



# Companionship, familial relationships & individuality:

Sense of (be)longing in multigenerational households

Never Stand Still

Built Environment

City Futures Research Centre

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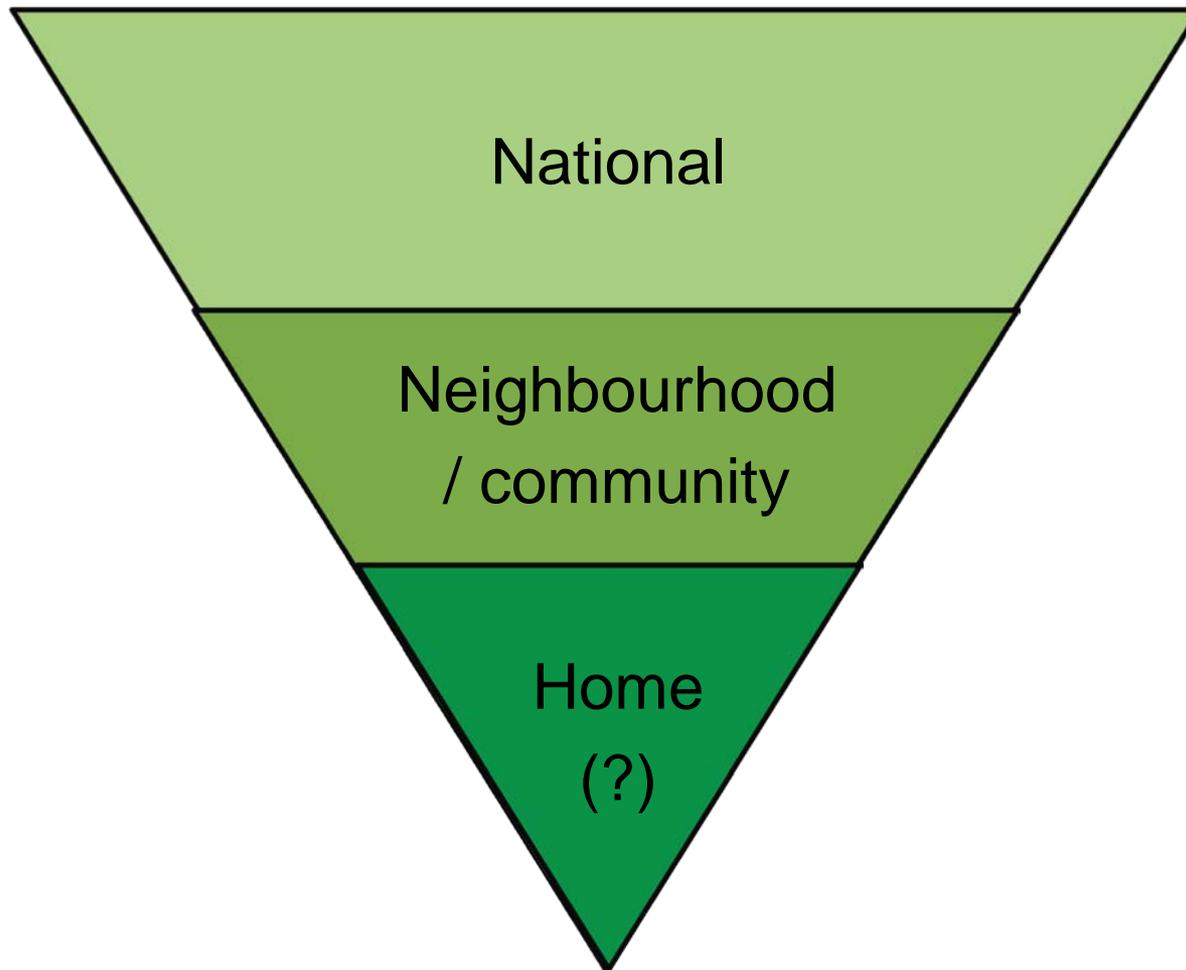
# ‘Natural’ belonging

- Feinberg (1988:98) – “There does seem to be a natural human need to associate, **to belong**, to ‘identify with’, to be accepted, to acquire both membership and status within a group”
  - Mason (2000)
    - Connectedness
    - Identification
    - Membership
    - Recognition
    - Inclusion
  - Mellor et al. (2008:213) – “a sense of belongingness is not only a precursor to social connectedness but also a buffer against loneliness.”
  - Hogg (2006): “the lure of belonging”
- Is the lure / need to belong universal and unquestionable?

