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New Research on Housing and Territorial Stigma

Editors

Margarethe Kusenbach and Peer Smets

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Editorial

New Research on Housing and Territorial Stigma: Introduction to the Thematic Issue

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Abstract
This introduction to the thematic issue on housing and territorial stigma provides concise overviews of the concepts of stigma, housing stigma, and territorial (or neighborhood) stigma, while tracing back current research on these topics to the pioneering work of Erving Goffman and Loic Wacquant. In doing this, we place particular attention on social responses to, and coping strategies with, stigma, especially various forms of stigma resistance. Finally, in brief summaries of all articles in the thematic issue, we emphasize their shared themes and concerns.

Keywords
Goffman; homelessness; housing; marginalization; migration; neighborhoods; social/public housing; stigma; territorial stigmatization; Wacquant

Issue
This editorial is part of the issue "New Research on Housing and Territorial Stigma" edited by Margarethe Kusenbach (University of South Florida, USA) and Peer Smets (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands).

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1. Introduction

It is the goal of this thematic issue to present new and original research on experiences and social processes of stigmatization in relation to housing and neighborhoods—as applied, for instance, to people living in public or social housing developments, institutional housing, impoverished neighborhoods, or informal settlements, yet also to those without any housing, as well as migrants and displaced groups. Residents of so-called "problem" neighborhoods and other marginalized locations typically experience multiple forms of denigration that may include cultural stigmatization, physical and symbolic exclusion from public spaces and institutions, extreme surveillance, biased policing and criminalization, material neglect, as well as exposure to violence, crime, disorder, and environmental hazards. People in marginalized neighborhoods and housing arrangements are tainted by virtue of living or spending time in these environments. They face personal and collective stigmatization by others based on being considered uneducated, lazy, dirty, immoral, or criminal. Housing and territorial stigma is seldom rooted in personal familiarity and in-depth understanding, yet it most often stems from second-hand stereotypes and false characterizations that circulate in mass media and popular culture.

To give one example: The visibility of rubbish or trash on the streets of disadvantaged neighborhoods is often interpreted as evidence for the poor cleanliness practices and preferences of their inhabitants. When these residents are migrants from other, and especially non-Western, countries, judgements are typically associated with the migrants' "inferior" cultural or ethnic backgrounds or religious beliefs (Douglas, 2003). In the 2019 Dutch documentary film *Returning to Akbar Street* (van Erp, Busman, & Dogan, 2019), about a street in the

disadvantaged "Kolenkit" neighborhood in Amsterdam, anthropologist Sinan Çankaya offers an alternative and more accurate view of this problem. His insights are based on his personal life and research in the neighborhood where large migrant families from non-Western countries live in small housing units, replacing wealthier, white residents who moved out when migrants began to arrive. Here, apartments and neighborhood facilities were originally created for smaller households and a smaller number of residents overall. For instance, the size and number of trash containers is simply too small to hold the amount of rubbish produced by current residents, and garbage pick-up is too infrequent, leading to trash spilling out into the streets on a regular basis. Poverty and cultural barriers are keeping residents from furnishing their own solutions. Due to a lack of facilities and official responses, the neighborhood trash problem is spiraling out of control. To outsiders, it looks like the new migrant residents are to blame for the issue and, moreover, that it is their cultural or personal preference to live on dirty streets, yet this interpretation is false and based on stereotypes. As this example shows, normative cultural views of places, objects, practices, and moral character become conflated and reinforce each other over time.

2. What Is Stigma?

The example indicates that housing and territorial stigma is a complex phenomenon which can be difficult to define and apply precisely in scholarly research. In this section, we approach the topic of housing and territorial stigma via a brief discussion of stigma more generally. One useful definition of stigma is offered by Pescosolido and Martin (2015, p. 91) in a thorough overview article:

> Stigma…is the mark, the condition, or status that is subject to devaluation….Stigmatization is the social process by which the mark affects the lives of all those touched by it.

Here, we see that stigma, as a noun, is a negative attribute that is associated with certain people, places, or objects. In contrast, stigmatization, as a verb, refers to a social process by which persons suffer negative impacts due to their association with a condition. This process can include a variety of actions, such as labeling, stereotyping, discrimination, exclusion, and separation, among others. Stigmatization is rooted in cultural beliefs; however, it also depends on power and social structures. It can only occur when some have the ability to impose their definitions and treatments on others due to their privileged access to material and immaterial resources. Interestingly, through contamination, stigmatization can also affect people who are merely connected with stigmatized others, places, or objects but are not themselves carriers of the mark (for a more detailed overview of the concept see, in this volume, Horgan, 2020; see also Link & Phelan, 2001).

In their overview, Bos, Pryor, Reeder, and Stutterheim (2013) offer a useful and innovative typology of stigma. The authors distinguish between public stigma, self-stigma, stigma by association, and structural stigma. The concept of "public stigma" aims at those who engage in stigmatizing others based on negative perceptions and interpretations. Here, cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of stigma and stigmatization are examined together. The second type of stigma, "self-stigma," aims to conceptualize the social and psychological impacts that processes of stigmatization have on stigma recipients. Third, "stigma by association" can be defined as "social and psychological reactions to people associated with a stigmatized person (e.g., family and friends) as well as people's reactions to being associated with a stigmatized person" (Bos et al., 2013, p. 2). Finally, "structural stigma" refers to how societal institutions and ideologies legitimize and cement a person or group's stigmatized status. We find this typology helpful in that it differentiates the major actors and components that define stigma as a social problem and topic of scholarly analysis.

We would be remiss to gloss over the pioneering work on stigma by Erving Goffman (1963), in which stigma was primarily linked with the social construction of deviance. In Goffman's understanding, stigma is negative moral judgment that is attached to people, and their associates, based on either a physical attribute, group membership, or particulars of their character or behavior. Goffman's introduction of stigma as a topic of sociological concern has inspired a large body of research on various forms of social stigmatization in relation to many topics (for overviews see Link & Phelan, 2001; Pescosolido & Martin, 2015; Tyler & Slater, 2018). Current issues discussed in the vast stigma literature include, for example, racialized poverty (Loyd & Bonds, 2018), mental illness (Sheehan, Nieweglowski, & Corrigan, 2017), gender and disability (Thomas, 1999), sanitation work (Vázquez, 2016), and sex work (Benoit et al., 2018). Today's multifaceted stigma research has generated a variety of concepts and models that are rooted in both social constructionism and critical theories of social inequalities. The same can be observed regarding the particular issue of housing and territorial stigma.

3. Housing and Territorial Stigma

As fundamental as they are, Goffman's ideas focus on stigma in reference to people and not with respect to places. While he recognized the importance of bodily stigma, he did not discuss spatial locations, neighborhoods, and forms of housing as material sources of stigma and stigmatization. It is the merit of Loic Wacquant (2007, 2008) and his collaborators (Wacquant, Slater, & Pereira, 2014) that the attention of stigma scholars has expanded to places and neighborhoods, particularly those inhabited by poor residents of color in urban areas. He was also a pioneer in promoting comparative

stigma research in multiple locations, especially across national boundaries.

Theoretically, Wacquant (2008) draws on Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power that is used to examine the making and unmaking of social groups and their spaces from a top down perspective. Besides focusing on the production and institutionalization of stigma, Wacquant's work makes claims about the negative social, material, and emotional impacts of stigma that is linked to the built environment. He argues that internalized territorial stigma leads to declining mutual solidarity, increasing social fragmentation, diminishing institutional support, and lacking economic opportunities (Wacquant et al., 2014). Building on Goffman's and Wacquant's earlier work, territorial stigma in neighborhoods has been studied widely and internationally by a diverse community of scholars (for instance, to name just a few, on Amsterdam, Pinkster, Ferier, & Hoekstra, 2020; on London, le Grand, 2014; on New Delhi, Ganguly, 2018; and on Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Loyd & Bonds, 2018).

Most current research on territorial stigma does not differentiate between stigma that is applied to neighborhoods, types of housing, and types of tenure—however, making such distinctions is becoming increasingly important to further broaden and strengthen this area of research in the future. While housing has a prominent place in the literature dealing with territorial stigma, the focus is placed on those living in public or social housing developments that are owned and managed by municipal, state, or national government entities (e.g., Watt & Smets, 2017). However, there are other forms of housing, as well as other forms of tenure, that are also stigmatized and will also need consideration: for instance, *barrio*, *favela* or "slum" dwellings (Bredenoord, van Lindert, & Smets, 2014; Ferguson & Smets, 2010), manufactures housing and mobile homes (Kusenbach, 2009), Single Room Occupancy (SRO) residences (Horgan, 2018), and, in some contexts, even privately rented homes and apartments (Vassenden & Lie, 2013).

Since not all forms of housing and tenure stigmatization are tied to neighborhoods and/or territories, we need to deepen our understanding of where and how housing and tenure intersect with more generic aspects of the process of stigmatization. Horgan's theoretical article offers significant steps into this direction:

> Housing stigmatization…is neither monolithic nor unidirectional. Thus, a general theory must account for unit-dweller and unit-neighbourhood relationships, as well as multiple housing types and forms of tenure. (Horgan, 2020, p. 13)

Housing and tenure stigma are difficult to grasp because, in almost all cases, they interact with other kinds of stigma, typically regarding territory/neighborhood, but also based on individual or group characteristics in terms of class, race/ethnicity, heritage, religion, health/disability, age, gender, and/or sexuality (for examples see Elias & Scotson, 1994; Smets & Sneep, 2017). Moreover, there is often a general distrust among established residents toward newcomers, regardless of who they are. Note that, depending on contexts, surrounding attributes can intensify housing stigma yet may sometimes work to reduce or even overcome housing stigma.

Despite some research efforts, the multiple layers and aspects of stigmatization (housing, tenure, neighborhood, etc.) intersect in ways that we have yet to examine and understand in sufficient depth. Remedying other thinly covered topics in the literature would require new investigations of housing and territorial stigma in non-metropolitan (suburban, rural) locations, the Global South, among middle classes and higher income groups, to mention only a few. Generally speaking, we believe that housing and territorial stigma is a rapidly growing and diversifying area of research that will continue to be influenced by dominant theories and evolving concerns in sociology and neighboring disciplines.

4. Stigma Responses and Resistance

Over the past two decades, one growing thematic focus in the literature on housing and territorial stigma—besides the social production of stigma by powerful actors, including the state—are the experiences and behavioral responses of stigma recipients. Evidence from numerous studies shows that their reactions vary greatly and can be located on a continuum unfolding between two extremes: acceptance/internalization of, and resignation to, the inflicted stigma on the one side (Wacquant, 2007, 2008) and rejection of, and resistance to, stigma and stigmatization on the other (see, for instance, Hastings, 2004; Jensen & Christensen, 2012; Kirkness, 2014; Kusenbach, 2009; Palmer, Ziersch, Arthurson, & Baum, 2007).

