Methodological Challenges in Critical Analysis of Institutional Discourses of Residential Multi-Occupancy in Melbourne

Keiken Munzner[1] and Dr. Jennifer Day[1]
[1]Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, The University of Melbourne

Abstract: This paper provides a review of key methodological concerns that arise in a study of discourses of housing policy relating to residential multi-occupancy in Melbourne. In the context of marked population growth and an escalating housing affordability crisis, household configurations that fall outside of the 'mainstream' model of one nuclear family per dwelling are increasingly common. Among these, 'multi-occupancy' or 'multi-family households' (MFHs) are the focus of this review. Despite increasing attention paid to these tenure types in public discourses, MFHs remain generally regarded as marginal and/or undesirable against 'mainstream' forms of tenure within Australian society.   Further, while literature on multi-occupancy in Australia most often examines household-dwelling relationships from sociological or needs-based perspectives, less attention is paid to how attitudes and truths about these households are constructed and shaped, chiefly by the institutions of property.   This paper reports on in-progress work that critically analyses how multi-occupancy household-dwelling relationships are constituted in property discourses, including whether and how these discourses reflect or even incite binaries of 'mainstream' and 'other' living configurations. In this paper, a preliminary output, we focus on the methodological challenges faced in the scoping, codifying and interpreting of these discourses, and draw on precedent critical urban and housing studies that employ discourse analysis methods to explain and justify our approach.

Introduction

This paper presents a theoretical review of the methods used in a scoping study of current institutional discourses relating to residential multi-occupancy in metropolitan Melbourne. This review is provided with the aim of developing an appropriate method for a study in-progress, whose larger objective is to identify whether discourses in housing policy and practice exist that reflect or even incite such binary attitudes as a 'mainstream'-'other' binary relationship for housing arrangements. The overarching research inquiry asks, do property institutions in Victoria respond to multi-occupancy household arrangements with language and discourse that reinforce exclusive notions of property, and if so, what are the nature of these discourses and their implications? (Are they explicit or implicit, restrictive or supportive, exclusive or inclusive? Etc.)

The research responds to a general assumption conveyed in public discourse that owner-occupancy of single-family dwellings remains the norm in market-led economies such as Australia, and that forms of house-sharing occur only in exceptional circumstances (Jarvis 2013). Our impressions of these public discourses are that, at best, this tenure is seen as a stepping-stone to single family owner-occupation, at worst it is pathologised as slum dwelling, with classed and racialised connotations. In exploring the foundations of these assumptions and whether and how they translate into regulatory and/or material outcomes, the research aims to, first, situate multi-occupancy within contemporary institutional discourses of property, and second, to interrogate the nature of these discourses. We focus on institutions as the regulators of space and behaviour within it; if institutions are producing and reproducing certain ideological biases in relation to property and occupancy, then this has potentially broad-reaching social justice implications for people living in non-mainstream circumstances, whether out of necessity or choice.

We use the terms 'multi-occupancy' and 'multi-family household' (MFH) interchangeably to denote cohabitation of related or unrelated households in a single dwelling, inclusive of all tenure and dwelling types. By 'institutions' we mean 'institutions of property', including urban planning, design and building, real estate, financing and housing support services, as well as contextual factors such as general media. Our definition is inclusive of legislative, statutory, judicial and policy agencies, processes and practices.

Our proposed methodology is both exploratory and critical, involving critical discourse analysis of documentation on the one hand, and of various actors' language on the other. This paper discusses methodological challenges faced in the scoping and preliminary analysis (coding and interpreting) of these discourses, and what we have learnt from the critical housing policy literature. We conclude by outlining avenues for further research.

Before explaining the motivation for the research, it is important to distinguish our *discursive critique* from other possible analytical approaches to the study of multi-occupancy. Here we draw on David

