Chapter Three: "And Who Do You Belong To?" Fieldwork in a Small Southern Town

Phenomenological research requires both courage and faith. The researcher embarks on such a project with an initial set of ideas, but without knowing in advance what the ultimate research questions will be, what the size of the data set will be, how long the study will take, or how to identify when all relevant data have been collected. In the qualitative research that is necessary for a phenomenological investigation the shape of the research question is largely unknown at the beginning and only emerges over time. Discovery of the interior life world of the participants in such a study, which is the goal of phenomenological research, is revealed as the researcher considers the words and actions (and the motivations behind them) of the participants. Information provided by them drives the research design, which must remain flexible and open-ended. At some point the researcher must begin to make conclusions about the themes that are appearing in the data and pursue those themes, but if done too soon, one risks narrowing the study and omitting something important. The researcher must have faith that patterns will eventually appear in the data, and that a question or questions will emerge that will give shape to the study and reward the researcher with results that are worth publishing.

In this chapter I present the methodology of this study, which includes the principles that guided me, the methods used, and an evaluation of the ability of the methods to provide answers (Gould and Kolb 1964). I present this information in what I hope is a logical order, and this method of presentation may give the impression that the research proceeded in a neat and orderly manner. Nothing could be further from the truth. Information provided by the informants drove the research in an iterative fashion,

in which each interview shed light on the research questions and presented the opportunity for reconsideration of the interview questions and research procedures. As my understanding of the study deepened, the research design also evolved, with many false starts and revisions, some of which I attempt to convey. The chaos of the procedures actually produced many benefits, which I also attempt to convey.

The evolution of the research questions

This study began with a set of research interests that evolved over time. As a geographer interested in both tourism and historical geography, the emergence of a landscape of heritage tourism in Hillsborough intrigued me. In the late 1980s town leaders were hopeful that heritage tourism would create jobs and revenues that would offset the loss of the town's two textile mills. In 1990, as I was preparing to develop a dissertation project, my goal was to explore the development of this landscape of heritage tourism. However a debilitating illness created a ten-year hiatus in the project. During those years the town's leaders realized that heritage tourism would not provide a panacea for the town's economic ills, and some of the external impetus for that study was lost. As I began to recover my health and reconsider my earlier project, I found that one of my central interests involved the role that perception of the landscape plays in each person's sense of place. The study then shifted from the tourism landscape to the subjective life worlds of the people of Hillsborough. The long hiatus provided some unexpected benefits. My mobility in the region was circumscribed by the illness. Thus Durham grew and Cary exploded while I was not watching. This "Rip Van Winkle" effect gave me a perspective on dramatic changes in the regional landscapes. The contrast between

these places of rapid growth and Hillsborough proved to be an important component of Hillsborough's sense of place, as I describe in Chapter 6.

When I began the study, I intended to explore the intersection of sense of time and sense of place. I wanted to know how people perceive a depth or length of time over which landscape elements and features have evolved. I was also interested in transcendent experiences triggered by landscape elements, the occasions on which the present disappears and one feels as if one has traveled into the past. These were the questions with which I began the study; however my first informants were universally puzzled by my questions. They found it difficult to express opinions about the depth of time encoded in the landscape. Most of them did not organize their ideas about the past in a historical sequence: time for them was just "now" and "then" and perhaps "long, long ago." Furthermore, the term "landscape" proved to be a minefield. Some participants requested clarification of the term; others obviously had their own definitions, often involving shrubbery. I spent considerable time trying to explain to them what was to me a basic and obvious geographic concept. But my informants were not geographers.[1]

The informants may not have had anything to say about historic landscape features, but they took pleasure in describing their own relationships to place developed through personal experiences, memories and family stories. Thus the central question of this study emerged: How does history connect people to place? Instead of asking questions about the historic landscape I asked "Is history an important part of

[1] Later in the study I did encounter several people who understood landscape in the same way that I do. Tom Magnuson, executive director of the Trading Path Association, Cathleen Turner, executive director of the Alliance for Historic Hillsborough, and Margaret Schucker, Hillsborough's historic preservation planner are all familiar with geographic concepts of landscape through their graduate school coursework.

Hillsborough's sense of place?" Interestingly, the phrase "sense of place" created none of the problems that "landscape" had. It was obvious throughout the study that this phrase has entered the popular culture and all of the informants had an understanding of what the phrase meant. Not only that, they all had opinions about the relationship between history and sense of place in Hillsborough.

In this study I used the techniques of naturalistic inquiry, which allowed me to explore the relationships among people, place, and history in Hillsborough. The naturalistic paradigm is appropriate to many approaches including phenomenological, ethnographic, qualitative, humanist and others (Lincoln and Guba 1985). All of these approaches share an emphasis on the subjective lifeworld of individuals, and the necessity for the investigator to enter the world of the informant and to understand the situation and context of information presented by informants. The investigator will not understand the lifeworlds of the informants well enough to construct the research design in advance, as the example above demonstrates. The many multiple realities of human life mean that research design must emerge during the study. Indeed, the investigator becomes part of that situation and context, and data are created by the investigator and the informants as they explore topics together. The relationship that develops between participants and investigator creates a collaboration that "transcend the prior experience" of both participant and investigator (Rowles 1978, p. 184).