In their research on American and French public housing neighborhoods, Wacquant (2008) and his colleagues, as well as scholars working in their wake, have observe that residents of denigrated neighborhoods internalize stigma and become demoralized as a result. It is argued that resigned acceptance and incorporation of negative views lowers residents' self-esteem, triggers a self-fulfilling prophecy, and eventually perpetuates and even strengthens the validity of stigma in the eyes of non-residents and public institutions. Marginalized neighborhoods are characterized by a lack of informal support and negative symbolic capital (see Watt, 2006). Residents face discrimination on the labor market and differential treatment from governmental institutions. In other words, residents become trapped in stigmatized spaces and are unable to escape, leading to further alienation and exclusion from mainstream society. This is the self-perpetuating cycle of exclusion, in which stigmatization, internalization, alienation, and isolation are stages that reinforce each other (Wacquant et al., 2014).

While Wacquant's and his colleagues' groundbreaking contributions to the study of neighborhood or ter-

ritorial stigma are beyond any doubt, the evolving literature includes an increasing number of studies that offer more nuanced, and at times contradicting, accounts of the impacts of stigmatization on affected residents and their adaptive responses. Many studies reveal that a certain degree of stigma acceptance and internalization can, indeed, be observed among some residents of denigrated housing types or neighborhoods. However, other, typically the majority of, residents engage in individual and collective strategies that resist and counter the stigma they experience, based on the conviction that these views are incorrect and that they, as individuals or as a community, deserve better.

For instance, Palmer et al. (2007) examine how residents deal with reputational problems of the neighborhood. First, they draw boundaries between "good" and "bad" parts and associate themselves with the better area. A second strategy of resistance lies in stigmatized residents' engagement in local social and civic activities. Lastly, residents challenge external stereotypes through getting involved in conversation and public discourse aimed at fighting negative labels. Others studies on social housing estates in the United Kingdom focus on residents' collective efforts to combat negative views through image management (Dean & Hastings, 2000; Hastings, 2004; see also Wassenberg, 2004).

With varying emphasis, all articles collected in this thematic issue build on both Goffman's pioneering introduction of stigma to social science discourse and Wacquant's pivotal theorizing and research on territorial stigmatization. Likewise, in one form or another, all articles in this thematic issue discuss reactions to stigma and examine coping strategies among study participants, while placing particular emphasis on various forms of resistance at both individual and collective levels. In our view, besides strengthening the theoretical foundation of the field, the nuanced empirical analyses of stigma resistance across diverse social and geographical locations are this issue's most significant contribution to the growing literature on housing and territorial stigma.

5. Overview of Articles

This thematic issue originated in a session titled "Housing Stigma" co-organized by the editors of this volume for the 19th World Congress of the International Sociological Association, in Toronto, July 2018, for Research Committee 21 "Regional and Urban Development." Four of the seven articles present research conducted in Western Europe (including in Finland, England, and Scotland), two articles report on North America (United States and Canada), and one article examines housing stigmatization in Asia (Bangladesh). All articles are based on qualitative research, including various kinds of ethnographic observation, in-depth interviews, as well as secondary media and historical research. Some articles offer case studies of single neighborhoods or sites, while others provide a composite analysis based on research in two or more locations; only one article employs a comparative analytic framework. In this final section, we conclude the introduction by offering brief overviews of all seven articles in this thematic issue.

Mervyn Horgan's (2020) groundbreaking article delivers a much-needed theoretical clarification of the concept of housing stigma. After describing the broader social-structural contexts and existing previous knowledge concerning housing stigmatization and related topics, Horgan describes seven elements of a general theory of housing stigma—identifying it as relational, contextual, processual, reinforceable, reversible, morally loaded, and contagious—all of which are revisited, in one form or another, in the following empirical articles. Going beyond its theoretical contribution, Horgan's article also includes a vignette from his own research on the stigmatization of SRO residents in a wealthy Toronto neighborhood, a housing type that has been understudied in the past.

Housing and territorial stigma can only be understood if they are viewed in relation to broader historical, social, and material contexts. In his article about a social housing estate in the periphery of London, United Kingdom, Paul Watt (2020) relates residents' responses to stigma to their struggles in coping with dilapidated housing conditions, an aspect of the built environment that is often overlooked in stigma research. Through an analysis of qualitative interviews and other data sources, Watt finds that the latter, material circumstances are often much more challenging, and impact residents' daily lives more significantly, when compared with symbolic stigmatization. Watt argues that, while serious, symbolic denigrations are often eclipsed by more forceful, in this case material, challenges that affect residents' lives, and that attention to build environments is critical in this area of study.

Attending to a different kind of context, in his article, Pekka Tuominen (2020) closely examines the history, as well as the changing reputation and representation over time, of a socially stigmatized neighborhood near Helsinki in Finland through long-term ethnographic and media research. It is here where specific "senses of belonging and exclusion" are anchored that give rise to particular practices, strategies, and narratives in response to stigma that were provided by diverse residents, both individually and collectively (Tuominen, 2020, p. 34). Shared stigma, when it is not internalized, can empower residents and lead to a strong sense of belonging grounded in shared resistance. Tuominen shows how his research participants were united in their efforts to resist the territorial stigma and turn their place of living into a positive feature of their identity by drawing on Herzfeld's concept of cultural intimacy.

Also relying on historic and long-term ethnographic research conducted in Finland, in her article, Lotta Junnilainen (2020) reconstructs two alternative stigma narratives that she found at the collective level among residents of two Finnish social housing neighborhoods:

one rooted in "class struggle" and the other in "middle-class aspiration," as sources of residential identity, dignity, and pride. In her view, housing and territorial stigma can only be understood if it is viewed in relation to the history and place-based stories of specific locations, and in relation to other, non-stigmatizing social identities and characteristics of its targets. It is here where specific "cultural milieus" are rooted that give rise to particular practices, strategies, and narratives in relation to housing stigma that were observed among diverse residents, both individually and collectively, and by employing a comparative analytic framework.

The final three articles offer detailed examinations of how residents in various locations respond to the negative reputation and stigmatization of their neighborhoods. In their article which is mainly based on interview research, Kazil Fattah and Peter Walters (2020) provide valuable insights into housing and territorial stigmatization in the Global South in their analysis of "discursive formations." They found that residents in two poor and denigrated neighborhoods in Dhaka, Bangladesh, reject the stigma aimed at their place of living and produce counternarratives, even though some appear to readily stigmatize residents of other neighborhoods. Dhaka informants rallied together in declaring their own neighborhoods to be "good places" to live for the poor, due to the many advantages and resources they provide. Fattah and Walter's article reveals interesting similarities yet also differences with housing and territorial stigmatization in the Global North that will have to be examined elsewhere in more detail in the future.

Focusing on an understudied housing type, in her article, Margarethe Kusenbach (2020) examines reactions to housing stigmatization in mobile home communities in Florida, in the United States. Her analysis discusses three major response strategies found among poor white mobile home residents, the most vulnerable targets of the "trailer trash" stigma, which is simultaneously aimed at certain neighborhoods, a form of housing, and residents' personal character. The three identified response strategies are resisting, downplaying, and perpetuating, the latter showing some acceptance of the stigma when it is rejected personally but used to stigmatize others who live nearby. The different reactions to stigma are related to varying senses of belonging and unbelonging in the mobile home community. By examining white, non-urban recipients of housing stigma who are predominantly homeowners, Kusenbach's article broadens research on this topic beyond urban populations of color who reside in public housing complexes or inner-city neighborhoods.

Lastly, in her article, Jennifer Hoolachan (2020) circles back to examining how housing stigma is embedded within larger contexts by including study participants' other identities based on (young) age and deviant behavior (in this case, drug use) in the analysis. Hoolachan's ethnographic and interview-based research with homeless youth took place in a transitional housing facility in Scotland. Echoing findings of other articles in this issue, she discovered that youth engage in distancing and othering by projecting the stigma that was aimed at them onto others, as well as rejecting stigma altogether, and producing alternative, positive counternarratives. Hoolachan shows how multiple social identities work together, how they can be variably constructed as either positive or negative, and consequently, how they are either embraced or rejected. Hoolachan's analysis opens up new links between housing stigmatization research and the vast literatures on homelessness, youth, and deviance, as well as work on identity construction and management more generally.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Housing Stigmatization: A General Theory

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Abstract
This article treats housing stigmatization as a social process of symbolic ascription, connected to inhabitants, housing form, housing tenure, and/or housing location. Stigmatization research tends to focus on personal stigmatization, or to examine housing only in relation to territorial stigmatization, while housing research tends to focus on health and policy. This article demonstrates that housing stigmatization, which is differentiated from personal stigmatization and territorial stigmatization, is a viable unit of analysis in its own right for stigma research. Seven core elements are identified, showing that housing stigmatization is: (1) relational; (2) contextual; (3) processual; (4) reinforceable; (5) reversible; (6) morally loaded; and (7) treated as contagious. Comprehending the elements of housing stigmatization will benefit destigmatization efforts.

Keywords
housing; housing stigmatization; stigma; stigmatization; tenure

Issue
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1. Introduction

In May 2017, *Toronto Life* magazine, a popular self-styled "guide to life in Toronto," ran an article titled "We Bought a Crack House." Authored by one-half of a young affluent couple, the article tells their story of purchasing a "three-storey detached Victorian on a corner lot" (Jheon, 2017) in Toronto's Parkdale neighbourhood, equally renowned for its poverty, single room occupancy (hereafter, SRO) housing, community organizing, and gentrification. The house was a "crumbling Parkdale rooming house, populated by drug users and squatters and available on the cheap," with a "post-apocalyptic vibe inside," but the couple sensed that "[b]eneath the grime, dust, junk and assorted drug paraphernalia was a potentially stunning home" (Jheon, 2017). The article recounts their travails evicting existing residents and deconverting the rooming house, and throughout it is peppered with the before-and-after images that so thoroughly infuse the property-porn obsessed age of real estate speculation.

This vignette draws together multi-dimensional and overlapping processes of stigmatization: stigmatized housing type (SRO); stigmatized form of tenure (short-term rental); stigmatized neighbourhood (Parkdale); and stigmatized identities (drug users and squatters). Working together, these layers of stigmatization generate a morally-laden tale of inequality and exclusion organized around housing that bears a negative taint.

Little research to date focuses explicitly on housing stigmatization: Housing research generally tends to focus on policy, and stigmatization research on housing tends to connect it to territorial stigmatization. To develop a general theory of housing stigmatization, I treat housing as a viable unit of analysis in its own right for stigma research by disentangling housing stigmatization from two closely related but analytically distinct forms: personal stigmatization and territorial stigmatization. While all three forms are connected in practice, housing stigmatization remains comparatively underscrutinized. Developing a general theory of housing stigmatization informs strategies for blunting or undermining its force, and addresses a gap in existing literature.

First, I outline the relationship between housing and stigma, showing how conceptual tools from interpretive sociology are useful in bringing housing and stigma research together. Next, I distinguish between stigma as

a state, and stigmatization as a process. Then, I survey three broad literatures on stigmatization, primarily from Western contexts: individual/group level stigmatization; territorial stigmatization; and housing stigmatization. Drawing out themes from existing research, I discuss seven core elements of housing stigmatization, showing how it is: (1) relational; (2) contextual; (3) processual; (4) reinforceable; (5) reversible; (6) morally loaded; and (7) treated as contagious. Deepening our understanding of how these elements work together in producing housing stigmatization aids in destigmatization efforts. Finally, I consider potential applications and limitations of the general theory.