# ‘Natural’ belonging

- Mellor et al. (2008:214) – “individuals differ in the strength of their need to belong”
- Taylor (2009:297) – “Within the spatialised imaginary of the nation, certain citizens tend to be regarded or regard themselves as ***belonging more or less than others.***”
- Tindale, Kameda & Hinsz (2003)
  - Exclusion
  - Insularity
  - Boundedness
  - Authoritarian

# Scale of belonging



# Multigenerational households

- Cohen & Casper (2002:1) – “conceptually, standard practices for identifying multigenerational living arrangements and their implications remain elusive”
- We define multigenerational households as:
  - households where two or more generations of related adults cohabit in the same dwelling, with the oldest of the youngest generation being aged 18 years or older
- Notable cultural differences in practice
  - More common in African, Asian, Middle Eastern & Southern/Eastern European societies
  - Research beginning to emerge in Australia, Canada, UK & US
- Wide variety of influences/catalysts, including immigration & late 2000s economic downturn
- Flatau et al. (2007:67) → changing social norms and values

# The project

3-year Australian Research Council Discovery Project

***Living together: The rise of multigenerational households in Australian cities***

- 3 hypothesised principal drivers
  1. Structural changes in Australian society, notably the ageing of the population, changing employment structures, and constrained housing supply
  2. Public policy decisions about the provision of housing and areas of family significance, notably higher education, child care and aged care
  3. Social and cultural views about the family, influenced by shifts in the social and cultural makeup of our cities

➤ Dependency

➤ Family

➤ Home

# The project

1. Statistical analysis of custom census tables, 1986-2011
2. Detailed survey of multigenerational households in Sydney & Brisbane
  - August 2012 to July 2013
  - 337 valid completions
3. Solicited diaries on thoughts and experiences of living in multigenerational households
  - 22 diaries from 15 households
4. In-depth interviews re: outlooks and relationships with others
  - 21 interviews with 17 households
5. Policy workshops with Federal/State policymakers, private sector, NGOs

# The project

- 2011: 1 in 5 Australians (4.3 million) lived in 1.2 million multigenerational households
- More prominent in major cities

	<b>Australia</b>	<b>Sydney</b>	<b>Brisbane</b>
As % of total population	19.7%	24.5%	19.5%
% owner-occupiers	78.5% (61.8%)	77.8% (62.0%)	76.2% (61.0%)
% in detached dwellings	88.6% (72.4%)	82.9% (65.5%)	94.2% (81.9%)

Note: % for all other household types presented in brackets

Source: Easthope et al. 2013; Liu et al. 2013

- More likely owner-occupiers in detached dwellings
- More common amongst several overseas-born communities, but 2/3 born in Australia/Oceania

# The project

- 55% live together for financial reasons, but 2/3 of which a result of or in combination with one or more of the following:
  - Relationship breakdown
  - Continuing / returning to education
  - Care arrangements
  - Cultural practice
  - Practicality
  - “We’re a family”
- Only 21% live together because adult ‘children’ have yet to leave home
- Fewer still resulted from adult children ‘boomeranging’ (5%)

Source: Easthope et al. (2013)

# Articulating belonging

- Textual analysis
    - “If I visit our son it's a home where you just visit and you're a guest in their home. Whereas here we're going back to Australia to home, this is classed as our home. I don't - when you say ownership I've never thought for one second we own it. The feeling is belonging. ***It's more belonging than ownership. I don't need to own it.*** ... It just gives you the strength inside to know you belong somewhere. ... Being part of the building going on, it's growing. ***As it grows, we grow. It cements your feeling of belonging.***” (QLD408I)
- Implicit & unspoken rather than explicit & upfront

# Belonging

- ... to their family
  - “With my parents there's no conflict or tension between us as parent and child. So I think that was a very big thing. I feel like friends with my parents. ***I would rather live with my parents than live with strangers or backpackers or in a share house situation.*** So I enjoy living at home. ... Every day I come home and I can talk with my mum about my day, she talks about her day, we bounce off each other. There's no discomfort there. ... ***we're completely comfortable.***” (QLD404-2I)
  - “Have been away on field prac, back for five hours and will leave again for next prac. Really good to be home. Feels comfortable and I’m definitely more relaxed. Don’t really want to go back on prac as I want to look after the garden and spend time with mum and [sister].” (QLD406-2D)

# Belonging

- ... to their household
  - “***It's nice*** to be able to have a chat to somebody in the morning before you go off to work and in the evenings when you both end up at home at just sort of whatever time that might be. To be able ***to share meal preparation, share shopping, looking after things, doing chores around the house***, so I think that it's got its advantages when there are two people who think probably the same way and have got the same goals. ***I know that I'm quite fortunate with my daughter that we have those same goals.***” (QLD402I)

# Belonging

- ... to a network
  - “We have become better friends with another kindy family because we each live in extended families and have some USA links which has been great for all 12 of us (2 kids, 2 parents & 2 grandparents all x 2) get together for a big meal every couple of months. The two grandmothers even went out to an art exhibit recently which was nice & a relationship facilitated through their grandkids as a result of living in an extended family.” (QLD403-1D)
  