Reality can only be understood in context, therefore naturalistic inquiry requires the investigator to engage with subjects in their everyday world rather than in an artificial setting. I do know many of the informants in their everyday world. I see them at Wal-Mart, at parties, at powwows, and (when my children were younger) at school events and

youth sports events. I have observed people's behavior in the landscape (building, renovating, altering structures, landscaping, gardening). My observations provided background that allowed me to understand the role of history in people's lives in Hillsborough, and helped me to frame the questions that I asked them. What I have considered as "data" for this study, however, are the words that they used in answering those questions. My interpretation of this data arises from the context of the interviews within the actions of their lives that I have observed.

The particular approach that I followed was ethnographic, which is an empathetic approach that attempts to see the world through the eyes of the study informants and describe that world from their perspective (Kitchin and Tate 2000). The multiple influences on the individual's life world can best be understood through the use of qualitative methods such as interviewing. Open-ended interview questions allow the informant and the investigator to explore topics and construct meaning together. The language and behavior of the informants provides a window through which I can begin to apprehend their subjective lifeworlds, but this understanding can never be complete. The intersubjective nature of this study results in a work that reflects my perception of the worlds of the informants, and that emerges from the relationships that exist between them and myself and allows the construction of knowledge that is created by the researcher and the informants together (Miles and Huberman 1984)

Principles that Guide this Research

Naturalistic methods have been used by geographers for decades (Rowles 1978). In the 1990s feminist geographers embraced naturalistic methods, and I found their

observations useful as I designed my research. They recommend that the following issues be considered (England 1994), (Nast 1994), (Wilton 1999), (Herod 1993):

- The researcher's biases and beliefs as they affect the study
- The elements of her biography that influence her perceptions and her relationships with informants
- The researcher's intrusion into the life of each informant
- The right of the informants to inquire into the researcher's life as she inquires into theirs
- The power relationship(s) between the researcher and the informants
- The possibilities of the study to transform the researcher, the informants and the community
- The role of the informants in knowledge creation
- The researcher's responsibility to return that knowledge to the community
- The possible consequences of the research

After a consideration of these principles and how they affected the methods of this study, I turn to a more detailed discussion of the methods themselves.

Biography and Community

The characteristics of every researcher influence the processes and results of their studies (Olesen 2000). The informants of this study could easily perceive that I am a middle-aged, well-educated white woman. Also obvious every time I opened my mouth was the fact that I am not a Southerner, a very significant fact in the South. As a native of Baltimore who grew up in Ohio, I never thought of myself as a Yankee. In Ohio,

Yankees are from New England. Once here, I accepted as natural the fact that I would be cast as "other," and I understood the term "Yankee" to mean "not from the South." The South has a distinctive culture, culturally not much more different from Ohio than the East Coast was. But in the allegiance of its citizens it becomes a nation, and that difference is profound. Because I was not born here, I am not and could never become a Southerner.

The informants were drawn from Hillsborough's three major ethnic groups, black, white and Indian, and from points scattered along a middle range of the socio-economic spectrum from people of modest circumstances to people of considerable prosperity (the extremes of wealth and poverty were not represented). I shared with all informants an interest in history and in Hillsborough, and all of the people who agreed to participate in the study appeared to speak with candor. However I cannot know with what degree of caution people of an ethnicity different from my own tempered their observations, or what ideas Southerners may not have been willing to share with a "damn Yankee."

That this research was conducted in the hometown of my husband, where I have lived for the past fifteen years is highly relevant to the study. As a resident of this town I am both participant in and observer of life here. My position is that of a "resident alien" (Hauerwas and Willimon 1989), in which I have an outsider's perspective, yet can listen to the daily comments of insiders as a result of my life among them. I have knowledge of events, processes and people over a fifteen-year period. I have heard some of the stories that insiders tell one another. I have heard the shorthand comments that reveal a glimpse into the depth and complexity of layers of family, church, work and political relationships

that go back for generations.[2] I am a part of the network of social relationships that define the town for the insiders. I have access to people through my husband and his family that an unconnected researcher would not have. I will continue to live here after I complete the study. All of these factors affect the research processes and the way I portray Hillsborough, as I discuss later in this chapter.

The biographies of my husband and his parents are also relevant. The "home place" of my husband's family is Prospect Hill, North Carolina, a wide place in the road near the Orange/Caswell county boundary. My husband's parents moved to Hillsborough as they began their married life shortly after World War II, joining several Warrens of earlier generations who had also made their homes in Hillsborough. My mother-in-law, Helen Warren, is originally from Maxton, North Carolina. She worked for the Orange County school system for over 40 years, first as a schoolteacher and then as a school system administrator. My late father-in-law managed the local ABC store. Hundreds of former students remember my mother-in-law, hundreds more know my husband from his childhood and school years, and hundreds more were acquainted with my father-in-law. That this network of connections affected my access to people is clear. How the study would have been different if I had not been a part of this network is impossible to say.