2. The Housing Stigma Interface

The UN identifies a:

> Global crisis in access to adequate housing [defined as adequate privacy, adequate space, adequate security, adequate lighting and ventilation, adequate basic infrastructure and adequate location with regard to work and basic facilities-all at a reasonable cost]…rooted in a crisis in access to justice. (Farha, 2019, p. 3)

Addressing this crisis necessitates understanding interconnections between housing policy reforms, state withdrawal from housing provision, and housing's rapid financialization (August & Walks, 2018; Fitzpatrick & Pawson, 2014; Forrest & Hirayama, 2015; Rutland, 2010). That said, housing stigmatization cannot be understood or reversed by an exclusive analytic focus on housing as commodity and policy object (King, 2009). For example, as homelessness research shows, being homeless endures as a stigma globally (Anderson, Snow, & Cress, 1999; Hansen, 2018; Somerville, 1992; Ursin, 2016), yet being housed does not automatically mean that stigma is absent. While an address is fundamental to accessing rights of citizenship and residency, an address alone ensures neither full societal membership, nor neighbourhood belonging, nor community esteem.

Stigma research approaches stigma as an ascribed characteristic of persons, places, and things. Early waves of research focused primarily on personal or identity-based stigma. Over the last quarter-century this focus has been supplemented and extended by research on, for example, structural stigma (Hatzenbuehler & Link, 2014), territorial stigma (Wacquant, 1993), and housing stigma (Hastings, 2004). Recent research also analyzes destigmatization (Clair, Daniel, & Lamont, 2016). Before surveying these literatures, I first describe stigmatization as a symbolic process whose effects are not only symbolic.

2.1. Housing Stigmatization Is Symbolic

Housing is a material necessity layered with multiple meanings, but the symbolic dimensions of material inequalities are often overlooked. Recent research in cultural sociology markedly advances our understanding of the role of symbolic classification, in particular, in (re)producing inequality and exclusion (Alexander, 2007; Lamont et al., 2016). Following an interpretive social scientific thread running from Durkheim (1995), through Goffman (1963) and Douglas (1966) to Alexander (2006) and Lamont et al. (2016), my approach focuses on the social life of symbolic ascriptions. This interpretive social scientific perspective treats meaning as central to social life (cf. Blumer, 1969; Geertz, 1973; Weber, 1978). While this approach is relatively marginal in housing studies, it has much to offer.

To treat stigmatization as symbolic, our analyses must be meaning-centred. This means disentangling the processes by which housing markets marginalize people, from other less well understood processes, like stigmatization, that work alongside—and, sometimes, independently of—market dynamics. Since "the marketplace does not exhaust modern society, which is filled with places and positions that operate according to fundamentally different logics" (Alexander, 2018, p. 6), my approach hedges on the overlap between symbolic denigration and economic forces, and focuses on a meaning-centered analysis of stigmatization as a symbolic ascription.

A meaning-centered analysis addresses the current lack of a general framework for understanding how specific forms of housing and specific housing units in particular become stigmatized. From the slums of Lagos and Manila (Davis, 2007) to the Parisian *banlieues* and Chicago's 'ghetto' (Wacquant, 1993), from Toronto's SROs (Horgan, 2018) to Beijing's informal settlements (Huang & Jiang, 2009), housing stigmatization may well be a global phenomenon, but may not be everywhere identical. It is unevenly applied and varies contextually. Focusing on meaning helps make sense of this variability. The argument that follows focuses on the symbolic processes by which negative meanings attach to housing. It does not analyze consequences of stigmatization or the resistance strategies of stigmatized persons/groups. What it does do is deepen our understanding of broader processes of stigmatization (of housing and beyond) and provide conceptual foundations for developing destigmatization strategies.

2.2. Stigmatization Is a Process, Stigma Is Its Product

Stigma describes the "situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance" (Goffman, 1963, p. 9). Relatedly, the theory of symbolic pollution posits dirt/pollution as "matter out of place" (Douglas, 1966, p. 36). When people and properties that should not be here, are here, based on how their presence is interpreted by others they can be stigmatized and socially excluded. Thus, spatio-temporal context shapes who or what is stigmatized.

If stigma is an ascribed quality with negative meanings, then stigmatization is the social process making

negative meanings stick to persons, places, practices, or things. Because stigmatization is meaningful and interpretive, it is malleable. Stigmatized individuals are not necessarily stigmatized in all places at all times. There are many examples of destigmatized identities and forms of conduct, for example, homosexuality in Western liberal democracies. This contextual variability emphasizes that stigmatization is processual. Treated as a process rather than a product, stigmatization requires symbolic work to be reinforced or reversed.

In light of the above, I define stigmatization as the social process of symbolic denigration of persons, places, practices, and/or things. The case of housing stigmatization adds some complexity.

2.3. From Stigmatization in General to Housing Stigmatization in Particular

Housing is first and foremost material, but it is not only material. As anthropologists of housing demonstrate, housing is symbolically-laden, infused with meanings that weave persons, places, things, and ideals into "dense webs of signification" (Carsten & Hugh-Jones, 1995, p. 3; see also Lévi-Strauss, 1988). Stigmatization is primarily symbolic, but is also material in the sense that it attaches to persons, places, and things. Its effects are also material, and markedly so when material deprivation and negative symbolic ascription combine (Hatzenbuehler & Link, 2014; Link & Phelan, 2014).

Discussing housing and stigmatization simultaneously means exploring intersections between material reality and the symbolic realm of signification. Housing stigmatization involves the process of ascribing symbolically denigrating qualities—stigma—to material artifacts—housing. As Goffman's (1963, pp. 30–31) concept of "courtesy stigma" demonstrates, stigma can spread; for example, housing units may be stigmatized by stigmatized residents and/or location. Moreover, particular housing types and forms of tenure are also stigmatized. With housing stigmatization, the flexibility of a social ascription meets the relative durability of the built environment. A general theory of housing stigmatization, then, must account for the meanings ascribed to residents of particular housing units, to neighbourhoods where they are located, to particular housing types, and to forms of tenure.

In light of the above, I define housing stigmatization as the social process of symbolic denigration of particular housing units due to their inhabitants, form, tenure, and/or location.

3. Situating Housing Stigmatization

Housing mediates the complex relationship between the individual and their neighbourhood, community, and societal membership. Analytically distinguishing between stigmatization as it applies to persons and to places helps unpack this relationship. To situate a general theory of housing stigmatization, I group existing research into two broad categories: identity-based stigma (individual/group level stigma), and place-based stigma (territorial and housing stigma). Below, I begin by discussing identity-based stigma, connecting it to recognition as a core dimension of social justice and inclusion. Next, I survey research on territorial stigmatization—in particular as it concerns housing—before moving to research on housing and stigma, focusing on what I call 'tainted type and tenure.' With this context in place, I then identify and describe seven core elements of housing stigmatization.

3.1. Individual/Group Level Stigma

For Goffman (1963), stigma is a social ascription of taint—that is, a negative moral judgment of character and/or worth—that attaches to persons because of: (1) a physical attribute, usually visible to others; (2) membership in a particular group; or (3) some element of their personality or behaviour that brings disrepute. Stigma is a "discrediting…undesired differentness" (Goffman, 1963, pp. 3–5), where a tainted part represents the whole. Stigmatization is the eminently social process by which some people deem others to be impure, profane, or polluted (Durkheim, 1995). As a social process of symbolic ascription, stigmatization connects a person's conduct, for example, and negative moral judgment. Stigma is the product of this moral judgment (Yang et al., 2007).

There is no inherent, natural, necessary, or fixed relationship between a particular person, their character, their conduct, or their group membership and their stigmatization. The social ascription of stigma draws upon a binary symbolic structure dividing the world into sacred and profane categories (Durkheim, 1995). Stigmatization requires continuous discursive revitalization of this binary, through, for example, direct statement ('they are bad') or discursive alignment with polluting properties ('they are vermin'). While what is considered impure varies cross-culturally, that the impure is to be excluded, feared, and/or avoided appears to be constant (Douglas, 1966). The contents of stigma vary, but stigma as a form is steady. What is sacred is good, what is profane is stigmatized (Alexander, 2006; Durkheim, 1995). Thus, while, stigma's symbolic structure is analytically independent of particular persons or locations, it is enlivened and mobilized in specific times and places with regard to specific persons and groups.

Since Goffman's initial formulation, stigma research has developed remarkably, focusing, for example, on the stigma management strategies of persons experiencing homelessness (Anderson et al., 1999; Roschelle & Kaufman, 2004), panhandlers (Lankenau, 1999), and persons with visible disabilities (Cahill & Eggleston, 1994). Examining the management of stigmatized identities in public places provides an inroad in to understanding the relationship between personal identity and societal membership.

Goffman-inspired stigma research also has its critics. Kusow (2004) argues that a focus on identity management fails to get at contemporary manifestations of the stigmatization process. In Kusow's view, the agency of racially stigmatized groups—Goffman's "tribal stigma" (Goffman, 1963, pp. 4–5)—needs reconsideration in light of complex membership and group identification in contemporary societies defined by heterogeneity in personal and group attachments. This connects to broader political philosophical understandings of recognition as central to the achievement of social justice and inclusion (Honneth, 1996; Lamont et al., 2016; Taylor, 1994).

Since Goffman, linkages between stigmatization, discrimination, and negative attitudes have become well established (Klin & Lemish, 2008; Philo et al., 1994; Powell, 2008). Link and Phelan (2001) connect stigma to discrimination at three levels: individual, structural, and through the beliefs and behaviors of the stigmatized person. The internalization of negative judgment by stigmatized persons animates research on those who accept being denied full societal membership, and is found too in research analyzing heightened self-monitoring by stigmatized persons (Zaussinger & Terzieva, 2018).

Tying together these various strands, recent research demonstrates the causal power of stigma, both in terms of its structural embeddedness (Hansen, Bourgois, & Drucker, 2014; Hatzenbuehler & Link, 2014) and connection to negative health outcomes (Hatzenbuehler, Phelan, & Link, 2013; Kelaher, Warr, Feldma, & Tacticos, 2010; Link & Phelan, 2014). Treating stigma as an independent variable impacting individual and community mental health also provides analytic tools for deepening our understanding of destigmatization, or the "reduction of societal-level stigma over time" (Clair et al., 2016, p. 223; see also Corrigan et al., 2001).

3.2. From Persons to Place-Based Stigma

Stigma is not about personal attributes or group membership alone, it also attaches to place. As Douglas' formulation of dirt as "matter out of place" (Douglas, 1966, p. 36) suggests, the spatial presence of some polluting quality generates the perceived need for symbolic and spatial exclusion. Cities where extremely structurally differentiated populations dwell in close physical proximity demonstrate this clearly (Caldeira, 1996). At the neighbourhood level, Takahashi (1997) and Smith (2010) show how social and spatial taint intertwine through "socio-spatial stigmatization." In a different register, Anderson (2012, 2015) explains how pervasive images of the "iconic ghetto" reproduced in popular culture act as a "powerful source of stereotype, prejudice, and discrimination" (Anderson, 2012, p. 8) casting a shadow over African-Americans' experiences in "white space" (Anderson, 2015).