- Guibernau (2013) – “Conditions of belonging” / “reciprocal commitments”

# Longing

- ... for individuality
  - “I guess my feelings are contradictory – ***I sometimes feel dissatisfied or disappointed that she doesn’t help me more*** in the garden or with those tasks other than cooking, ***but then I don’t want her to not go out and do things with friends and colleagues*** as I want her to have her own strong circle of friends and support group and social life outside of home and our relationship.” (QLD406-1D)
  - “Ever since I can remember I have been a parent to my siblings. I always had a pram, I was always carrying stuff, ***everything has always been with respect to the younger siblings***. Like my school holidays were never my own ... I feel like a lot of the time that should have been my own – I know it's very selfish – but time that all of my friends had to themselves and not have to worry about what the kids are doing or being home in time to make sure there's dinner for them or something like that. ***I feel like I've never really had the opportunity to just be my own teenager, or now young adult-self.***” (QLD406-2I)

# Longing

- ... for individuality
  - “being able to say to myself that I assisted my son and his wife even if there was some issues for me personally” (QLD416S)
  - “My daughter and her husband have decided to go on an extended working holiday around Australia. They have rented out their unit that they have for 12 months. ... I am fully expecting there may be a period of time from when they arrive home to when they can move back into their unit.” (QLD416D)

# Longing

- ... for control
  - “I wanted to buy a cooked free-range chicken (on sale) for dinner & lunch the next day. [My elderly mother] wanted to buy an uncooked chicken. The difference was at most \$1-2 and I was paying. We argued in [the supermarket]. It’s worth paying it when I’d have to cook it & ***it’s my money.***” (NSW213D)
  - “Mum and [sister] have been away for a few days ... ***I actually love the ability to completely control my life*** – eating patterns and volume” (QLD406-2D)

# Longing

- ... for unawareness
  - “After my daughter left home I gradually began to appreciate the release of not knowing every detail of her life. In particular her health. She has a range of ongoing health problems which, while not stopping her from living her life, do involve a lot of natural remedies. ***I find I am again more aware of her everyday well-being.*** Usually whatever is bothering her, but I am fairly constantly wondering if she is ok. And ***afraid to ask*** in case she says she is not, with nothing to be done either way on my part.” (QLD405D)
  - “It is really difficult when your adult children are still at home and have boyfriends and want to have sleep overs with them. ... ***I never expected them to remain virgins but I hate being a parent when it comes to this.***” (QLD407D)