Batten's (1999) work on policy orthodoxy, which is both a precedent for and antithesis to this research. Batten traced the discursive construction of the 'housing mismatch' policy orthodoxy in Australia, i.e. a policy narrative of 'underoccupancy' and underutilisation of dwellings that became entrenched in housing policy research of the early 1990s amidst calls for more efficient use of housing stock. He differentiated his analysis of the influence of this policy narrative, a *discursive critique*, from a *conceptual critique* of the meanings of the notions of 'under-occupancy' or 'mismatch', and from an *empirical critique* of the data used to justify the ideas and narrative. Batten explained that, in the latter two approaches, "the direction of the critical gaze is towards the relationship between household and dwellings", while the discursive critique "asks why the mismatch argument should have arisen and become so persuasive" (1999, p. 140). Indeed, since the 'discursive turn' in housing policy studies in the mid-to-late 1990s, several researchers have sought to challenge taken-for-granted housing 'problems' and illuminate how dominant policy notions and subject positions have been shaped over time (Hasting 2000, Marston 2002). We too adopt a discursive critique in our exploratory work on how assumptions and values about multi-occupancy are constructed and reproduced, thus also turning our 'critical gaze' to language and discursive practice rather than households or dwellings. We do not attempt to document, explain or propose 'solutions' for MFHs, nor do we seek to critique property norms and standards on a conceptual level, though such analyses may logically follow.

Background and motivation: narratives of 'squeeze' and 'squalor', justice and progressivism

To contextualise our research focus, consider the following three parallel narratives about present-day multi-occupancy in Australia which have shaped this inquiry and which, together, reflect common social undertones toward these tenure types. They include a personal anecdote, mainstream media reports, and academic scholarship.

First, a local government planning officer in greater Melbourne, recently in conversation with one of the authors of this paper, expressed concerns over multiple "recent migrant" families living together in single dwellings. The officer questioned what could be done to assist these families to move out of this housing situation. The unspoken-but-implied message was that such cohabitation was somehow improper or undesirable – for both the families living in multi-occupancy situations and those around them – and required intervention.

Mirroring the concerns of local government officials, media reports of house-sharing of rental properties, particularly apartments in the capital cities, consistently stress the "crisis" of housing "overcrowding". These reports relate to several cases of alleged rental agreement breaches where tenants are considered to be 'over-occupying' their rental houses by sub-letting rooms to additional tenants. In some cases this has involved new tenants paying substantial rent to inhabit small sections of shared living space, sometimes in bed-share arrangements. Highly reported recent cases include a single detached house in inner Sydney found to have 58 occupants (Hansen and Gorman 2015), and an apartment building fire in Docklands, Melbourne, which was linked to personal belongings stored on balconies and blocking exits due to high occupancy numbers (Vedelago and Houston 2015). The media reports designate these dwellings as "slum-like" (Vedelago and Houston 2015), exhibiting "squalor" (McNally 2015) and being thereby "illegal" (Dow 2015), and often associate them with particular population groups including "suspected illegal workers" (Vedelago and Houston 2015), "foreign students" (Dow 2015), "Chinese" (Vedelago and Houston 2015) and "Japanese and Korean" (Hansen and Gorman 2015). In Melbourne, media coverage has included maps of suspected "illegal" rooming houses across the city, and helicopter fly-bys of apartments (Dow 2015). In Sydney, these cases have spurred calls for an "Unauthorised Accommodation Investigation Team" (Hansen and Gorman 2015). Notwithstanding the clear dangers and injustices that some such cases may entail to tenants, the overall narrative conveyed by this media coverage is clear: certain forms of multi-occupancy are considered problematic and unwanted. Furthermore, the language equating these dwellings to slums signifies that these arrangements are unjust and dehumanizing to the occupants themselves.

Often the slowest form of discourse to respond to an emerging social phenomenon, academic scholarship is also exploring forms of cohabitation in Australian cities, thus increasing the visibility of certain forms of this tenure. Most prominent is the work of Easthope, Liu, Burnley, Judd and colleagues on multigenerational households in Australian cities (Easthope *et al.* 2013, 2014). Their research has explored characteristics, experiences and social and cultural views of multiple generations of cohabitating families in Sydney and Brisbane, finding that these households are increasing throughout Australia's major cities due to both structural changes and individual agency. That is, academic scholarship has deepened the narrative about MFH by pointing out that people may choose these housing arrangements, but that they remain also at least partially driven by the forces of

housing prices, employment shifts, an ageing population and the "changing ethnic makeup of cities" (Easthope *et al.* 2013, npn).