Personal contacts are of paramount importance in a small town. A small town is a network of family ties and personal relationships that incomers cannot fathom, and even the resident alien will never learn the depth and complexity of these relationships.

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[2] From a conversation at the dinner table (used with permission):
First speaker: "His mother was a 'Smith'" (name changed).
Second speaker: "That's all you need to know."
Then, for my edification, they embarked upon a lengthy description of what it means to be a "Smith" that covered several generations, family, church and political ties, and a variety of dubious activities including Ku Klux Klan membership.

During the course of this study, I observed several people make the attempt to "place" me within this network. For example, at the formal opening of the Alexander Dickson House[3] in 1988 an older woman walked up to me and said "And who do you belong to?"

I understood several things about her question at the time. "And" signified that in her own mind she had begun the dialogue before speaking to me. As she looked around the room, I was the only person who was not known to her. "Who do you belong to?" signified that she knew that I must have a connection to the town and "belong to" a family in some way. Otherwise, why would I have been there? This was not a function that had attracted the general public. I mentioned to her that I was a friend of Bob Warren's and she looked a bit puzzled, so I said "Perhaps you know him as Three Warren," referring to the nickname he has had since childhood. She looked me up and down very carefully, introduced herself, made a pleasant comment and moved on.

Other layers of meaning in this interaction became clear to me over a considerable period of time. I told this story to Bob's parents shortly after it occurred, and learned that she was a neighbor of theirs. I then understood that her visual inspection of me sprang from her interest in the family and in Bob's future. While retelling this story some years later, I realized that at the time the neighborhood network would almost certainly have provided her with the information that he was dating someone. Eventually I came to understand that her comments signified a worldview in which the family is more important than the individual and in which each individual's place in the world arises from their membership in a family. While I consider this specific example in detail here, other interactions have also revealed the same worldview. Another informant repeatedly

[3] The Alexander Dickson House, an important Civil War landmark, had been saved from demolition and moved to downtown Hillsborough.

asked me for my last name, apologizing for the fact that he had forgotten it. Over the course of the interview he asked this four times. Each time he asked for a bit more detail about my relatives and the location of their houses. Finally he said, "Oh, the Prospect Hill Warrens." Once he understood my membership in a local family, he had no more trouble remembering my name.

Although my connections to a local family helped me, my incomer status undoubtedly hurt at times. Even though I was born south of the Mason-Dixon Line (in Baltimore), by any Southerner's standards I am a Yankee. One informant introduced me to a man at a local event. I briefly described the study to him and stated that I thought he could make a valuable contribution. He flatly contradicted me, saying, "No, I couldn't." My sister-in-law witnessed this exchange and described it as "a wall dropping down." He physically turned away from me, and then turned back towards me and asked "Are you local?" I told him that although I'm not local, my husband is from Hillsborough. My informant then described her 40-year long relationship with my mother-in-law. The man walked away, but came back five minutes later and gave me his phone number. At the time I interpreted this to mean that he would not speak to an outsider, and that perhaps he was fearful of how I might portray his ethnic group. As I spent time with him during the interview, I discovered that he has a sharp sense of humor of the type that involves making statements in opposition to reality. I no longer know how to interpret this event. Was he disclaiming his ability to make a contribution, was he just joking with me, or was he fearful of the results of the interview? In the interview he spoke freely about ethnicity and identity. This story illustrates that this work will be a result of my interpretation of what others choose either to tell or withhold from me. It should be viewed as a

collaborative effort among the participants and me to portray perceptions of reality that may be fluid and shifting. Participants have both conscious and unconscious agendas. I attempt to identify these, and assume that I sometimes succeed and sometimes fail. My interpretation of their stories will undoubtedly be colored by these successes and failures.

Biases and Beliefs

Evernden suggests that "the investigator must put his own beliefs aside; he must 'bracket' his own preconceptions" (Evernden 1985, p. 59). Before this is possible the investigator must be aware of what those beliefs are, and how they might impact her study. As I began this study, I considered my own attitudes towards the conflicts between the goal of historic preservation and my homeowner's instinct to resent interference with my personal property rights. I looked forward to a close examination of the relationship between people and the historic landscape and assumed that this would result in a clarification of my attitudes and beliefs. I thought I would discover "the answer" and would no longer harbor mixed feelings about the actions of the Historic District Commission.[4] I was mistaken in this assumption. I am no closer to drawing conclusions about the optimal way of managing the tensions between preservation and property rights than I was at the beginning of this study. As I talked to people during this study I heard a range of opinions about the historic landscape, from a strong preservationist position to a strong libertarian position, and I can empathize with many arguments along this spectrum of opinions. The fact that I can empathize with a variety of opinions about the landscape allowed me to establish rapport with my informants, yet

[4] As a resident of Hillsborough's historic district, the Historic District Commission has power over the color I paint my house, the outbuildings I add to the property, the walkways and driveways, and all visible exterior features of my house.

at the same time I risked giving them the false impression that I agreed with their positions without reservation.