Wacquant's (1993) concept of "territorial stigmatization" brings together Goffman's foundational theory and Bourdieu's (1991) analysis of the symbolic power embedded in structures of classification. Where Goffman shows how stigma attaches to categories of persons and shapes social relations, Wacquant shows how stigma also attaches to and shapes neighbourhoods. If Goffman's theory is one of social taint, Wacquant's is one of spatial taint. Social and spatial taint mutually reinforce one another, with territorial stigmatization generating forms of marginalization irreducible to those based more exclusively on personal characteristics. Territorial stigmatization foregrounds the "role of symbolic structures in the production of inequality" (Wacquant, Slater, & Pereira, 2014, p. 1270; cf. Alexander, 2007), with research tracing the texture and topography of these symbolic structures, showing "how persons become polluted or their pollution is accentuated through association with stigmatized territories. Territorial taint then 'rubs off' on inhabitants" (Horgan, 2018, p. 502). Research also highlights the strategic deployment of territorial stigmatization to justify state and/or market intervention in 'problem' areas (Cohen, 2013; Kallin & Slater, 2014; Kornberg, 2016; Kudla & Courey, 2019; Sakizlioglu & Uitermark, 2014).

The connection between territorial and personal stigma is debated. While some claim that residents internalize stigma, and that this "feeds back into demoralization" (Wacquant, 2010, p. 218), others argue that "networks of solidarity and a deepening attachment to place…allow residents…to cope with life under conditions of territorial stigmatization" (Kirkness, 2014, pp. 1285–1286; see also Jensen & Christensen, 2012).

Due to its restricted focus, territorial stigmatization research informs but does not circumscribe a general theory of housing stigmatization. While housing is a central focus of literature on territorial stigmatization (Arthurson, 2010; Hancock & Mooney, 2013; Slater & Anderson, 2012), this tends to centre on public housing (Hastings, 2004; Kearns, Kearns, & Lawson, 2013; Wassenberg, 2004), examining, in particular, the stigmatization of public housing's tenants and location. While public housing is vilified in many places, as demonstrated below, public housing is not the only stigmatized housing type, nor indeed is it everywhere stigmatized.

Territorial stigmatization generally includes housing stigmatization, but housing stigmatization does not always include territorial stigmatization: Stigmatized properties are not only found in stigmatized neighbourhoods, for example, stigmatized group homes in 'respectable' middle-class neighbourhoods in Western cities (Finkler, 2014). Moreover, taint is not evenly distributed across territories: it varies by housing type and tenure. Territorial stigmatization research neglects intra-territorial differentiation—differentiation within a given territory—specifically variation at the level of individual housing units and across locales. And, as noted above, stigmatization varies too by the personal characteristics of dwellers, for example, racial or class difference. A neighbourhood can contain radically differing identities, some that are more amenable to territorial taint, and others that it may bypass.

3.3. Housing Stigmatization: Tainted Type and Tenure

While incorporating dimensions of each, housing stigmatization is neither generalizable to the level of territorial stigma, nor reducible to the particularities of individual or group-level stigma. It can vary in intensity according to the possible combinations of personal and territorial stigmatization involved. This is especially important in considering variation in housing type and tenure. Take, for example, the persistence of prejudice against SROs and their residents (Dear & Taylor, 1982; Dear & Wolch, 1987; Derksen, 2017; Freeman, 2017; Harris, 1992). Similar patterns of prejudice, whether interpersonal, community-based, or formal-legal have been delineated across research on SROs, sober houses, group homes, and mobile homes (Crystal & Beck, 1992; Grant, Derksen, & Ramos, 2019; Heslin, Singzon, Aimiuwu, Sheridan, & Hamilton, 2012; Kusenbach, 2009; Mifflin & Wilton, 2005). This sometimes infuses battles over municipal zoning, where the 'saturation' of a particular housing type is rhetorically deployed to propose desaturation through zoning as a means of destigmatization (Finkler & Grant, 2011; Horgan, 2018). Thus, "selective accentuation" (Wacquant et al., 2014, p. 1274), emphasizes the concentration of particular stigmatized housing forms, and can scale up from individual stigmatized properties—like SROs—to broader territorial stigmatization. In Goffman's (1963, p. 3) synecdochal language, a "tainted" part comes to stand for the whole.

Housing scholarship also shows how tenure—owning versus renting, especially social renting—can impact belonging (Smets & Sneep, 2017). Ronald (2008, pp. 239–254) demonstrates the negative impacts of the "ideology of home ownership" for those who do not own their own homes. Homeowners often implicitly question the moral character of renters, generating "tenure stigma" (Rollwagen, 2015). Similarly, Bate (2018) shows how the stigma of renting in Anglophone countries shapes public discourse and tenancy law, and consequently, tenants' homemaking practices (see also Flint, 2004). Echoing this, Vassenden and Lie (2013, p. 78) demonstrate how "tenure can work as a proxy for moral character" in Norway, but they find significant variations between private and social renting, thus establishing that the stigma of renting is not generalizable. In the UK, Gurney (1999) argues that the rapid normalization of home ownership generated prejudice towards social renters (for a comprehensive history of Western social rented housing, see Harloe, 1995). While renting is the norm in some markets (for example, Vienna), shifts in European housing markets make renting increasingly the norm across the continent (Arundel & Doling, 2017). Yet, even with affordable home ownership off the table for so many—the UK's so-called 'Generation Rent'—renting remains stigmatized (Cole, Powell, & Sanderson, 2016). While Hulse, Morris, and Pawson (2019) show that many renters in Australian "home owning society" do not view renting negatively, the extent to which their sample included people bearing personal stigma, or living in stigmatized territories is unclear.

Overall, symbolic boundaries between homeowners and non-homeowners appear to be pervasive, with homeowners' real or perceived equivalent structural position limiting cross-tenure mixing (Arthurson, 2010; Bucerius, Thompson, & Berardi, 2017; Kemp, 2011; Palmer, Ziersch, Arthurson, & Baum, 2004; van Eijk, 2012; Vassenden, 2014). There are some important caveats here. Cultural expectations around housing type and tenure figure strongly. For example, Lauster (2016) shows how the single family home is disappearing as a norm in Vancouver, while Kusenbach (2009, 2017) shows that despite the fact that many trailer homes in Florida are owner-occupied, this form of tenure does not protect trailer homes from being stigmatized.

3.4. Interplay between Types of Stigmatization

Clearly, housing stigmatization does not occur in a vacuum; personal/group, territorial, and housing stigmatization can shape one another. For example, one could be stigmatized as both a drug-user and a member of a stigmatized ethnic group, or one could bear neither such stigma, but live with the consequences of inhabiting stigmatized social housing. Further, public housing dispersed into otherwise middle-class areas, for example, may show different patterns of stigmatization compared to concentrated public housing, the former likely less subject to territorial stigmatization than the latter. Thus, housing stigmatization intersects with personal/group stigmatization and territorial stigmatization in complex ways that generate variability. A general theory cannot measure this variability, but does sensitize us to it. To do this, the next section outlines seven elements of a general theory.

4. Elements of a General Theory of Housing Stigmatization

Stigmatization is boundary work: it is about the production, reproduction, reinforcement, and defense of symbolic boundaries (Lamont & Molnár, 2002). The stigmatization process requires something or someone doing the stigmatizing, yet we cannot locate a single source. Rather, constellations of actors and activities *in toto* produce stigmatization.

Social exclusion is both material and symbolic. With housing stigmatization, material and symbolic exclusionary processes are complementary. Theorizing housing stigmatization means understanding where and how housing's material form intersects with more generic features of the process of stigmatization. As shown above, while housing stigmatization attaches to specific properties, the process of housing stigmatization is neither territorially bounded nor reducible to personal characteristics of individuals. If taint accrues to the housing of already marginalized persons, it appears to intensify their marginalization. While housing stigmatization

incorporates the generic social process of stigmatization, it is neither monolithic nor unidirectional. Thus, a general theory must account for unit-dweller and unit-neighbourhood relationships, as well as multiple housing types and forms of tenure.

Drawing out themes from existing research discussed above, I identify seven core elements of housing stigmatization. While these work together to produce housing stigmatization, here, I distinguish between them analytically. Housing stigmatization is: (1) relational; (2) contextual; (3) processual; (4) reinforceable; (5) reversible; (6) morally loaded; and (7) treated as contagious. I describe each of these elements below, where appropriate illustrating with examples tying them to the opening vignette and existing research.

4.1. Housing Stigmatization Is Relational

Housing stigmatization draws on a binary structure of symbolic ascription, organized around the sacred-pure/profane-impure (Douglas, 1966; Durkheim, 1995). Since housing stigmatization is relational, it is also relative: binaries are activated through contrast. These binaries are absolute in name only. In practice, we find that some housing can be more—or less—stigmatized than other housing. For example, Valverde (2012) has demonstrated how the "normative family home" is discursively employed in Toronto to position other housing types—particularly SROs—as not the 'right' kind of housing. Similarly, this relational element can connect to housing condition or quality, for example, where the poor physical appearance of a housing unit relative to nearby units provides bases for stigmatization. For some housing to be stigmatized requires other housing to not be stigmatized, so housing stigmatization is relational.

4.2. Housing Stigmatization Is Processual

As discussed earlier, stigmatization is a process rather than a steady state or a fixed product, "it is never a static nor a natural phenomenon" (Tyler & Slater, 2018). It has no permanent and enduring form. Housing stigmatization is the social process by which stigma, as a symbolic ascription, is made to attach to particular housing units. This processual character means that stigmatization can develop or diminish; because housing stigmatization is processual, it is also malleable. For example, in the case of rental housing above, the meanings ascribed to particular types of tenure can shift across time and space; the ascription of stigma does not always and everywhere stick to the same housing. If housing stigmatization were not processual, such shifts would not be possible (see also Section 4.7).

4.3. Housing Stigmatization Is Contextual

Housing stigmatization is spatio-temporally bounded: it is embedded in particular spaces at particular points in time. While housing stigmatization draws on abstract symbolic structures, it must be enlivened in particular grounded contexts. While some housing types—like mobile homes, for example (Kusenbach, 2009)—are widely stigmatized, in some contexts they may not be—for example, mobile homes used as holiday homes. Similarly, prejudice against rental properties on predominantly owner-occupied streets, or student rentals in family neighbourhoods (Sage, Smith, & Hubbard, 2012) highlight this contextual element of housing stigmatization. Indeed, stigmatization appears more likely in forms of housing with residents perceived as transient, with renters deemed to be uncommitted to neighbourhood well-being (Rollwagen, 2015). Whether or not this has basis in fact is an open question. This belief's wide currency makes it real in its effects. The process of stigmatization may be generic, what is stigmatized is not always and everywhere the same. Thus, housing stigmatization is contextual.

4.4. Housing Stigmatization Is Morally Loaded

Housing stigmatization is a symbolic ascription laden with moral judgment. For housing to be stigmatized, it must be posited as in some way morally corrupt or corrupting. This moral dimension may be tethered to characteristics of inhabitants as somehow opposed to value-laden constructions of 'decency' and 'respectability' (Anderson, 2000; Bourgois, 1996). As a moral problem, stigmatized housing is deemed to be either in need of transformation through radical top-down intervention, or beyond salvation, and sometimes isolation (Navon, 1996). For example, slum clearance and neighbourhood renewal projects mobilize moral language to denigrate particular types of housing, often strategically, as a pretext for displacement and/or to provide moral justification for state intervention (Davis, 2007; Whitzman, 2009).

