

# Understanding the embodiment of discrimination, stigma, and agency among waste workers in Shimla (India), and its impact on their health and well – being

## Background

Waste work in India is deeply embedded with symbolic and practical manifestations of caste, gender, religion and class, with a majority of them belonging to historically oppressed communities.

Despite the social, economic and ecological importance of their work, waste workers are not given due recognition and continue to struggle under the pressures, of poverty, stigma and compromised citizenship. They are discriminated against by way of their socio – economic background and occupation and are often viewed with suspicion and distrust, by the state and society.

Existing evidence and knowledge on waste workers in India is largely focused on the scientific treatment of waste and integrating waste workers into solid waste management systems. Research that explores and understands the more intimate aspects of their lives is hard to find. **This research aims to bring forth the lived realities and experiences of waste workers.**



This research will be conducted in Shimla, a hill city located in northern India and situated amidst the western Himalayas.



## Research Objectives

To examine the practices of 'dis/respect' and its contextual influences, with a special focus on the intersections of gender, caste, class and religion and its effect on health and well –being.

To explore understandings and practices of 'discrimination' and its quotidian manifestations in the lives of waste workers.

To explore **how** waste workers **cope** with everyday discrimination and stigma, and understand its influence on their experiences of **health and well – being**.

To investigate how discrimination, stigma and collectivisation affects waste workers' 'agency' to access **health services** and their fundamental **rights to health and dignity**.



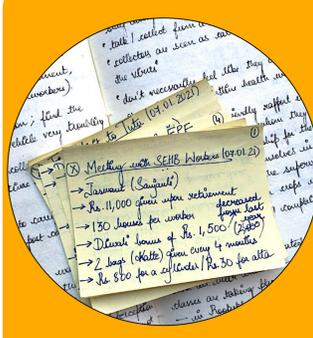
## Methodology



Participant - Observation



In-Depth Interviews & Life Histories



Reflexive Diarising (Researcher)

Ethnographic Approach

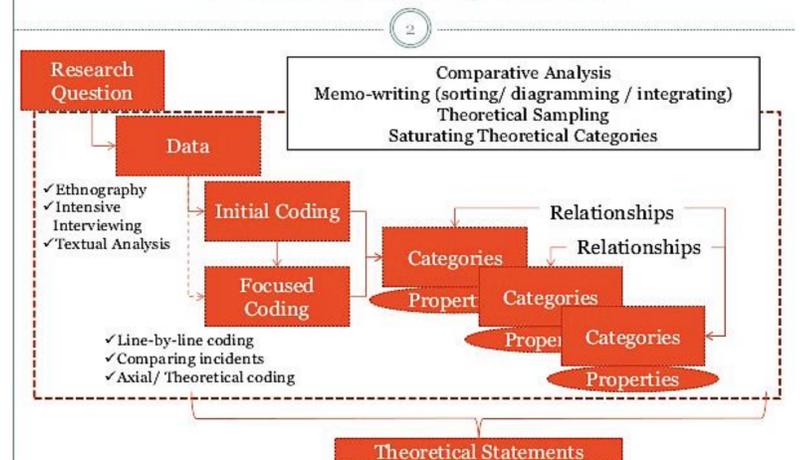
## Analytical Approach

Kathy Charmaz's Grounded Theory

"...the researcher should not predetermine a priori about what he or she will find, and what and how social phenomena should be viewed. Therefore, the value of Grounded Theory is that it avoids making assumptions and instead adopts a more neutral view of human action in a social context."

Simmons, DE (2006)

### Grounded Theory Process



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