The informants in this study universally (and remarkably) expressed positive feelings about the town of Hillsborough. This does not mean that all citizens of Hillsborough have only happy thoughts about the town, so it is worth considering what may have produced this effect. A bias toward the positive almost certainly occurred in the selection of informants. All of the informants had an interest in history. Since the major question of this study was "how does history connect people to place?" possible informants who expressed no interest in history were not selected. History lovers talking about their relationship to a place which has an identity rooted in history may be expected to have positive feelings about the town. One of the informants said "You've got to enjoy history before you can be connected, you know." A study about water rates would certainly have discovered some people with less positive feelings about the town.

The Procedures

Data collection for this study began in July of 2000 and concluded in February of 2004. During this period of time I attended 28 public meetings, read minutes of many more public meetings that I was unable to attend, and conducted 32 interviews. As a resident of Hillsborough I also routinely read the local and regional newspapers,[5] and often discussed local events with friends and neighbors. The newspapers and public meetings provided much of the background for this study, but the interviews provide the central data of the study.

[5] The News of Orange County, the Chapel Hill Herald section of the Durham Herald, and the Raleigh News and Observer.

Prior to the approval necessary to conduct human subjects research[6] I could not approach people with questions, yet I wanted to learn what issues might be relevant to a study of the relationship between sense of place and the historic aspects of the landscape. To accomplish this I attended public meetings of the Historic District Commission, and I continued to attend throughout the study. Homeowners in the historic district who wish to make changes to the exterior of their homes must have approval of the Historic District Commission. At the meetings I had the opportunity to hear people talk about their property, and to hear the commissioners express their views and reveal their values. I continued to attend the meetings long after they ceased to provide new "data." My long relationship with the commission paid off in the form of three very useful interviews, two with commissioners and one with the town's historic preservation planner. I believe these people would have granted me interviews regardless, but they were clearly comfortable with me by the time we sat down for the interviews. Because I delayed two of these interviews until fairly late in the study, my knowledge of the informants' attitudes and values allowed me to ask better, more specific questions. Another benefit of my long relationship with the commission resulted as I began to wrap up the study and attend the meetings less frequently. The planner often emailed to alert me to meetings that she thought would be especially relevant to this study,[7] or to tell me that a particular meeting would be routine and not as relevant.

[6] Federal regulations require researchers who use human subjects in research projects to train and undergo a review process at their home institution. I took training and obtained certification through the Academic Affairs Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

[7] Hillsborough's historic preservation planner, Margaret Schucker, has a master's degree in landscape architecture. As a result of her interests and education she understood the nature of this study and therefore was able to identify issues that would be relevant.

The most important issue addressed in my Academic Affairs Institutional Review Board (AA-IRB) application was the delicate nature of doing interviews in a very small town where the inclusion of even a few personal characteristics would allow the informant to be identified in the final work. I created two informed consent forms, one for private citizens in which I promised to keep their identity secret, and one for community leaders, in which I stated that I might quote them by name. People who were interviewed as private citizens are identified later in this dissertation by their code name, which is a first name assigned in alphabetical order. Gender is preserved, but the code name does not refer to any other characteristics of the individual. The first woman to be interviewed is identified as Alice, the first man as Adam, the second woman as Betty, and so on. Although the code names do not reveal race or ethnicity, this does not mean that race and ethnicity are unimportant to the study, as I discuss in the following chapters. People who were interviewed as community leaders are identified by their full names.

The language that people used in the interviews reveals information about their perception of the relationship between history and sense of place. Listening to their words and their silences provided information that I collated and analyzed. The historic landscape each person perceives has both visible and invisible elements that are significant to that person. Language provided a path to knowledge about those elements because it "can direct attention, organize insignificant entities into significant composite wholes, and in so doing, make things formerly overlooked--and hence invisible and nonexistent--visible and real." (Tuan 1991, p. 685).

Identifying the informants

My goal was to select people who could articulate their relationship with the historic landscape and who were willing to discuss their values, attitudes, beliefs, and personal and family history. Any selection of informants that met this goal would not produce a cross section of the residents of Hillsborough. There are people in town who are not aware of or interested in the town's history and they may not be able or willing to articulate any relationship with the historic landscape. Purposeful sampling was required, the selection of those informants "from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (Patton 1990, p. 169). As a resident of Hillsborough for many years, I was able to identify some of the people who could provide useful information for this study. Elected officials, the staff of the planning department, the executive director of the Alliance for Historic Hillsborough, the leaders of the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation, and the members of the Historic District Commission are among the community leaders who had the potential to make valuable contributions. I identified other prospective participants as I listened to private citizens make interesting comments about the historic landscape, and as I observed changes to private property that appeared to me to reflect an interest in history. In addition to my own observations of people and property, my mother-in-law provided introductions to many long-term residents and natives of Hillsborough.