4.5. Housing Stigmatization Is Treated as Contagious

If housing stigmatization means being posited as morally corrupt, it is also treated as morally corrupting. Proximity to stigmatized individuals risks pollution of adjacent persons, properties, and places (MacRae, 2008; Wood & Lambert, 2008). Thus, stigmatization is treated as contagious between places and persons, what we can call stigmatization by association or proximity. Housing stigmatization can rub off on dwellers, and can also scale up from person to housing, and from housing to territory. Conversely, a neighbourhood's stigma can also rub off on housing units located within it, and from housing units to individuals. In this sense, stigmatization's contagiousness is multidirectional.

That said, location within a stigmatized territory does guarantee that an individual housing unit or cluster of units will be stigmatized. As gentrification scholarship has demonstrated, homes of middle-class gentrifiers in

stigmatized territories are rarely subject to the same process of stigmatization as are SROs, for example (Freeman, 2017). Nonetheless, housing stigmatization can rub off from a stigmatized housing unit to adjacent properties. Thus, housing stigmatization is treated as contagious.

4.6. Housing Stigmatization Is Reinforceable

Fundamentally incomplete, housing stigmatization is reinforceable in the sense that for existing stigmatization to be reproduced it must be reinforced. In line with well-established research on social reproduction in sociology, any existing state of affairs is not in itself stable: The status quo requires ongoing work of reinforcement (Archer, 1995; Bourdieu, 1990; Giddens, 1986). In the case of housing stigmatization, this means that the negative symbolic ascriptions that attach to a particular housing unit, for example, must be repeated and reasserted. This can occur through regular restatement of its bases, for example, through morally loaded denigrating language in public meetings and media stories, whether local, regional, or national (Anderson, 2012). In this sense housing stigmatization is reinforceable.

4.7. Housing Stigmatization Is Reversible

Because housing stigmatization is processual, relational, and reinforceable, it is also reversible. The process of reversing housing stigmatization is best termed housing destigmatization. If reinforcement is not regular and the symbolic work of maintaining stigma is not ongoing, then destigmatization may be possible. Reversing housing stigmatization may attend to context and attunement to local-level exigencies and particularities (Horgan, 2018), and may also occur through a variety of reversal strategies including positive representations or increased normalization of previously stigmatized housing.

While these seven elements of housing stigmatization can be analytically disentangled, it should be clear that they are deeply imbricated in practice. Nonetheless, parsing them analytically in this way opens up avenues for possible action. Developing a general theory of housing stigmatization is not simply an abstract pursuit. At the core lies a normative concern: undoing housing stigmatization.

5. Practical Uses and Limits of General Theory

There is no single fix-all for undoing housing stigmatization. Nonetheless, we may arrest the social processes where symbolic denigration is invoked and mobilized. While I do not wish to make untenable claims on the basis of the general theory presented here, housing destigmatization efforts that do not attend to at least some of the seven elements identified above are unlikely to succeed.

Returning to our opening vignette, and the case of SROs in Parkdale, the work of a local agency—the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (PNLT)—is instructive. The PNLT (2017) has worked to demonstrate how SROs, while symbolically denigrated, form an important part of the affordable housing landscape for single persons often living with mental health and addictions issues. Drawing together housing advocates, activists, civil society organizations, service providers, and progressive local officials, the PNLT developed a two-pronged approach to SRO preservation in the neighbourhood by: (1) demonstrating how SROs are a viable and valuable form of affordable accommodation for structurally vulnerable residents; and (2) destigmatizing SROs by working alongside SRO residents in designing research and proposing policy. SRO residents gathered both qualitative and quantitative data, combined with their own first-person narratives to demonstrate the significance of SROs to the local housing landscape. This work focused specifically on destigmatizing SRO housing, showing its value both for dwellers and for maintaining Parkdale's heterogeneity. The combination of hard evidence and personal stories elicited "empathy across chasms of difference" and successfully gained "a hearing for claims that would be otherwise ignored" (Polletta, Chen, Gardner, & Motes, 2011, p. 115). In 2019, on foot of this work, Toronto City Council passed a motion making municipal funds available to purchase Parkdale SROs identified by PNLT (2017) as at risk of deconversion in Toronto's heated housing market. These properties actively sustain the heterogeneity of housing types and tenure that has long characterized Parkdale.

More generally, given the contextual variability of housing stigmatization, mitigation requires strategies attuned to specifics. While firm and enduring commitment to the provision of quality affordable housing is clearly necessary, absent government appetite for spearheading social housing, then legally binding demands on governments, property owners, and developers must play some part. Thus, destigmatizing housing is part of a broader battle to meaningfully attend to wider social and material deprivation.

As demonstrated here, stigmatization generates social distance by drawing symbolic boundaries. Two decades of research shows that symbolic boundaries can harden into social boundaries, potentially becoming embedded in institutional structures, social policy, and common ways of understanding collective life (Lamont et al., 2016; Lamont & Molnár, 2002). Symbolic boundaries, though, are malleable and can be loosened. If they cannot be dissolved in their entirety, we can at least find where they are most porous and focus our efforts there.

The conceptual work presented here has some limits that may impact the extent of its generalizability across contexts. First, since it is conceptual, it does not engage with the lived experience of stigmatization in a significant way. Second, because it offers a meaning-centred theory of housing stigmatization, it may not adequately account for the connection between housing condition and stigmatization. Third, the bulk of the literature con-

sulted focuses on Western sources, and so may overlook elements of housing stigmatization operational in non-Western contexts. Finally, while the theory sensitizes us to variability in housing stigmatization, empirical tools for operationalization and measurement are absent. That said, applying the basic conceptual framework to a variety of cases will enhance, refine and—I trust—critique the general theory. This can inform both analyses of, and strategies for, housing destigmatization.

6. Conclusion

This article demonstrates that housing stigmatization is a viable unit of analysis in its own right for stigma research, by attending to housing as a central point of mediation between persons and broader societal membership, and to the specificity of the place of particular housing units in their immediate context. As a contribution to both housing and stigma studies, this article deepens understanding of how the symbolic denigration of marginalized persons, housing, and neighbourhoods, are intertwined. It also advances understanding of how stigma may attach to specific housing types and particular forms of tenure. Focusing attention on housing stigmatization brings a new lens to the intersections between different forms of stigmatization and how the stigmatization process is mobilized and modulated in arenas adjacent to housing, such as, for example, municipal zoning and welfare provision.

Structural vulnerability and housing stigmatization are all too often connected and mutually reinforcing. The symbolic work of destigmatization should accompany expanded rights to adequate, appropriate, and affordable housing. At base, destigmatization is about civil inclusion and the extension of solidarity necessary to a just society worthy of the name. Deepening our understanding of housing stigmatization permits us to discover cracks and cleavages in those processes upholding social exclusion, so that we may wedge open new ways of halting and reversing processes of stigmatization, and work to make good on the promise of an open, just and inclusive society. Housing is an important—if not essential—place to focus our efforts.

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The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

Territorial Stigmatisation and Poor Housing at a London 'Sink Estate'

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Abstract
This article offers a critical assessment of Loic Wacquant's influential advanced marginality framework with reference to research undertaken on a London public/social housing estate. Following Wacquant, it has become the orthodoxy that one of the major vectors of advanced marginality is territorial stigmatisation and that this particularly affects social housing estates, for example via mass media deployment of the 'sink estate' label in the UK. This article is based upon a multi-method case study of the Aylesbury estate in south London—an archetypal stigmatised 'sink estate.' The article brings together three aspects of residents' experiences of the Aylesbury estate: territorial stigmatisation and dissolution of place, both of which Wacquant focuses on, and housing conditions which he neglects. The article acknowledges the deprivation and various social problems the Aylesbury residents have faced. It argues, however, that rather than internalising the extensive and intensive media-fuelled territorial stigmatisation of their 'notorious' estate, as Wacquant's analysis implies, residents have largely disregarded, rejected, or actively resisted the notion that they are living in an 'estate from hell,' while their sense of place belonging has not dissolved. By contrast, poor housing—in the form of heating breakdowns, leaks, infestation, inadequate repairs and maintenance—caused major distress and frustration and was a more important facet of their everyday lives than territorial stigmatisation. The article concludes by arguing that housing should be foregrounded, rather than neglected, in the analysis of the dynamics of urban advanced marginality.

Keywords
advanced marginality; council tenants; dissolution of place; gentrification; housing conditions; neighbourhood; regeneration; sink estate; social housing; territorial stigmatisation

Issue
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1. Introduction

This article provides an analysis of territorial stigmatisation, place, and housing conditions at the Aylesbury estate in the London Borough of Southwark and in so doing offers a critique of Loic Wacquant's (2008) influential advanced marginality framework. This south London social housing estate—built by the council (local authority)—is emblematic of the stigmatising 'sink estate' label which has been prominent in UK mass media and political discourse. The Aylesbury estate has also been subject to a long-running controversial regeneration scheme (Southwark Council, 2016), which involves phased demolition and rebuilding "with *mixed income* new-build housing" (Lees, 2014, p. 924, original emphasis) the majority of which will probably be private. The article begins with a review of the literature on neighbourhood stigmatisation. It then summarises Wacquant's advanced marginality approach, noting his relative neglect of housing. The research context and methods are outlined. The research findings are firstly discussed in relation to territorial stigmatisation and place, and secondly in relation to poor housing, while the conclusion synthesises the findings.

2. Stigmatised Neighbourhoods: From 'Slums' to 'Sink Estates'

Although the 'territorial stigmatisation' concept was coined by Wacquant (2008), its core idea—the stig-

matisation of certain neighbourhoods along with their populations—has exercised urban sociology at least as far back as the Chicago School (Hastings, 2004). As Damer (1974, pp. 221–222, original emphasis) argues, in addition to any structural disadvantages that the residents of such areas might face, "they can also suffer from the very *reputation* of the outside world towards them [defined as] a publicly held opinion about a social group or a neighbourhood, which, when negative or pejorative, tends to have a stigmatising effect." Such stigmatised neighbourhoods are variously labelled as 'slums,' 'dreadful enclosures,' 'problem estates,' and more recently 'sink estates' by policy officials and other powerful bodies including the mass media, while their residents are termed as 'rough,' 'problem tenants,' an 'underclass,' and 'anti-social families' (see, among others, Damer, 1974; Gans, 1962; Hastings, 2004; Slater, 2018; Watt, 2008). Such stigmatising labels also form key aspects of the rationale for urban renewal (involving demolition) as has occurred during both the post-war slum clearance period and the contemporary 'new urban renewal' phase which has targeted social housing estates like the Aylesbury (Lees, 2014; Watt & Smets, 2017).

Two classic urban ethnographies of stigmatised neighbourhoods have highlighted how sociological reality failed to match the lurid 'wine alley' (Damer, 1974) and 'slum' (Gans, 1962) labels. Damer (1974) and Gans (1962) illustrate several enduring themes in research on neighbourhood stigmatisation, themes that are pertinent to the Aylesbury case. First, is that stigmatising labels do not necessarily accord with residents' lived experiences of the neighbourhoods which are far more ordinary, albeit not unproblematic, working-class areas; these are 'places with problems' rather than 'problem places' (Johnston & Mooney, 2007). Second is that many residents do not accept or internalise the external stigmatising labels. Third, is how neighbourhood stigmatisation is bound up with urban policy discourses and practices, notably in relation to demolition and urban renewal/regeneration.