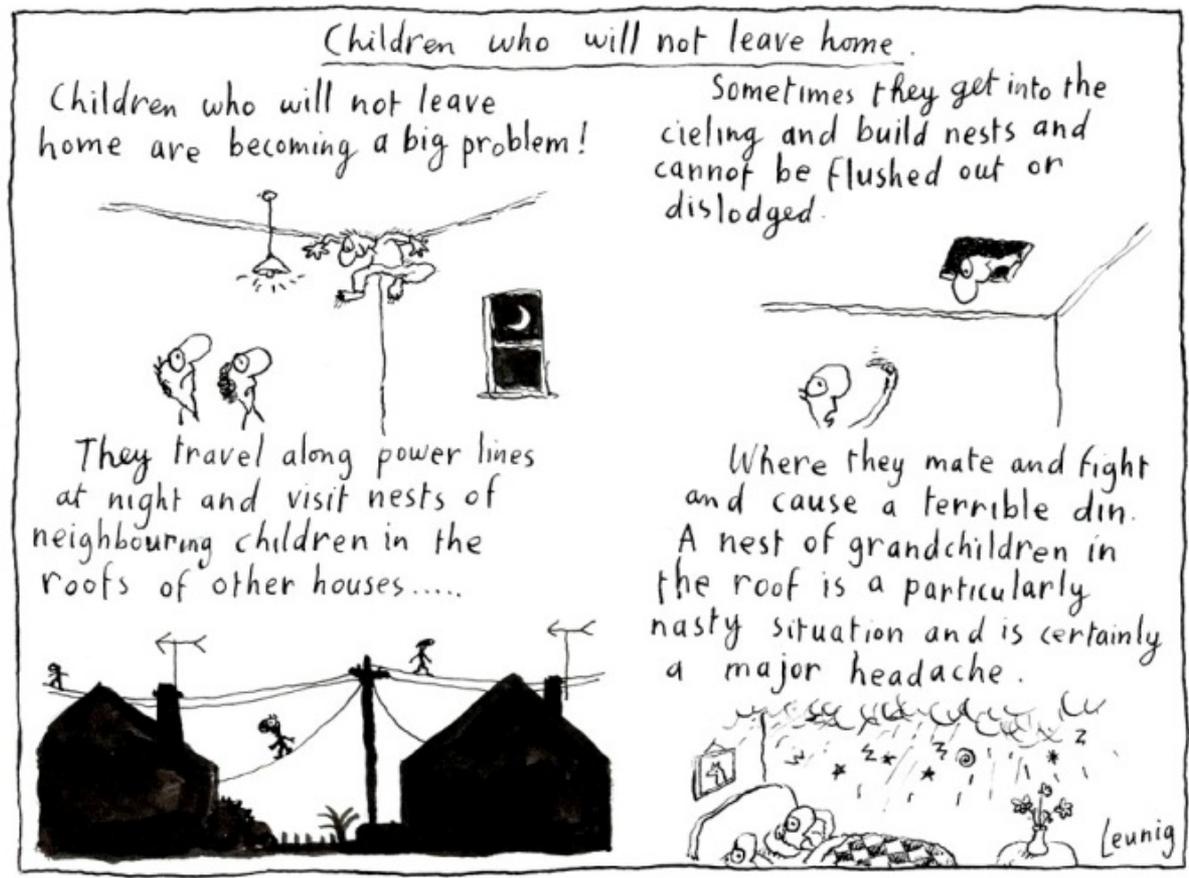
# (Be)longing

- Clear cut boundaries between belonging & longing?
  - “I think I am far more tolerant of family than my daughter. She also doesn’t wear the ‘they are family’ as an excuse to allow bad behaviour to get by without being pulled up.” (QLD401-1D)
  - Saunders & Williams (1988:85) – “For children and adolescents, by contrast, the home is often experienced as a domain where others (the adults) prevail. As they grow older, the constraints of home frequently become more irksome. The home becomes a place to escape from, a place where, as in school, they are subject to rules drawn up and imposed by others.”

# (Be)longing: “It’s a funny dual thing”

- Clear cut boundaries between belonging & longing?
  - “There are emotional benefits ... you always have somebody there, you always have somebody to talk to, you always have different perspectives on situations, you always have that. I think that in itself can be a challenge, because you never can be alone, you never can have any privacy, you can never get away from people being there all the time. So yes, I think lack of privacy is a big challenge” (QLD408I)
  - “I enjoy my daughter’s company but am aware that it may become unhealthy (not quite the right word but I’m struggling to think of a better word), for both or either of us for me to rely on her too much. I would hate her to resent me later on, and am conscious of trying not to be needy or reliant for company and friendship. It is an odd situation as it is quite different to being in a couple and quite different to being in a shared house living with non-family” (QLD401-1D)

# (Be)longing



- Failure to launch
- Hotel Mama
- Kidults
- Kippers
- NEET
- Parasite singles
- Twixters

# Longing

- ... for acceptance
  - Daughter: “You would know more people because they will admit to living at home, but I don't think it's any more accepted. Like when I tell people that I still live at home, they will look down at me, like, ‘**are you not smart enough to move out? You can't afford it or you're just living off your parents?**’ kind of thing. So that's really hard to take.”
  - Mother: “I think it's a sign of society with a lot of single parents. I think that's what it is. In that instance it's acceptable, but people are still – people say, has your daughter left home. No, she lives at home with me. Well you'll have to let go some time. It's sort of like, yeah, **there's still a bit of a thing about it.**” (QLD401I)

# Longing

- Daughter: “I think if there was an obvious medical reason like ‘yeah mum has to live with us because she's got diabetes’ or something that would be just really obvious. But I think people ... they don't, yeah, it's just not within their sphere of recognition. They just don't understand it. So they perceive it as unusual but yeah if there was a clear cut reason they're like, it had to happen ... ***you can't just want to, you've got to have a clear cut reason for it and then it's acceptable.***”

Son-in-law: “Yeah well the question is ‘do your parents live with you?’ I say ‘yes’ and then the second question is ‘why?’”

Mother: “Yeah I think if there was a reason like yeah well, ‘My mum's an invalid’, ‘Mum needs a triple bypass so she had to come live with us to be closer to the hospital whatever’”

Son-in-law: “Then everyone's alright, they accept that. They say yeah, yeah okay well that takes care of that but when you don't have a ...”

Daughter: “... a clear cut reason, then they're like ‘that is a bit odd’.”  
(QLD4081)

# Discussion

- Belonging to different things and at different scales
- Belonging versus longing
  - or is it really '**versus**'?
  - Taylor (2009:297) – "...shifting scales of belonging remain contingent, relative, and subjective"
  - "It was my house first, so I get to choose. But at the next house it won't be that way, and that's why we need the next house. We need a house that's ours ... because as long as we're here, it's always my house. So much as you try not to do that, it always defaults to the fact it was always my house ... when we get another house, it will be our homes, because we'll each put half the money into it" (QLD403I)

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# Websites

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