority housing* is different from men's?
  - In what ways?

- Do you think women and men *participate for different* reasons?
  - What reasons do you think women might have?
  - What reasons do you think men might have?

- Do you agree with the following statement: 'It is women who usually first set up TAs'?
  - Why do you think this may be the case?
## Interview Schedule

### Officers

- How is your own / officers in general *relationship* with tenants?
  - Would you say that you / officers value tenant opinion?
  - Do you think that you / officers listen to tenant views?
  - How involved are tenants in making decisions?
  - How much influence do tenants have?
  - How useful is their input?

- How are the tenants groups *organised*?
  - formally, informally?
  - is there a clear leadership?
  - how are the meetings run?
  - do local authority officers or councillors dominate them?

- Do you think that women's *experience of local authority housing* is different from men’s?
  - In what ways?

- Do you think women and men *participate for different* reasons?
  - What reasons do you think women might have?
  - What reasons do you think men might have?

- Do you agree with the following statement: 'It is women who usually first set up TAs’?
  - Why do you think this may be the case?
Interview Schedule

Tenants

- Tell me how you *first became involved* with TP?
  - How is your tenant group organised?
  - Is there a Chair etc.?
  - How often do you meet?
  - Where? Attendance details?
  - Who set up your tenant group? Why?
  - Do you find your membership *worthwhile*?
    - Why?

- What is your *relationship* with the local authority like?
  - with the officers
  - with the councillors
  - with other tenants
  - Do they listen to you?
  - Are you involved in decision-making processes with the authority?
  - Do you think that your participation helps your local authority?

- *Is woman's experience* of council housing different from men's?
  - Why do you think this is the case?

- *Do you think women and men participate for different reasons?*
  - What reasons do you think women might have?
  - What reasons do you think men might have?
  - Who is more at ease in participating in your group?

- Do you agree with the following statement: 'It is women who usually first set up TAs?'
Appendix VI

Primary source data
Primary Source Data

i) Local Authority A

Housing Committee Meeting Minutes 1995-1998

Housing Committee Meeting Agenda 1995-1998

'A Manifesto for Housing' Association of Metropolitan Authorities and Association of District Councils, 1995

Women and the Urban Environment (Joint Report of City Planning Officer, Acting Director of Engineering Services and the Chief Executive (n.d.)

Housing Committee Policy and Resources (Equal Opportunities and Personnel) Sub-Committee Minutes

Tenant Satisfaction Survey 1995

[LAA] Council's Estate Profiles


'Facts form the Fed' - working to keep council housing

[LAA] Federation of Tenants' Associations - Consultative process

'Why Have Tenants' Associations?' (LFTA, n.d.)

Various Annual Reports from Tenants' Associations

City Housing (monthly magazine for tenants)
Housing Needs Survey
LAA website

ii) Local Authority B

Housing and Public Services Committee Minutes 1995 -1998
Housing and Public Services Committee Agenda 1995 -1998
Annual Reports to Tenants

Housing Strategy 1994 - 1995
Housing Strategy 1995 - 1996
Housing Strategy 1997 - 1998

Housing Strategy Statement 1996 - 1997, Section 9, Tenant Consultation and Participation

LAB Website

Housing and Public Services Directorate - A Guide to Staff and Services

Housing News (paper for LAB tenants)
Minutes from tenant association meetings
Annual Reports from tenants' associations

Lists of Homeless Families Re-housed

Application for Family, Single or Elderly Person's Accommodation

LAB Equal Opportunity Policy
iii) Local Authority C

Health and Housing Committee Minutes 1995 -1998
Health and Housing Committee Agenda 1995 -1998
Housing Strategy Statement 1995 - 1996
Housing Strategy Statement 1996 - 1997
Housing Strategy Statement 1997 - 1998
Tenants' Handbook
Minutes from tenant association meetings
Annual Reports from tenants' associations
Lists of Dwelling Stock
Lists of Housing Waiting Lists
LAC Equal Opportunity Policy
LAC Website

iv) Local Authority D

Community Services Committee Minutes 1995 -1998
Community Services Committee Agenda 1995 -1998
Environmental Health and Housing Sub-Committee Minutes 1995 -1998
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LAD Authority Newsletter 1994 - 1997
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Housing Strategy 1995 - 1996
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Housing Stock Condition Survey 1993
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United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against
Ireland, London: Cabinet Office

Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, London: Employment Department Group


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