Damer's 'wine alley' in Glasgow was an inter-war council estate built by the local authority and his study illustrates the long history of public housing stigmatisation in the UK. Certain council estates were characterised by high levels of poverty, crime, and anti-social behavior (vandalism, graffiti, drunkenness, neighbour quarrels, etc.), hence giving rise to the notion of 'problem estates' (Attenburrow, Murphy, & Simms, 1978), including in Southwark (Coleman, 1990). Such estates were also a 'problem' for housing managers because they were unpopular with tenants who did not want to live there; hence they became 'difficult-to-let' (or 'hard-to-let') resulting in empty properties and above-average turnover rates (Attenburrow et al., 1978; Department of the Environment, 1981). While stigmatisation involved a minority of problem estates during the post-war period, it has widened and deepened in the UK during the last forty years due to neoliberal privatisation policies resulting in the residualisation of social housing (today owned and managed by either councils or housing associations) which has come to be regarded as the 'tenure of last resort' for those too poor to afford homeownership (Hamnett, 2003; Watt, 2008).

During the last 20 years, the dominant British lexicon has shifted away from 'problem estates' towards 'sink estates.' Campkin (2013) has traced the journalistic origins of the 'sink estate' label back to 1976, but argues that it was given oxygen by Tony Blair, the Labour Prime Minister (1997–2007). This occurred in various speeches Blair made, for example in his symbolic post-election 1997 visit to the Aylesbury estate where he mentioned "estates where the biggest employer is the drugs industry, where all that is left of the high hopes of the post-war planners is derelict concrete" (cited in Campkin, 2013, p. 97). As Slater (2018) has shown, the national press usage of 'sink estate' increased exponentially under New Labour (1997–2010; see Johnston & Mooney, 2007; Watt, 2008). The term 'sink estate' shares many of the same features as the earlier 'problem estate' label, but with a heightened emphasis on crime and anti-social behaviour albeit with an updated stress on drugs and gangs. As Slater (2018) argues, it is the moralistic, behavioural aspects of the 'sink estate' discourse which is prioritised by the national press, rather than material factors such as poverty. A similar moralistic emphasis can be identified in New Labour's urban policy (Watt & Jacobs, 2000). Estate stigmatisation has taken a further upward turn during the post-crash decade as a consequence of austerity welfare policies (Hancock & Mooney, 2013; Slater, 2018).

Not only has estate stigmatisation increased, it also forms part of the class-based rationale for regeneration (new urban renewal) involving demolition and rebuilding with extensive private housing for sale or rent: "Symbolic defamation provides the groundwork and ideological justification for a thorough class transformation, usually involving demolition, land clearance, and then the construction of housing and services aimed at a more affluent class of resident" (Kallin & Slater, 2014, pp. 1353–1354). Such regeneration-related state-led gentrification has occurred at several London social housing estates (Hodkinson, 2019; Watt, 2013) including the Aylesbury as Lees (2014) discusses at length. Similar intertwined processes of social housing residualisation, stigmatisation, and regeneration have been identified in other neoliberal housing policy regime contexts, for example Australia (Jacobs & Flanagan, 2013; Morris, 2013) and Canada (August, 2014).

3. Wacquant, Territorial Stigmatisation, and the Dissolution of Place

The most influential sociological account of contemporary territorial stigmatisation comes from Wacquant in *Urban Outcasts* (2008). In this book, Wacquant argues that urban areas such as the South Side of Chicago and

La Courneuve in the Parisian periphery—which prominently include social housing estates or 'projects' in US terms—form epicentres of advanced marginality. These are formed by multiple overlapping strands of socio-spatial disadvantage including wage-labour insecurity, disconnection from macroeconomic trends, territorial stigmatisation, the dissolution of place, loss of informal neighbourhood support, and social fragmentation via the creation of a nascent 'precariat.' This article focusses on just two of these issues—territorial stigmatisation and the dissolution of place.

Territorial stigmatisation fuses Goffman's notion of stigma as 'spoiled identity' together with Bourdieu's account of symbolic violence (Flint & Powell, 2019): "Advanced marginality tends to be concentrated in isolated and bounded territories increasingly perceived by both outsiders and insiders as social purgatories, leprous badlands at the heart of the postindustrial metropolis where only the refuse of society would agree to dwell" (Wacquant, 2008, p. 237). Wacquant (2008, p. 238) spatialises Goffman's approach by suggesting that a "taint of place" (or 'blemish of place') is superimposed onto social stigmata such as poverty, ethnicity, or migrant status, but importantly this taint negatively affects residents irrespective of "whether or not these areas are in fact dilapidated and dangerous" (Wacquant, 2008, p. 239). Such effects include spatial discrimination (for jobs), but also residents' internalisation of spatial stigma by hiding their address, wanting to leave the area, see it demolished, etc. In fact, Wacquant (2008, p. 169) claims that territorial stigmatisation is "arguably the single most protrusive feature of the lived experience of those entrapped in these sulfurous zones." Furthermore, regarding place belonging and attachment:

> The obverse side of this process of territorial stigmatization is the dissolution of 'place': that is, the loss of a humanized, culturally familiar and socially filtered locale with which marginalized urban populations identify and in which they feel 'at home' and in relative security. (Wacquant, 2008, p. 241)

In other words, residents' place belonging and neighbourhood-based sense of community have atrophied under the combined weight of the vectors of advanced marginality which are especially pronounced in the US hyper-ghetto but which also occur in less extreme form in the social housing estates of the Parisian *banlieues*.

The concept of territorial stigmatisation has proved influential in understanding how advanced marginality is constructed in relation to social housing estates including in the UK (Hancock & Mooney, 2013; Kallin & Slater, 2014). This article does not attempt to review Wacquant's work in its entirety (Flint & Powell, 2019), but instead makes three critical contributions.

First, the article builds upon existing studies of social housing estates which have revealed less resident internalisation of territorial stigmatisation than Wacquant suggests and more positive place attachment and sense of belonging than his 'dissolution of place' implies (August, 2014; Garbin & Millington, 2012; Jensen & Christensen, 2012; Morris, 2013).

Second, the article addresses how the advanced marginality framework has tended to neglect housing, as Powell and Robinson (2019) argue, a neglect which Wacquant (2019) acknowledges. To some extent, Wacquant is being unfair to himself since *Urban Outcasts* includes several comments on housing, for example on the dilapidated state of buildings which reinforces marginality (Wacquant, 2008, pp. 82, 158–160, 220). Nevertheless, housing is distinctly marginal—rather than central—within Wacquant's advanced marginality conceptualisation. In addition, there is a tendency within some UK literature on advanced marginality to stress the symbolic and representational aspects of social housing estates as seen in the emphasis placed on the mass media and right-wing think-tanks in producing territorial stigmatisation (Hancock & Mooney, 2013; Slater, 2018). By contrast, the material fabric of such estates—housing and the built environment—is less well scrutinised (although see Baxter, 2017).

Third, despite Wacquant's rhetorical flourish—that territorial stigmatisation is, arguably, the most significant aspect of residents' lived experiences—there is little understanding of the relative importance of stigmatisation in residents' everyday lives and especially relative to housing. For example, although Kelaher, Warr, Feldman, and Tacticos (2010, p. 383) suggest that territorial stigmatisation has independent negative health effects on residents, they don't scrutinise how only 5% of interviewees' neighbourhood dislikes involved "negative reputation" well below the 18% for physical environment. In a paper on the Regent Park estate in Toronto, Canada, August (2014) examines territorial stigmatisation alongside housing neglect and crime. However, although August acknowledges that stigmatisation is not the sole problem tenants face, she does not adjudicate how significant it might be relative to other factors. Therefore, one of the main purposes of this article is to begin to assess the relative significance of territorial stigmatisation from the perspective of the everyday lives of the residents of a stigmatised 'sink estate,' rather than to simply assume that it is of central significance as Wacquant's advanced marginality framework implies.

4. Context and Methods

This article is based on a multi-method case study of the Aylesbury estate which forms part of a much larger research project on public/social housing and estate regeneration in London (Watt, in press). The latter's research focus is how estate residents experience regeneration with reference to housing, place attachment/belonging (to homes and neighbourhoods), and inequality. It examines several London estates at various stages of the re-

generation life-cycle. Although reference is made to the overall project, the focus here is the Aylesbury because it is probably the London estate which has been the most stigmatised, not least due to the (in)famous role it played in New Labour's urban policy.

The Aylesbury estate is located in the London Borough of Southwark, south of the Elephant and Castle town centre and the smaller, now-demolished Heygate estate. It was built by Southwark Council from 1963–1977, and is (or was) one of the largest estates in Europe with approximately 7,500 people living in 2,759 dwellings spread over 28.5 hectares (Southwark Council, 2005). The dwellings are arranged in 4–14 storey blocks and the estate is an archetypal example of post-war 'Brutalist' modernist municipal architecture, even though it also has extensive green space (Figure 1). Like most London estates, the Aylesbury is largely working class but it has become demographically more multi-ethnic and less white British; by 2001, 61% of its residents were from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups compared to just 8% in the UK (Blandy, Green, & McCoulough, 2004, p. 15). Ninety percent of households were social renting (mainly council tenants) compared to 20% in England (Blandy et al., 2004). By 2005, around 12% of Aylesbury properties had been sold to sitting tenants under the 'Right-to-Buy' (RTB) scheme (Southwark Council, 2005), which was a key plank of Thatcherite neoliberal housing policy (Hodkinson, 2019).

During the late 1990s, the Aylesbury estate was the subject of various regeneration area-based initiatives, including the Single Regeneration Budget and Sure Start, but most significant was the New Deal for Communities (NDC) which was an ambitious £56M, ten-year regeneration programme launched in 1998 (Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research [CRESR], 2015). Of the 39 England NDC Partnerships, ten were located in London and several of these focussed on large council estates like the Aylesbury (Watt, 2009). The NDC areas were targeted because they were spatial concentrations of social exclusion including high levels of poverty, deprivation, and crime (CRESR, 2015; Watt, 2009). The NDC areas, but especially the London estates, were also extremely physically rundown having experienced many years of underinvestment in the physical dwellings and estate environment (Bennington, Fordham, & Robinson, 2004; Watt, 2009, in press). In 2005, Southwark Council decided that it lacked sufficient funds to refurbish the Aylesbury estate and embarked upon comprehensive redevelopment involving phased demolition and rebuilding but with a substantial amount of new private housing; Notting Hill Housing Trust was subsequently chosen as the development partner (Southwark Council, 2005, 2016).