Other scholarship is exploring design and management aspects of specific cohabitation models, which are lauded for their 'innovation' and 'creativity' as well as their cost-saving and environmental benefits. For example, in their article in *The Conversation,* 20 April 2015, McGee and Benn discuss forms of purposely-designed or retrofitted conjoined-dwelling models commonly characterised by distinct dwellings with defined private and shared spaces, and which afford "more privacy and independence than flatmates" (McGee and Benn 2015, npn). Similar forms of separate-but-combined dwellings, such as dual-key apartments, are also profiled in industry publications and media with increasing frequency. The narratives that these examples (re)produce elevate awareness of non-standard housing configurations, including multi-occupancy, albeit in specific forms, i.e. cohabitation among immediate family members (multigenerational households) and/or of shared spaces that are pre-designated and highly regulated. On the one hand, this scholarship places certain forms of multi-occupancy within positive discourses of 'liveability', 'community' and 'sharing economies'. On the other hand, it furthers conceptions of this tenure as being marginal and/or exceptional.

Altogether, these narratives convey conflicting views of and responses to multi-occupancy; some forms are considered acceptable and even promoted while others are vilified. Moreover, they exhibit racialised and classed associations in that MFH is discursively linked to certain ethnicities or cultural groups as well as cost-saving intentions. The differing forms of MFHs entail markedly different living conditions for occupants as well as different degrees of regulation and formality, ranging from purpose-built and regulated forms of sharing to seemingly informal and ad hoc arrangements. These discourses appear to set parameters within which cohabitation can acceptably occur. They also frame discussions about multi-occupancy within 'common sense' notions of health, safety and order, which we believe warrant further analysis.

Providing a critical perspective

Substantial scholarship has sought to describe, justify and/or advocate for differing ontologies of property, household and home that extend or disrupt mainstream notions, including more fluid conceptions of occupancy, ownership, homelessness, etc. (see Blomley 2008; Crabtree 2013; Memmott 2014; Porter 2011 and Shaw 2007, to name but a few). Much of this literature documents or explains the perspectives or experiences of marginalised groups. It includes theoretical works that critique dominant Western property models on grounds of cultural specificity, and empirical works that provide more nuanced understanding of housing experiences. With regard to MFHs in Australia, particularly important is the work of Paul Memmott and colleagues on the subjectivity of the concept of '(over)crowding' and its incongruence for some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) communities who have particular cultural obligations and values regarding cohabitation, as well as specific meanings of 'place' and 'home' (Memmott, Birdsall-Jones *et al.* 2012, Memmott, Greenop *et al.* 2012, Memmott 2014). These works challenge mainstream ideas of the primacy and sanctity of single-family owner-occupied dwellings in Australian society.

Australian academic literature that specifically broaches multi-occupancy is sparse and primarily descriptive. This literature includes Easthope *et al.*'s (2013, 2014) work on multigenerational households, as well as specific investigations of the housing experiences of ATSI peoples, migrants and refugees (see Berta 2012, Birdsall-Jones and Corunna 2008, Forrest *et al.* 2013 and Harte 2013, to name but a few), most of which examine household-dwelling relationships from sociological or needs-based perspectives. Though this improves understanding of 'non-mainstream' property forms, it does little to illuminate how attitudes and truths about these households are constructed and shaped, and the power relations embedded within these 'truths' and the subject positions they create. Descriptive studies perpetuate a focus on the 'Other' ('different' ontologies, living forms, experiences, etc.) as 'the observed' that is inevitably compared to an (often invisible) norm. However, as Marston (2002) explains, "from a social constructionist perspective" such *norms* are "historically, politically and culturally contingent" (p. 83) and thus warrant further interrogation of how they are constituted and their implications. Such an understanding would add nuance to the narratives above and any policy decisions that might stem from them.

Accordingly, the contribution of this research is a reorientation of the current scholarly interest in multi-occupancy in Australian cities, by applying a critical perspective to the inherent assumptions in related property discourses. Similar research has been undertaken in other contexts, particularly in the United States where explicit single-occupancy housing regulations exist in some states. Those studies have interrogated such regulations from conceptual and discursive perspectives, finding them to be "culturally-determined" and "a conduit for discriminatory practices against non-dominant ethnic

groups" (Pader 2002a, p. 317, 2002b). Though no directly comparable regulations are enacted in Victoria, Australia, similar research would nevertheless contribute a more robust conceptualisation of the 'problems' of multi-occupancy in this setting, chiefly by identifying the visible and invisible social rules which bound these households and may designate certain aspects as problematic.

Operationalising the search for multi-occupancy discourses: the challenges

Having explained the motivation for the research and the aims of this paper, we now discuss the methodology. Our discussion focuses on conceptual and empirical challenges encountered in the work in-progress, and what can be learnt from precedent critical urban and housing studies.