Although obtaining a cross section of the population was not the goal, it was relevant to search for informants who represented many segments of the community, because I wanted to incorporate as many different voices as possible. Because "place experiences are necessarily time-deepened" (Relph 1985, p. 27), I assumed in advance that even more important than variation in demographic characteristics would be

variation in the length of time that a person or person's family had been associated with Hillsborough. Therefore, one goal of the sampling strategy was to interview informants who fall along a time continuum of association with Hillsborough, from Native Americans and descendants of the earliest settlers, who know that their ancestors were in the area in the 1700's, to people who have moved into town recently.

Many qualitative researchers (Marshall and Phillips 1999; Robinson and Elliott 1999) note that it is important to identify one or more key informants who can help the researcher gain access to members of a community. This is especially important if the researcher and the community have different demographic characteristics (in my case a Yankee background). The key informant can also help the researcher understand and interpret information gathered during the study, providing useful local background knowledge and insight into customs and mores. Helen Warren, my mother-in-law, served as my key informant and her assistance in this project was extremely valuable. Her long-standing relationships with many people in the town gave me access that I would not otherwise have had. She provided me with a list of possible participants, and in some cases called them before I contacted them to see if they were willing to be interviewed. I assume that among this group there may be people who would have been comfortable refusing a request from me, but who would not have been comfortable refusing a request from her. She was also useful in answering spur-of-the-moment questions about the past landscape.[8]

I began by requesting interviews with some of the people on the list she provided and proceeded by asking them to refer me to others, an approach known as snowball or

[8] It would have been very difficult to discover the answers to many of my questions. For example, is the giant statue of Daniel Boone located at what was the original entrance to Daniel Boone Village? (Yes.)

chain sampling (Patton 1990). The snowball grows as you interview the people suggested and ask them to refer you to others. This approach provided me with more potential informants than I could possibly have interviewed, but it also had limitations. Snowball sampling may work well when the informants understand the purpose of the study and know other possible informants well enough to envision their relationship to the study. For example, the questions "Who do you know who has had meningitis?" or "Who do you know who has moved here from New York?" would probably produce a useful list of interview subjects for studies of meningitis sufferers or migrants from New York. It proved less useful to me because few people in the population at large understand what geography is or what geographers do. This problem was particularly pronounced in the first few interviews, when I was still attempting to pursue the question of the perception of time in the landscape. As the research questions evolved my explanation of the purpose of the study became clearer to the informants. "How does history connect people to place?" made sense to everyone when "How do you perceive a depth of time in the historic landscape?" did not.

As I asked the question "Who do you recommend I interview?" I was invariably referred to the oldest person known to the informant (someone who had lived through history). In some cases I was referred to a person who, I later surmised, had been recommended because the informant knew that the person had few visitors and thought I could perform a useful function by chatting with him or her. Many of these were useful contacts, but as the study proceeded and I refined the original questions and began to see the final shape that the study would take, I increasingly relied on my own local knowledge of the people who could best contribute to the study. The real benefit of

asking folks for additional contacts was the introductions to informants who were not personally known to me (I also asked "May I tell this person that you gave me their name?") In the course of this study I only made two cold calls where I contacted people without that personal introduction, and the tenor of the first conversation with those people was radically different and much more difficult.

In addition to purposeful and snowball sampling, I took advantage of local events to identify possible participants. The annual Festival of the Autumn Moon brings craftspeople to Hillsborough. At this event, I waited by each table until the craftsperson did not have customers, introduced myself, described my study very briefly, and asked if that person felt that history played a role in his or her presence at the festival. I described two ways in which I thought this might be the case: through the history of their craft tradition, or through the attendance of customers who were drawn by the historic nature of the town. Most of those exhibiting at this festival did not see a relationship between history and their presence at the festival, but the two people who did later provided me with fascinating interviews. Another departure from snowball sampling occurred as I attempted to find people who had never visited Hillsborough before. One such opportunity arose when a friend asked to be shown around town, and I asked in return for permission to tape our conversation about the historic landscape. Another time I overheard a conversation among a group of Canadians in the visitor's center, and introduced myself to them. I also gave them a guided tour in return for permission to tape their comments.

Prior to each interview, I decided whether to ask the person to sign the "private citizen" consent form, in which I guaranteed to protect that person's anonymity or the

"community leader" consent form, in which I stated that I might quote the person by name with the proviso that I would not quote them out of context. Were I to begin this study again, I would omit the private citizen consent form entirely. In some cases I discovered that the elderly people I had interviewed as private citizens had been community leaders in earlier decades. In some cases I knew that it would be impossible for me to discuss the content of the interview and still keep the identity of the informant secret. Hillsborough is a very small town, and at least for the insiders there is knowledge of the relationships and life events of others that made it impossible for me to conceal their identity. For example, one woman described to me a conflict she had with the Historic District Commission over an awning at a convenience store (described in Chapter 6). Even though those events had taken place twenty years earlier, the story and the woman would be instantly recognizable to many people. Halfway through the study I abandoned the private citizen consent form, and in some cases went back to people and asked them to sign the community leader form, explaining that I might want to quote them by name. No one objected to being classified as a community leader.