The research findings are drawn from several primary and secondary data sources. Fieldwork/participant observation was undertaken by the author via attendance at the following Southwark events which included Aylesbury residents' participation (2009–2018): eighteen housing, regeneration, and community meetings; Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) inquiries (three days in 2015 and one in 2018); and several demonstrations. In-depth interviews were conducted during 2014–2017 with five long-term residents—two secure council ten-

Figure 1. Aylesbury estate, 2017. Source: Paul Watt.

ants and three leaseholders who had bought their flats under the RTB—plus two charity workers based at the estate. Shorter interviews were conducted in 2015 with three council tenants and three temporary tenants; the council placed the latter in empty properties on a temporary non-secure basis while the estate was undergoing regeneration (see Watt, 2018a). Extensive newspaper analysis was undertaken including web-based sources (local and national press) and archival research on two local newspapers, *Southwark News* and the *South London Press.* Because the Aylesbury estate was the subject of an NDC, numerous research and consultancy reports are available, but which have not thus far received focused academic assessment (Beatty, Grimsley, Lawless, Manning, & Wilson, 2005; Blandy et al., 2004; Castle & Atkinson, 2004; Christmann, Rogerson, & Walters, 2003; CRESR, 2015; ERS, 2010; Opinion Research Services [ORS], 2009). Two post-NDC reports are also referred to—one on BAME unemployment (Murray, 2012) and one on residents' attitudes in 2014–2015 (Social Life, 2017). These various reports are based on resident surveys, interviews, and official statistics.

The Aylesbury estate has been the subject of considerable academic scrutiny including excellent accounts of the mass media's contribution to the development of its 'sink estate' label and how this was reflected in the official demolition rationale (Campkin, 2013; Lees, 2014; Romyn, 2019). Various studies have also argued that the Aylesbury's reputation is exaggerated and does not accord with residents' lived experiences (Baxter, 2017; Lees, 2014; Rendell, 2017; Romyn, 2019), a view this article concurs with. However, despite their rich findings, the existing publications do not adequately calibrate how the estate—and residents' experiences and opinions of it—changed over time from the 1990s onwards. By employing secondary analysis of the quantitative data drawn from the above reports, this article provides a more nuanced and calibrated account of such changes. The combination of this quantitative analysis with qualitative and newspaper data therefore facilitates a more rounded, temporally specific, and spatially contextualised analysis of the Aylesbury estate vis-à-vis territorial stigmatisation, place, and housing conditions than hitherto available.

5. Territorial Stigmatisation and Place at the Aylesbury Estate

The building of the Aylesbury estate involved cost-cutting measures which negatively impacted it from the very beginning, while it also suffered from various early problems, including vandalism, which led to its classification as 'hard-to-let' (Boughton, 2018; Carter, 2008). As Romyn (2019) illustrates, the Aylesbury estate was subject to negative local press reports during the 1970s and 1980s. However, it gained a high-profile national media presence from the 1990s onwards—for example being part of "No-Go Britain" ("No-go Britain: Where, what, why," 1994)—a profile which effectively fused it with the 'sink estate' label (Campkin, 2013). Since 1997, the Aylesbury's reputation as a 'tainted place' in Wacquant's terms has become firmly embedded in national mass media and policy discourse. This was achieved via repetitive newspaper phrases including the 'notorious estate' trope: "Britain's most notorious housing estate" (*The Independent*, 19 October 2008, cited in Romyn, 2019, p. 141). As Campkin (2013, p. 96) argues, such stories "have repeatedly naturalised the interpretation of the Aylesbury as a crime-ridden dystopia," a reputation which has also formed part of the demolition rationale (Lees, 2014).

5.1. What Kind of 'Tainted Place'?

The 1998 Aylesbury NDC delivery plan painted a grim picture of extensive deprivation in terms of poverty, unemployment, crime, ill health, and low education (ERS, 2010), all of which amounted to "staggering" figures and the estate being portrayed as "a study in social exclusion" (Helm, 2000). As well as most residents being social renters, 24.6% of Aylesbury NDC households were on low incomes, nearly double the 13.3% England average (Blandy et al., 2004, p. 15). Unemployment in the Faraday ward (where the Aylesbury estate is located) stood at 8.2% in 2001 well above the England and Wales' average of 3.4% (Castle & Atkinson, 2004, p. 54). Not only was the Aylesbury area deprived, residents' subjective experiences also appear to suggest that a dissolution of place, in Wacquant's terms, might be underway. Fear of crime, for example, was the highest among all the NDC areas and 2.5 times greater than the NDC as a whole (Beatty et al., 2005; Christmann et al., 2003), while neighbourhood satisfaction was 49% in 2000 compared to a national 85% (ERS, 2010, p. 33).

Despite the above 'staggering figures,' a close reading of the NDC reports, allied to the local newspaper analysis, suggests a much more nuanced reality, especially when one takes the Aylesbury's south-east London location into account, an inner-city area long-associated with poverty and crime (Robson, 2000). Among the 39 NDC areas, the Aylesbury NDC was actually the 6th least deprived using the 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation (CRESR, 2015, p. 12). As such, it appeared in the 10–20% most deprived areas in England at 4,633rd out of 32,482; in other words, there were 4,632 more deprived areas in England than the Aylesbury estate. Furthermore, the Aylesbury NDC had the lowest level of residents reporting "health not good" in 2002 at 14% compared to the 23% NDC average (CRESR, 2015, p. 15). Thus, there were far more deprived NDC areas than the Aylesbury, even if they received nothing like the same national media attention as this 'notorious,' 'sink estate.' In addition, while Aylesbury residents were deprived by national measures, their disadvantages were not 'staggering' by Southwark's own standards—as the ninth most deprived local authority area in England in 2000 (Castle & Atkinson, 2004). In 2000, Faraday was only the thirteenth most deprived

ward in Southwark, while the 8.2% Faraday unemployment rate was not greatly above the 6.2% borough average (Castle & Atkinson, 2004).

Despite extensive fear of crime, the Aylesbury NDC area had lower levels of victimisation in comparison to other NDC areas but also in comparison with Southwark as a whole (Beatty et al., 2005). When comparing crime rates for violence, burglary, theft, and criminal damage in each NDC area in 2002–2003 with the relevant local authority, the Aylesbury NDC "consistently reveals crime rates which are about half that for the parent local authority [Southwark]" (Beatty et al., 2005, p. 36). Furthermore, within the context of the routine plethora of crime-related stories in *Southwark News* and the *South London Press,* the Aylesbury does not emerge as an outlier. If anything, the Aylesbury featured less prominently relative to other far less 'notorious' south London estates—for example, "tenants set to hire security guards in fight against crack house plague" (Quinn, 2002), referring to another Southwark estate—suggesting that the Aylesbury's crime and anti-social behaviour problems were not in fact extraordinary once located within their inner-city London context.

If the above indicates that the Aylesbury's 'sink estate' reputation was exaggerated at the start of the NDC, later reports highlight notable improvements which are, at least in part, due to NDC and other regeneration-related community development initiatives (ERS, 2010; Social Life, 2017). While poverty and unemployment, especially BAME unemployment, remain problematic issues at the Aylesbury (Murray, 2012; Social Life, 2017), the estate's deprivation ranking improved "largely driven by reductions in crime and improvements in educational attainment" (ERS, 2010, p. 31). Fear of crime also reduced—from around 70% of residents saying they felt afraid to walk in the area alone after dark in 2002 (Castle & Atkinson, 2004, p. 51), 65% felt safe to do so by 2015 (Social Life, 2017, p. 19). Thus, "there was a strong consensus among residents and agencies that the Aylesbury Estate is no longer a dangerous place, and that crime is far lower on the estate than the public tend to believe" (Social Life, 2017, p. 31), even though some Aylesbury residents continue to be concerned about anti-social behaviour in the estate's public spaces (Baxter, 2017). Neighbourhood satisfaction markedly improved from 49% in 2000 to 63% in 2008 (ERS, 2010) and then to 89% in 2015 (Social Life, 2017, p. 19), although the latter was somewhat higher in the new housing association blocks than the pre-existing council estate. The Social Life (2017, p. 31) report concluded that "generally residents were happy with the area as a place to live," while 89% said that they belonged to the neighbourhood, 25% above the UK level (Social Life, 2017, p. 19); this indicates that residents' sense of place has not in fact dissolved. Such survey findings are borne out by my interviews and fieldwork which suggest broadly positive neighbourhood place belonging (at least until the blocks were being emptied out due to demolition), alongside scepticism regarding the estate's 'notorious' reputation. Salma (council tenant, black) had lived at the Aylesbury since the late 1990s. She worked locally as a part-time carer and described her everyday routine including her appreciation of the estate's location and transport connections (cf. Social Life, 2017):

> I have never seen anything bad in this area. I can go to the mosque and I feel safe in the Old Kent Road. At Ramadan you have to pray in the night-time, I walk there, I don't have a car. I've always felt safe, I go shopping—if you want to go anywhere in London, you can get anywhere by bus, there are lots of different buses. I don't know why they say the Aylesbury estate is so bad with crime.

Dolores (leaseholder, Asian) loved the area because of its proximity to the West End. During the many years she had lived at the estate, Dolores had never been burgled and had not even heard of any break-ins. Once her bag had been stolen, but "this is the only thing what has happened to me since last twenty years, but after that it's safe, I feel safe to come here and sometimes I come at 1 o'clock [in the morning] and it's not a big deal."

Although many residents had repairs and maintenance problems with their flats and blocks—as discussed afterwards—there was at the same time an appreciation of the intrinsic qualities of their flats which led to a sense of home, as Baxter (2017) has highlighted. The flats' generous size and views (for those on the higher floors; Figure 2) were prominent features of such domestic place attachment: "I like the views and this is a lovely massive 1-bed flat" (Julie, temporary tenant, white British). Dolores loved her "very spacious flat" which she had bought under the RTB. Like many working-class RTB homeowners on London's estates, this purchase reflected Dolores' desire not to leave her home or area, but instead to fix herself in place (Watt, in press): "This is home and when I come in the night and then you see the lights and it's just nice."

5.2. Residents' Responses to Stigmatisation

The above indicates how the Aylesbury was "less a 'problem estate' than an estate with problems" (Boughton, 2018, p. 223). However, even if sociological reality was not in accordance with the estate's external 'taint of place,' Wacquant (2008) argues that territorial stigmatisation does its work irrespectively notably via resident internalisation, specific dimensions of which are discussed in the next paragraphs. While some resident internalisation has occurred, there is also substantial evidence of Aylesbury residents either disregarding, rejecting, or resisting territorial stigmatisation (see Lees, 2014, especially on resistance).

In terms of disregard, when a group of unemployed BAME estate residents were asked about barriers to employment, they mentioned racial discrimination/ethnic

Figure 2. Aylesbury estate: Tenant's treasured view, 2012. Source: Paul Watt.

stereotyping, language and having a criminal record, but not territorial stigmatisation (Murray, 2012). As above, Aylesbury residents have also rejected the estate's reputational blemish while expressing considerable belonging to their homes and neighbourhood. Following Tony Blair's visit to the estate, two locally-engaged women wrote a letter to the local newspaper highlighting their objection to the negative media attention his visit had unleashed: "The Aylesbury Estate is not the 'Estate from Hell' which has been much publicised in the media; it simply needs a kick start from the Government to get more money to enhance the community" (Harrison & Lauder, 1997). At a 2010 housing meeting, an elderly female Aylesbury resident stood up and passionately denounced the disjunction between the estate's reputation and her active home-making: "I've worked hard on my flat, we've been working on our homes, but we're told by PR campaigns that this is the estate from hell." Among the interviewees, Gesil and William, a married black couple living in a leasehold flat, did have a negative view of the estate when they arrived during the mid-1990s while their friends warned them about its reputation—indicative of internalised stigmatisation: "When we first moved in here, nobody wants to come here, nobody" (Gesil). However, they thought the Aylesbury had become safer over the years due to the crime-control measures, while they had also "made a community"—"we feel like a small family there, that's how it felt…with the neighbours" (Gesil)—that is before their block had emptied out due to the 'decanting' of tenants. There is also evidence of collective active resistance to the estate's taint of place, for example via the work of the Aylesbury Tenants and Leaseholders First campaign, as Lees (2014) and Romyn (2019) discuss, including effectively challenging Channel 4 television's stereotypical ident (logo; Beanland, 2014).