The research employs an exploratory and critical research design to determine whether and if so how notions of property, occupancy and household are constructed as 'mainstream' or 'alternative/other' in the discourses of property institutions. Data collection and analysis is divided into two phases: an initial scoping study of the policy and regulatory environment of MFHs in metropolitan Melbourne and whether and how multi-occupancy is codified in the discourses of property institutions, and subsequently, an in-depth case study used to explore the complexities of the discourses and their implications at the local scale. Potential cases will be identified in the first phase and may involve particular policies, actors, settings, 'representative' groups, or other cases that are noteworthy for social or political reasons. *As the initial scoping study is currently ongoing, we discuss only this activity in this paper.*

The scoping study is necessary and important as there has been no specific and comprehensive analysis of housing policies relating to multi-occupancy in Australian cities, let alone any critical consideration of such documentation from a social justice perspective. Table 1 outlines the guiding questions, methods, data types and key methodological challenges of the scoping activity. The main dataset being produced is a policy and regulatory review identifying agencies that deal with forms of multi-occupancy and the documentation and processes they use in their activities, be they legislative, statutory, judicial, policy or other. This information is collected via desktop research of such agencies' websites and through interviews with housing practitioners, policy makers and academics. Preliminary analysis of how multi-occupancy is codified in the data is carried out concurrently to begin organising the texts and observed discourses into broad themes, such as 'explicit or implicit' relevance to multi-occupancy, 'supportive or restrictive' of multi-occupancy, etc.

Table 1. Outline of Questions, Methods, Data Types and Challenges in the Scoping Study

Guiding questions	Information sought	Methods	Data types & sources	Challenges
Where does governance of multi-occupancy occur among the institutions of property? Which policy texts or related documents are referred to in this governance?	Govt. and non-govt. agencies *involved with multi-occupancy* in metropolitan Melbourne, their roles, activities and jurisdiction, and the documents/tools that they use in these functions *that relate to multi-occupancy*	Desktop research Informational interviews Storytelling interviews	Department, portfolio, organisation or service information, sourced from public repositories and verbal accounts from housing practitioners, policy makers and academics	Managing the scale of the scoping activity Negotiating the conceptual complexity of multi-occupancy as an analytical object
What is the nature of the discourses? Do they (re)produce binaries of mainstream-other household arrangements? If so, how?	Is multi-occupancy referred to directly or indirectly? Do the discourses exhibit manifest or latent forms of 'Othering'? Are there dominant or residual discourses? What are they?	Critical Discourse Analysis of written texts & interview transcripts	Linguistic and textual devices ('micro-level'), discursive practice ('meso-level') and social practice ('macro-level') of core and supplementary written and verbal 'texts' (Fairclough 1992)	Identifying, coding and interpreting discourses, particularly manifest and latent forms of *othering* in language and discursive practice

Several conceptual and empirical challenges affect the scoping activity. In this section we focus on the conceptual complexity we encountered when considering multi-occupancy as an analytical object. As we describe below, this complexity drives the scope of the project to a very large scale and compounds the challenges of coding and interpreting the discursive evidence.

Challenges in defining and observing (discourses of) multi-occupancy

As noted above, few studies have described forms of cohabitation in Australian cities, and none have specifically analysed the discourses surrounding these households. The present research is

exploratory in the first instance and, in order to build a comprehensive dataset, the scale of our scoping activity is intentionally expansive. We include all forms of multi-occupancy and all manner of institutional discourses that may surround these differing forms. We follow Fairclough's (1992) definition of 'discourses' as including written, verbal and visual representations, and seek to collect both *core* (direct/explicit) representations of multi-occupancy and information about their social-political historical context. Our scoping thus extends to *contextual* data, including media reports, political statements, meeting minutes, case law, etc. The spatial scope of the study is the greater Melbourne metropolitan area, i.e. agencies and documents with jurisdiction in this area. The temporal scope is the 21st century, with necessary historical grounding. This breadth entails high time and resource demands and high data volume.

Central to the expansiveness of the scoping activity is our broad conceptualisation of multi-occupancy. Our definition encompasses everything from 'common' forms of cohabitation such as student share-houses to varying configurations of related or unrelated people and families co-residing, each of which entail distinct housing 'issues' and needs depending on tenure and dwelling type. Sharing arrangements may be formal or informal, fixed or fluid. We intentionally do not focus our inquiry onto a specific form of MFH as one of our goals is to determine the diversity of practices and attitudes towards differing forms, including whether some are constructed as 'more appropriate' than others, or are characterised in particular ways.