I contacted potential participants by phone or in person. If the person did not know me I mentioned the person who had referred them to me. I then described the study very briefly, and asked if they would be willing to participate. I asked for up to one hour of their time, and stressed that I would not take more of their time than that. If they agreed, we arranged a time and place for the interview. Most of the interviews took place in the homes of the participants. A few interviews took place at the informant's place of work (the museum, the Alliance for Historic Hillsborough), and as I have already described, a few took place during walking or driving tours.

Each interview began with the necessary consent form. Once that was signed, I requested permission to tape record the interview, and none of the informants objected. The tape recorder was a useful tool for several reasons. Most obviously, it provided a record of the interview that could be transcribed, and the transcription was often more accurate in some ways than my memory or perception of the interview. Next, it provided a useful reminder that the interview was on the record. I often asked for clarification for the record, pointing to the tape recorder, when the discussion lead to things that were common knowledge for both me and for the informant. This provided a way to get the informant to talk in more detail about things that they assumed that I already knew. Several people asked me to turn the recorder off on occasion while they discussed things that they wished to tell me but that they did not want to be included in the study. Finally, I used the tape recorder as a way to signal the end of the interview. When the 60-minute tape was full and the wheels stopped turning on the recorder, I ended the interview.

The goal of the interview questions was to allow me to perceive the role of history in each person's connection to place. As Rowles observes, it is not possible to access the perceptions of other people directly, but interpersonal knowledge can be created by developing a shared awareness through "immersion in the everyday worlds of those with whom we study" (Rowles 1978, p. 176). This shared awareness may be created during unstructured interviews in which the interviewer raises broad issues and allows the informant to reveal their unique and idiosyncratic viewpoint (Lincoln and Guba 1985). My approach to the interviews was to ask broad open-ended questions that would invite conversation, rather than present a structured list of questions designed to extract specific information from the informants. The interview questions were designed to initiate

conversation, but not to control or dominate it. Insiders were encouraged to relate their family histories. Incomers were questioned about their decision to locate in Hillsborough in an attempt to discover if historic characteristics of the place created pull factors. As I prepared for each interview I reviewed the basic set of questions and made changes that were designed to take advantage of each informant's particular knowledge or experiences. For example, I asked members of the Historic District Commission many of the same questions that I asked private citizens about life in Hillsborough, but I also asked them questions about their role in maintaining the historic landscape.

I interviewed 32 people,[9] and most of these interviews lasted an hour. This is referred to as an "in-depth interview" in much of the literature (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Miles and Crush 1993; Baxter and Eyles 1999), but that phrase is misleading. An hour is not enough time to do more than begin to understand the informant's relationship with place, however it is more in-depth than survey research, and it does provide a window into the lifeworld of the informant. It is not reasonable to ask an informant for more than an hour of their time. In some cases I conducted a second interview to further explore the issues that emerged during the research. The interviews conducted during driving tours were significantly longer and do merit the title "in-depth," both as a result of the greater length of time, and as a result of the fact that they were more specifically focused on the landscape. Since I assumed that my interviewing skills would improve over time, I did not want to begin by interviewing community leaders who might provide vital information, so my first few interviews were with private citizens. I discovered that

[9] The number does not include the off-the-record conversations that I had with elders of the Pleasant Grove Indian community.

everyone has a unique and interesting story and none of the interviews were without significant content.

As I stated earlier, I assumed that my interviewing skills would improve with practice, and I believe they did. I have always thought of myself as an exceptionally good listener, with the skill to hear meaning in both the spoken and the unspoken. I was surprised to discover just how difficult interviewing is, and how much it differs from listening to ordinary conversation. The list of questions that I took to the initial interviews (included in Appendix A) did not produce the depth of information that I was seeking. I do not think I could have done a better job on the first set of questions; it was only through interviewing several different people that I began to see how to best structure the interviews to produce better results. I revised the standard set of questions by rewording some questions, changing the order of some questions, adding some new questions, and also by adding a visual component with a display board of a map and photos of some historic structures (see Appendix A for the revised questions and the reasoning behind each revision or addition). Some of the new questions were meant to elicit any imaginative engagement with the past. Other questions ask the informants to move imaginatively from the present back into the past or in the other direction, from the past to the present and into the future.

I created field notes about each interview, recording details about the situational context and the unspoken meaning within the interview (Kitchin and Tate 2000). The field notes included the initial approach or contact with the informant, a record of the setting or location of the interview, details about the personal interactions between myself and the informant (sometimes including notes about body language, facial expressions

and other nuances not recorded in the transcript), and my initial impressions of the substance of the interview. In an attempt to get the study moving forward I sometimes squeezed the interviews into busy work days, and did not always have time to write the notes on the day of the interview. It mattered. Field notes written even one day later lacked the richness of detail of notes written immediately after the interview, just as Gubrium and Holstein suggest (Gubrium and Holstein 1997). Once I had identified this problem, on days when I could not write up the field notes immediately I began taping them for later transcription.