Contrary to our approach, the discourse-analytical housing policy studies reviewed for this research focused their analyses on more distinct concepts or issues such as homelessness (Bullen 2015, Stonehouse *et al.* 2015), home ownership (Kemeny 1981, Ronald 2008), or public housing reform (Marston 2002), to name but a few. Even in David Batten's (1990) study on housing 'underutilisation' policy orthodoxy, Batten expressly looked at how *problem statements* related to (normative conceptions of) '*underoccupancy'* were manifest, as opposed to considering a range of policy statements related to occupancy and then narrowing to notions of *under-*occupancy specifically. A similar approach could be pursued in this study, for example by focusing on implied notions of 'over-occupancy' as one possible conception of cohabitation. However, such a narrow focus would not allow us to capture the concurrent 'positive' or 'neutral' discourses of multi-occupancy which are evidenced, for example, in the academic scholarship on multigenerational households and co-housing design approaches.

The conceptual complexity of multi-occupancy also affects its utility as an analytical object in other ways. Importantly, fluid and informal MFH arrangements may go unnoticed by policy-makers and practitioners, for instance due to an absence of tailored datasets (Easthope *et al.* 2013) or sufficiently detailed population and housing data categories and collection methods (Memmot, Greenop *et al.* 2012). More fixed and formal manifestations of multi-occupancy may also be prioritised by policy-makers and practitioners for practical purposes. The implication is that if certain MFHs are obscured from the policy-makers' view they may be omitted from public discourses, which, in turn, entails the possibility of gaps in our scoping of these discourses and challenges in interpreting their meaning and effects.

In terms of collecting a corpus of texts for critical discursive analysis, the vagueness of multi-occupancy entails that few policy and regulatory documents *explicitly* govern many of its forms. Our preliminary regulatory review has shown that there are few instances in Victorian building, planning, health and tenancy legislation and regulations where occupancy numbers (i.e. the number of people per dwelling) are explicitly regulated. Equally sparse are direct references to multi-occupancy in more general policy, statutory or judicial documents, though our review of such documentation is ongoing. Though a detailed description of our regulatory and policy review is beyond the scope of this paper, our main finding thus far is that there are few instances of explicit governance of the various forms of multi-occupancy in the Victorian context, and hence also few suitable core texts for analysis.

We hypothesize in this paper that the mere absence of explicit language in regulations is not evidence sufficient to conclude that the policy environment is not heavily influenced by notions of the 'right' kind of occupancy in housing. That is, we hypothesize that management of occupancy numbers must be occurring implicitly, for example by a landlord refusing a tenancy application from a large family on grounds of (subjectively-determined) insufficient space. The implication of this is that regulatory norms and values are latently expressed through discretionary processes and decisions. This calls for a need to supplement textual analysis with analysis of practitioners' own explanations and reflections as gleaned from interviews, which is in any case endorsed by critical discourse analysis methodologists (Fairclough, 1992).

Identifying the appropriate data sources is a crucial part of our process, however, once the appropriate sources are identified, additional challenges arise. These challenges are related to how we seek evidence, and what counts as evidence. The next section interrogates these additional scoping issues.

Challenges in coding and interpreting discourses of multi-occupancy

As we operationalize the search for evidence of 'othering' in formal policy and in public servants' execution of that policy, a problem arises in that the scope of language and omitted language, sentiment and omitted sentiment, is very large. It is not sufficient to develop a few keywords to search. The gaps and silences in the policies, and in the interviewees' accounts, are as important as the language that is actually there. Implicit regulations and latent expressions and rationalisations also pose particular challenges to the codification and interpretation of discourses. As our own analyses are preliminary we cannot yet offer an account of a rigorous approach to the codification of such omitted or latent sentiments, and we flag this issue here as one for further collegial discussion. Instead, in this section we review different discursive devices identified in precedent critical housing policy studies, and how these were interpreted and operationalized by researchers seeking to understand similar questions about policy.

A challenge common to all critical policy research is the breaking down of the guise of neutrality in which policies are framed. Policy texts are generally presented as responses to stated 'problems' or 'needs', and employ "consensual language that appears rational and akin to common sense" (Jacobs, Kemeny and Manzi 2004, p. 5). Such policy language is itself not ideological, but there is underlying ideology (van Dijk 2006). Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) allows this ideology to be revealed by providing a framework for situating the language and argumentation in such texts in social and political context. We thus base our analytical process on the guidance of key CDA methodologists and authors who have applied these frameworks.

Linguistic theorist Norman Fairclough outlines a multi-tiered, three-dimensional framework for CDA. It includes 'micro-level' analysis of form, structure and linguistic techniques in distinct discourse samples, 'meso-level' analysis of how texts and discourses interrelate and how some become dominant or are hidden, and 'macro-level' analysis of how discourses are reproduced and interpreted in context-specific social practice (Fairclough 1992). While micro-analysis illuminates the persuasive elements of specific expressions and representations, it is through the broader-level analyses that structures and functions of ideology and hegemony are revealed (Fairclough 1992).

Broad questions of hegemony and power relations – the designation of 'normal' and 'Other' - ultimately frame our analysis of the discourses of multi-occupancy. Precedent studies have shown that such 'othering' may occur in several ways at the micro-level of individual 'texts' and the meso- and macro-level of the corpus of discourse samples. In the remainder of this paper we briefly discuss the salient forms of 'othering' gleaned from this literature and postulate how these might appear in our own analysis.

Manifest designation of Self/Other categories

The most obvious form of othering is the express labelling of people, objects or practices as either 'normal' or 'different'. This may be as straight-forward as using language of 'us' and 'them'. It can also occur through the overt designation of people, objects or practices according to binary characterisations of mainstream/alternative, normal/abnormal, common/uncommon, or good/bad, desirable/undesirable, legal/illegal, etc. Alternatively, manifest othering may involve the explicit labelling of class, race or other facets of social stratification.

A clear example of manifest othering is provided by Kamp's (2010) content analysis of Commonwealth parliamentary debates regarding the development of the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*. Kamp quantified manifest and latent characterisations of 'race' and 'nationhood' in these debates, finding that such characterisations were used to construct clear notions of who did or did not belong in Australia. In terms of manifest content, she found for example that "each speech in the parliamentary debates made an average of nine references to the race or ethnicity of these 'undesirable' immigrants" (p. 415), and that (potential) immigrants were also expressly characterised as "multitudinous", "undesirable", "dangerous", "inferior", etc. (p. 416). She contrasted these characterisations with the positive labels given to the "white", "Australian" Self.

Though the extent of manifest othering identified in Kamp's study is shocking when viewed from a contemporary perspective, such language was common-place at the time. In contrast, it is unlikely

that our analysis of present-day official documentation and speech will reveal many, if any, such overt characterisations. Rather, we expect that any polarising sentiments will be subtly expressed.

Latent designation of Self/Other categories
Self/Other binaries may be implied through associations, metaphors, and other linguistic techniques. This includes allusion to values, emotions or behaviours with positive or negative connotations. Many such characterisations are apparent in the literature, for example: the association of home-ownership with desirable values constituting being a "good citizen" (Gurney 1999b, p. 171); associating renting with wasting money and tenants as "feckless" (Gurney 1999a, p.1715); differentiating good and bad public housing tenants (Marston 2010); and alluding to the superiority or inferiority of particular races and cultures (Kamp 2010).

Implied binary characterisations may also relate to notions of 'normality' versus 'abnormality'. Examples include: the portrayal of home-ownership as embodying "normal and natural behaviour" (Gurney 1999b, p. 171); the portrayal of the private market as 'unproblematic' (Marston 2002, Stonehouse *et al.* 2015); and the portrayal of the public housing system as inefficient and residual (Marston 2002, Stonehouse *et al.* 2015).

It is likely that some of the above characterisations will also be observed in our analysis, particularly the normalisation of home-ownership. Based on the narratives of multi-occupancy described at the outset of this paper, we also expect to find these households to be implicitly differentiated in terms of values of health, safety and civility. For example, while pre-determined co-housing models may be associated with positive values of 'sharing', 'community', and 'sustainability', the more ad hoc forms of cohabitation are likely to be associated with crime, disease and instability. Thus, even if MFH arrangements are not explicitly prohibited or vilified, their discursive characterisation will (re)produce clear designations of 'acceptable' versus 'unacceptable' tenure.