I began with the assumption that I would transcribe all of the interviews. I viewed this as an important part of the analytical process. Listening to each interview again at the slow pace of transcription would allow me to think about what I was hearing and would help me begin the analysis. I would hear things at this pace that I had missed or misunderstood during the interview. Nevertheless, I fairly quickly decided (as so many others also have done) that my time was more valuable than the money it would cost to pay someone to transcribe them. By the end of the study I had grown tired of the poor quality and slow delivery of a local business service, and began doing the transcription again myself. Upon reflection, I think it was good that I began and ended this way. Transcribing the first few interviews gave me that closer contact with the data that I had anticipated, and this was valuable as I refined the study procedures. By the end of the study a year and a half had passed and a closer look at the data was again valuable as I was analyzing the themes in the data. On several occasions I discovered things as I listened to the tapes while transcribing them—that I had subtly misinterpreted something, or that I had mentally inserted something that the informant had not actually said. This

led me to a decision to listen to all of the interviews again to be certain that my summaries and analyses were accurate.

Writing the Analysis

Patton describes analysis as "the process of bringing order to the data, organizing what is there into patterns, categories, and basic descriptive units" (Patton 1987, p. 144). What procedures allow the researcher to unravel the tangle of concepts and then to knit them into a coherent narrative? Analysis takes place at every step of the process, from considering who to interview and why, to listening carefully during the interviews, to transcribing or reading over a transcription, to the initial coding of the interviews for themes, to writing summaries, to organizing material into chapters and then finally writing those chapters. At each step one must think about the directions that the research might take. I title this section "writing the analysis" because it is within the writing process that the bulk of the analysis took place. The collection, coding and collation of data only began the analysis process and prepared me for the task of finding coherence in what 32 unique individuals said. In this section I describe the procedures that facilitated the analysis.

I began by using the software program NVivo, which allows the attachments of a hierarchy of codes to documents or portions of documents. Each interview was stored as a separate document. Some codes, such as the demographic characteristics of the informants, were applied to the entire document. Other codes were applied to specific portions of the interviews. For example, I coded sections of text for the geographic location being discussed by the informant during that portion of the interview, aggregating the specific place names used by informants into regions of the town (e.g.

West Hillsborough, Tuscarora Drive area, Downtown, others). I also coded portions of each document for themes such as attachment to place, family history, and many more.

Coding was an important part of the initial analysis, as it forced me to consider the themes. New themes and concepts emerged from each interview. Because of this, Lincoln and Guba recommend an iterative approach in which after each interview the researcher recodes all of the earlier interviews (Lincoln and Guba 1985). I found this to be both unnecessary and unnecessarily time consuming. It was unnecessary because each informant's discussion was unique, and I attempted to develop codes that captured the nuances of their thoughts rather than just a broad category. Although this meant that each interview had its own set that included many unique codes and hundreds of codes resulted, it also meant that those hundreds of codes suggested a much more nuanced understanding of the multiplicity of views than a simpler but more universal coding scheme would have provided. Another benefit of using NVivo was that it allowed the collation and retrieval of information. NVivo can collate all of the segments of text coded for each theme across all of the interviews. Each search produces a document consisting of fragments of interviews, all of which deal with the same theme. Although NVivo has more sophisticated analysis capabilities, I used it only as a smart filing cabinet that allowed me to sort, collate and retrieve information easily.

Interpretation

NVivo provided a framework for storing and retrieving information at the beginning of the project, but its usefulness was limited. I now understand something that annoyed me as I prepared the proposal for this research: the literature on qualitative research is full of details on the mechanics of data storage and retrieval, but is

mystifyingly silent on the actual creative processes of interpretation. Nor am I, having now completed the task, any better able to describe it than those other authors were. I can only describe the approach that I took. I read the interview transcripts and wrote summaries of the information they contained. I thought about them. I created concept maps on which I wrote all of the ideas related to a topic and then explored the linkages between those ideas (See Appendix B for an example). The concept maps provided a non-linear way of presenting the non-linear data, and were a useful preliminary step to prepare for the linear activity of writing. I drew preliminary conclusions and wrote about them, many of which I later decided were wrong.[10] I read and listened to the interviews again. I considered which informants had similar stories to tell and wrote analyses of how those stories related to one another.

As patterns began to emerge I considered which stories should be included as case studies. This proved to be an important part of the process. Certain stories stuck with me, demanding to be considered. I knew they were important, but at first I did not know why. Some of these were "set pieces" that the person had obviously told to others many times before.[11] These stories were included by the informant for their significance and the fact that they condense and summarize something important or remarkable. Other stories emerged in bits and pieces over the course of one or more interviews.[12] I attempted to reconstruct both the surface and the hidden meanings of the stories. The eventual result of the collaboration between me and the informants is another story,

[10] For example, for a long time I clung to the notion that considering the different relationships of insiders and incomers to place as a dichotomy was overly simplistic. Surely, I thought, there must be a continuum of place experiences. In the end I came to the conclusion that their experiences of place are profoundly different.
[11] For example, Mrs. X and the gas pump canopy, told in Chapter 6.
[12] For example, Helen Warren's story of her introduction to the "significant" houses of Hillsborough, told in Chapter 4.

which I tell in the following chapters, the story of the way in which history connects people to place. Over time the data of the interviews sorted itself out into the following categories: attachment to place (Chapter 5, responsibility to place (Chapter 6) and transformation of place (Chapter 7). This approach follows the recommendations of Entrikin (Entrikin 1990) and Tuan, who states that "the technique of a cultural-humanist (descriptive) geographer is basically that of a storyteller" (Tuan 1989, p. 240).