Dominant and residual discourses
A third form of othering occurs through the (re)production of dominant discourses that, through their reproduction, become naturalised as "truth" or "common sense", with the effect of positioning anything outside of the represented worldview as 'Other'. An example of this already described in this paper is the "housing mismatch" (underutilisation) policy narrative described by Batten (1990) as "entrenched" (p. 137) in housing policy and research since the 1990s. Other dominant discourses within Australian housing policy that this audience will be familiar with include: the sanctity of private home-ownership as the ideal tenure type (Gurney 1999a, 1999b, Kemeny 1981, Ronald 2008); a notion of state-led housing provision as 'enabling' of a 'dependent' 'underclass' (Jacobs and Manzi 1996); general reformist narratives promoting the residualisation of government activity in housing (Jacobs and Manzi 1996, Marston 2002, Stonehouse *et al.* 2015); a notion of homelessness as the responsibility of individuals (Bullen 2015, Jacobs and Manzi 1996); and narratives of 'deserving' versus 'undeserving' poor (Marston 2002).

The pervasiveness of discourses of home-ownership and self-reliance already observed in Australian housing policy literature goes some way to affirming our hypothesis that discourses of multi-occupancy will differentiate certain household formations as 'mainstream' and 'alternative'. Even so, given that our specific analytical focus is 'unchartered territory' in Australian housing policy scholarship, we use the findings of the extant literature as only a general guide to our own analysis. Though our discussion of discursive othering in this section has been necessarily brief, it has outlined at least three ways in which we might approach the challenging tasks of coding and interpreting of the discourses of multi-occupancy.

Conclusions and next steps
Relatively little academic attention has been paid to contemporary forms of residential multi-occupancy in Australian cities, and emergent scholarship is more focused on the nature of these household-dwelling relationships than how attitudes and truths about these relationships are constructed and shaped. Where multi-occupancy has been broached in public discourses, it seems to have been positioned as something 'exceptional' relative to a particular housing 'norm' of single-family owner-occupancy. This study explores whether such 'mainstream'-'other' binary relationships are (re)produced in the discourses of property institutions, and the possible implications for people living in these house-sharing arrangements. This paper discussed our approach to managing several methodological challenges in this undertaking, and serves as a means for reflexive and collaborative refinement of our methods.

Upcoming outputs of this research will include a discussion of the regulatory and policy frameworks that affect multi-occupancy households in Melbourne, and the findings of the discursive critique outlined in this paper. Future extensions of this work may venture a conceptual critique of occupancy standards generally and notions of 'over-occupancy' in particular. Such an analysis would provide the scope to reconceptualise taken-for-granted housing 'norms', and open up new spaces for alternative narratives, ontologies and practices of property such as residential multi-occupancy.

References

Batten, D. C., 1999. The mismatch argument: the construction of a housing orthodoxy in Australia, *Urban Studies,* 36 (1), 137-151.

Berta, L., 2012. *Making it Home: Refugee Housing in Melbourne's West*. Footscray: Footscray Community Legal Centre.

Birdsall-Jones, C. & Corunna, V., 2008. The housing careers of Indigenous urban households, *AHURI Final Report No.112*, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.

Blomley, N., 2008. Enclosure, common right and the property of the poor. *Social and Legal Studies,* 17 (3), 311-331.

Bullen, J., 2015. Governing Homelessness: The Discursive and Institutional Construction of Homelessness in Australia. *Housing, Theory and Society,* 32 (2), 218-239.

Crabtree, L., 2013. Decolonising property: Exploring ethics, land, and time, through housing interventions in contemporary Australia. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space,* 31 (1), 99-115.

Dow, A., 2015. Melbourne's illegal highrise rooming houses profit from foreign students, *The Age*, June 21. Available from: http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/melbournes-illegal-highrise-rooming-houses-profit-from-foreign-students-20150621-ghl8un.html

Easthope, H., Liu, E., Burnley, I. H. & Judd, B., 2013. "We're a family - it makes sense to live together": Multigenerational households in Sydney and Brisbane. *In:* K. Ruming, B. Randolph & N. Gurran, eds. *Proceedings of the State of Australian Cities National Conference*, 26 - 29 November 2013 Sydney, New South Wales. State of Australian Cities Research Network.

Easthope, H., Liu, E., Burnley, I. H. & Judd, B., 2014. Changing perceptions of family: A study of multigenerational households in Australia. *In:* B. West, ed. *Proceedings of the Australian Sociological Association Conference*, 24 – 27 November 2014, Adelaide, South Australia. University of South Australia.

Fairclough, N., 1992. *Discourse and social change.* Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Forrest, J., Hermes, K., Johnston, R. & Poulsen, M., 2013. The housing resettlement experience of refugee immigrants to Australia. *Journal of Refugee Studies,* 26 (2), 187-206.

Gurney, C. M., 1999a. Lowering the Drawbridge: A Case Study of Analogy and Metaphor in the Social Construction of Home-ownership. *Urban Studies,* 36 (10), 1705-1722.

Gurney, C. M., 1999b. Pride and Prejudice: Discourses of Normalisation in Public and Private Accounts of Home Ownership. *Housing Studies,* 14 (2), 163-183.

Hansen, N. & Gorman, J., 2015. Former Scotland Yard members brought in to investigate illegal overcrowding of homes in Sydney, *Wentworth Courier*, June 16. Available from: http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/city-east/former-scotland-yard-members-brought-in-to-investigate-illegal-overcrowding-of-homes-in-sydney/story-fngr8h22-1227399965588

Harte, E. W., 2013. Towards a culturally-appropriate model of collecting demographic data from ethnic minority communities: A case study of the Burundian community census in Queensland. *The Australasian Review of African Studies*, 34 (1), 82-102.

Jacobs, K., Kemeny, J. & Manzi, T. (Eds.), 2004. *Social constructionism in housing research*. Aldershot, Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Jacobs, K. & Manzi, T., 1996. Discourse and policy change: The significance of language for housing research. *Housing Studies,* 11 (4), 543-560.

Jarvis, H., 2013. Against the 'tyranny' of single-family dwelling: insights from Christiania at 40. *Gender, Place & Culture,* 20 (8), 939-959.

Kamp, A., 2010. Formative geographies of belonging in White Australia: Constructing the national self and other in parliamentary debate, 1901. *Geographical Research,* 48 (4), 411-426.

Kemeny, J., 1981. *The myth of home-ownership: Private versus public choices in housing tenure*. London: Routledge.

Marston, G., 2002. Critical discourse analysis and policy-orientated housing research. *Housing, Theory and Society,* 19 (2), 82-91.

McGee, C. & Benn, S., 2015. How co-housing could make homes cheaper and greener, *The Conversation,* April 20. Available from https://theconversation.com/how-co-housing-could-make-homes-cheaper-and-greener-39235

McNally, L., 2015. City of Sydney appoints ex-Scotland Yard detective to investigate illegal housing, *ABC News*, June 18. Available from http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-06-16/sydney-recruits-ex-scotland-yard-detective-to-tackle-housing/6548130

Memmott, P., Birdsall-Jones, C. & Greenop, K., 2012. Australian Indigenous house crowding. *AHURI Final Report No. 194*: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.

Memmott, P., Greenop, K., Clarke, A., Go-Sam, C., Birdsall-Jones, C., Harvey-Jones, W., Corunna, V. & Western, M., 2012. NATSISS crowding data: What does it assume and how can we challenge the orthodoxy? In B. Hunter & N. Biddle (Eds.), *Survey Analysis for Indigenous Policy in Australia: Social Science Perspectives* (Vol. 32, pp. 241-280). Research monograph: Australian National University Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research.

Memmott, P., 2014. What is Aboriginal Spiritual Homelessness? *In: Proceedings of the 8th National Homelessness Conference*, 10-12 September 2014, Gold Coast, Australia. Homelessness Australia.

Pader, E., 2002a. Housing occupancy standards: inscribing ethnicity and family relations on the land. *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research,* 19 (4), 301-318.

Pader, E., 2002b. Space of Hate: Ethnicity, Architecture and Housing Discrimination. *Rutgers Law Review,* 54, 881-892.

Porter, L., 2011. Informality, the Commons and the Paradoxes for Planning: Concepts and Debates for Informality and Planning. *Planning Theory & Practice,* 12 (1), 115-153.

Ronald, R., 2008. *The ideology of home ownership: Homeowner societies and the role of housing*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Shaw, W. S., 2007. *Cities of Whiteness.* 1st ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Stonehouse, D., Threlkeld, G. & Farmer, J., 2015. 'Housing risk' and the neoliberal discourse of responsibilisation in Victoria. *Critical Social Policy,* 35 (3), 393-413.

Van Dijk, T. A., 2006. Ideology and discourse analysis. *Journal of Political Ideologies,* 11 (2), 115-140.
Vedelago, C. & Houston, C., 2015. No stop to slums in the sky, *The Age,* May 3. Available from http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/no-stop-to-slums-in-the-sky-20150502-1myf98.html