Qualitative Rigor

In qualitative data analysis and interpretation, creative insight is necessary. Although the process by which flashes of insight occur is impossible to describe, the careful procedures of data analysis create the opportunities for insight. Miles and Huberman (Miles and Huberman 1984) emphasize that human beings are very good at discovering patterns but that they sometimes perceive them inaccurately. The crucial task, therefore, is to verify that the patterns that I identify accurately represent the data collected through techniques designed to produce qualitative rigor (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Since the final work represents a collaboration, I offered most of the informants[13] the opportunity to read this work prior to publication, a technique known as "member checking' that is designed to ensure qualitative rigor (Baxter and Eyles 1999). Taking this approach with informants "extend(s) their involvement into a phase of research from which conventionally they would be excluded" (Rowles, p. 182) and reinforces the idea that knowledge creation is a mutual endeavor between researcher and informant. Helen Warren, the key informant of this study read each chapter as it was completed and often provided further useful insights. I placed the chapters online at a website and gave some

[13] Some informants told me that they did not wish to read the final work. Some had moved or changed phone numbers by the end of the project and I was unable to reach them.

of the other informants and members of the community an opportunity to read them as they were completed. The three informants associated with the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation read Chapter 7, which discusses the emergence of the tribe's identity. All of those who responded after reading the work were pleased with the way they were represented. John and Lynette Jeffries stated that they felt that the chapter on the Occaneechi was accurate and that they would not "take a thing away from it or add to it."

There is nothing like knowing that one's informants, many of whom are also friends and neighbors, will read the work prior to publication to induce in one the correct frame of mind to pursue rigor. It led me back to the transcripts and the tapes of the interviews again and again. Did I express what they really meant? Are the nuances correct? Prior to beginning this study I worried about a possible conflict between my need to write something both rigorous and "true" and my need to create a work that would have a positive impact on my community and that would not result in harm to the informants (one of whom is my mother-in-law). It was challenging to write with the knowledge that they would read what I had written about them and about what they said. It had to be written in such a way that it treated their ideas with respect, even those ideas that are quite different from mine. This is philosophically necessary for me and politically necessary too, since I live here. However I found that this challenge produced better writing, both technically and substantively. I did not have the option of being sloppy with words or ideas, which resulted in clearer thinking. It challenged me to keep probing until I understood the standpoint from which they made their statements, which resulted in greater understanding. So what I feared at the beginning (how do I write

truthfully without offending anyone?) actually turned out to be a positive thing, and to play a critical role in the analysis.

In most cases I found it easy to write with respect, and to tell the person's story as I believed they would see it because I felt genuine respect (and often affection) for the informants. There were, however, a few people for whom I had difficulty achieving the proper level of respect. It was my struggles with writing about a portion of one of those interviews that led me to consciously consider my writing approach—it had been so easy with the others that I had not had to think about it. The struggle forced me to consider the criteria that I had been unconsciously using when writing about people whom I like. Using this approach then became a method of analysis. In telling a person's story what I write:

- Must be true to the meaning that I perceived during the interview. I must present my impressions accurately. This is the primary consideration, more important than everything else that follows.
- Must be true to the message that the person thought they were conveying. I must present that, even if the analysis that I presents suggests a different meaning.
- Must present that person in the light in which they see themselves, or at least not contradict their beliefs about themselves.
- Must show respect to the informant.
- Must show respect to the readers, including readers who differ in ideology or ethnicity from the informant.

There is, of course, no such thing as truth, but this produces writing that is as true as I can make it—true to what I perceive, and true to what the informants believe. In retrospect I believe that I was right to worry in advance about the way that I represent the community and the people in it. I could not have foreseen the resolution of this problem until I began writing the actual chapters for public consumption.

Returning Knowledge to the Community

Relph discusses the positive transformational nature of education, and the geographer's social responsibilities to the community (Relph 1989). It was my goal from the outset to produce a work that would have educational and practical value for my community as well as scholarly value. Many people have repeatedly expressed an interest in reading the final work. I have promised a copy of the dissertation to the Alliance for Historic Hillsborough, and I will place a copy in the Hillsborough branch of the Orange County Public Library. I will offer to speak before the member organizations of the Alliance, and before the Historic District Commission to describe the results of this study. It is my hope that this work will help foster a sense of community within Hillsborough, by allowing insiders and incomers to understand one another better, and to understand the processes through which both groups and their interactions with each other have constructed the place known as Hillsborough.