Wacquant (2008) suggests that the internalisation of territorial stigmatisation incorporates residents' hiding their address, wanting to leave the neighbourhood and preferring it to be demolished; each will be examined in turn. A newspaper article indicated some resident internalisation, for example by not inviting friends to visit (Barton, 2005). The Social Life (2017, p. 31) report also noted how "the negative portrayal of the estate in the past—in different films, TV series, and in the Channel 4 ident—is resented by residents, and some have internalised this, leading to feelings of shame." As one long-term resident said, "I've been embarrassed to say it's where I live" due to the Channel 4 ident (Beanland, 2014). As a way of countering such stigmatisation, a Notting Hill Housing Trust spokesperson suggested that the redeveloped estate could be rebranded to "something like 'Walworth Village' or 'Walworth Quarter"' (Morgan, 2014). The chairperson of the Aylesbury Tenants and Residents Association agreed with this rebranding: "If something goes wrong in this area, everyone thinks it's the Aylesbury. I don't want [the name Aylesbury] and most other residents don't want it either" (Morgan, 2014). Such blanket condemnation does not, however, accord with resident survey evidence since "nearly 70 percent said that they would tell others that they live on the Aylesbury Estate, suggesting that the stigma is not as great as some suggest" (Social Life, 2017, p. 31).

We have already seen how neighbourhood satisfaction at the Aylesbury increased since 2000, but did residents want to leave their homes and the estate? In 2008, 37% of Aylesbury survey respondents wanted to move from their current property, greater than the 30.6% Southwark average (ORS, 2009, p. 18) which might be considered indicative of territorial stigmatisation. However, when asked why they would like to move, the main reasons at the Aylesbury were housing-related (for example, wanting a bigger or better home), with area factors (for example, disliking the area or crime concerns) of secondary importance (ORS, 2009). A later Aylesbury estate survey found that 90% of respondents planned to remain as residents "for a number of years" 22% higher than the UK average (Social Life, 2017, p. 19). During fieldwork and interviews, I came across no residents who wanted to leave because of territorial stigmatisation and the estate's taint of place. Instead, there was considerable intention to stay put despite potential demolition: "I like to stay in my area and not move from the Aylesbury estate. I want to stay in my flat, I don't want to move. I like my garden; I grow tomatoes, green chillies, and coriander there" (Salma). Like Dolores, Gesil and William had bought their flat under the RTB because they wanted to remain in the area: "We did not buy this to move out, we want to stay here—the children love the place." Such place belonging not only challenges the Aylesbury's 'notorious' reputation—as the 'estate from hell'—but is also sharply distinct from the Chicago hyper-ghetto where "the only route they [residents] see for improvement is to move out, to which nearly all aspire" (Wacquant, 2008, p. 178).

Perhaps the Aylesbury residents had so incorporated territorial stigmatisation that they enthusiastically embraced the bulldozing of their homes and estate? The initial NDC redevelopment proposed a stock transfer to a housing association, involving extensive demolition and sale of land to private developers. A minority of residents accepted this vision of regeneration, but it also proved controversial since others argued that it amounted to privatisation and gentrification (Lees, 2014). Despite widespread recognition that the estate needed extensive refurbishment, there was a 73% 'no vote' against transfer based on a 72% turnout in late 2001 (Mullany, 2002a). Not only did this high turnout quash notions that the estate was an enclave of social disengagement and apathy—hence challenging the notion of an entrenched 'dissolution of place'—the result also indicates extensive scepticism regarding the regeneration-as-demolition proposal. Dolores explained why she had voted against stock transfer: "Because I love my home, my place, and because I think it was going to be more difficult to get another council flat somewhere else." Subsequent consultation exercises found a small majority (53%) of households in favour of demolition/redevelopment, but based on a 45% sample of households (Southwark Council, 2005, p. 11) as compared to the 72% ballot turnout. It is unclear, however, what kind of 'promises' were made regarding rehousing which might well have contributed towards this apparent shift from the earlier ballot result. Some residents favoured demolition, but this was more due to wanting to escape from poor housing conditions rather than avoiding stigmatisation. Hurmine (council tenant, black) had lived at the estate for over ten years and thought it should be demolished because "the council won't do anything for people because it's infested and old, I've got mice here, it's very infested."

Like the 2016 UK vote in favour of Brexit, the council's 2005 demolition decision has proved highly controversial and substantial numbers of Aylesbury residents have consistently argued for refurbishment instead—43% in one consultation (ERS, 2010, p. 18) and 90% in another (Southwark Council, 2016, p. 31). A determined group of Aylesbury residents have also mounted a sustained campaign against demolition based on wanting to preserve their existing homes and community, a campaign that dates back to the 2001 anti-stock transfer vote (Watt, 2018b). Part of this campaign has involved actively resisting the Aylesbury's tainted reputation, as seen in this letter by five residents and one Southwark supporter:

> Our Aylesbury Estate is not crime-ridden or about to fall down. We don't want to move from our sought-after spacious, solid, secure tenanted flats which are of a higher standard of sound insulation and open space than a lot of other council housing—and generally miles better than recent (higher rented) housing association ventures. The problem is that the Government, Aylesbury NDC and Southwark council deliberately paint a grim, desperate picture of the Aylesbury, and choose to fail to do basic maintenance of lifts, heating and rubbish chutes. (Briden, Corbyn, Dennis, Esteve, Hibbert, & Tarrawally, 2005)

This letter encapsulates a common fieldwork finding, as discussed further below—that residents thought that the council was effectively running the estate down via inadequate maintenance of the buildings. In addition, Aylesbury leaseholders mounted legal CPO challenges to demolition in 2015 and 2018; part of their case involved wanting to remain in their existing area, not least because it is a welcoming multi-ethnic neighbourhood (Hubbard & Lees, 2018; Rendell, 2017; Southwark Council, 2016). The equation of demolition with the inter-related class and ethnic transformation of the area—associated with state-led gentrification—was a prominent complaint in fieldwork and interviews. Gesil and William were explicit that they were de facto the 'wrong sort of people'—too working-class and too black—for the gentrification (or 'social cleansing' as they called it) that was occurring via demolition. Alongside other leaseholders who contested demolition, this couple knew that they would be unable to afford one of the new private properties or even the so-called 'affordable housing' (Hubbard & Lees, 2018; Southwark Council, 2016).

Hence, they faced the prospect of being forced out of the area, something that they bitterly resented after having lived through the estate's earlier 'bad times': "Now that the place is coming up, they [council] want us to move out" (Gesil). Aylesbury residents were only too well-aware of the fate of the nearby Heygate estate leaseholders, most of whom were displaced away from the immediate area while many had to leave London altogether (Flynn, 2016).

In conclusion, for such a tainted place, there is a remarkable degree of resident disregard, rejection, and active resistance of territorial stigmatisation at the Aylesbury estate rather than the widespread and deeply-felt internalisation that Wacquant (2008) has identified in his US and French advanced marginality exemplars. Having said that, interviewees described how the Aylesbury's reputation negatively affected their lives in one very practical way—London black-cab taxi drivers were reluctant to either pick them up or drop them off at the estate: "Usually I come by bus and then I go to Elephant and Castle, and I babysit there and then I take a mini-cab from there to here, but the black cabs they don't like to come here" (Dolores). William thought racism might be a factor as connected to the estate's large BAME population—"Black cabs are mainly white people." Although this expression of stigmatisation was inconvenient and annoying, it was also something that those affected had learned to cope with by using alternative means of transport (for example mini-cabs). By contrast, it was much more difficult for residents to cope with their poor housing conditions as I now discuss.

6. Poor Housing

Poor housing conditions at the Aylesbury are of long-standing nature and reflect long-term, widespread under-investment in social housing that has badly affected London council estates (Bennington et al., 2004; Boughton, 2018; Watt, 2009, 2013, in press). Council housing in Southwark was under-invested in for decades and even though Southwark was a major beneficiary of New Labour's nationwide, Decent Homes programme—which began in 2001 and aimed to improve social housing properties—"funding was insufficient to deal with the scale of the problem" in the borough (Luba, 2012, p. 24). It wasn't until 2011 that Southwark Council embarked on a pro-active and co-ordinated borough-wide housing investment programme (Luba, 2012).

Despite appreciation of their spacious and fundamentally sound homes, Aylesbury residents had many concerns regarding landlord repairs and maintenance as well as the estate's overall physical condition (Baxter, 2017; Lees, 2014; ORS, 2009; Social Life, 2017). What is striking is that by contrast with the improvements in neighbourhood satisfaction, crime, and fear of crime, there was no equivalent improvement in the state of housing and physical infrastructure over the NDC period. In fact, the 2001 stock transfer resulted in diminished upkeep: "With the council waiting to see if most of the estate would be demolished, major repairs were put on hold" (Mullany, 2002b). A post-ballot survey indicated residents' future priorities included "improvement to homes, such as double glazing, and work to kitchens and bathrooms, with health and community facilities, a youth centre and employment and training provision needed on the estate" (Mullany, 2002b). However, while the community development parts of the NDC went ahead following the vote against transfer, the housing aspects stalled. In fact, "The delay in pursuing substantial physical regeneration of community or housing facilities earlier within the programme" was identified as a key failure of the Aylesbury NDC (ERS, 2010, p. 5). In addition, several London regeneration estates were also either partially or fully removed from the Decent Homes programme because they were due for demolition (Watt, 2013, in press); the Aylesbury itself received no Decent Homes funding until 2015–2016 (Southwark Council, 2019).

Such delays and general under-investment meant that 45% of Aylesbury residents had at least one serious problem with their property by 2008, notably "damp penetration or condensation and heating or plumbing" (ORS, 2009, p. 14). This housing report went onto show that 57.5% of Aylesbury households were living in unsuitable housing, 28.0% had major disrepair, and 22.1% were overcrowded; the respective Southwark figures are 31.1%, 9.6%, and 11.3% indicating much worse quality housing at the Aylesbury compared to the borough average (ORS, 2009, p. 23). Indeed, 44% of Aylesbury council rented properties were classified as non-decent in 2010 compared to 31% across Southwark in 2011 (Luba, 2012, pp. 27–28).

Not only was poor housing extensive at the Aylesbury, but interviews and fieldwork indicate the depths of distress and frustration that the remaining residents experienced. Mohammed (council tenant, South Asian) described his family's housing problems: "There's no hot water, its freezing sometimes. There's a lot of repairs' issues, there's rats and the heating's messing up. A couple of days ago we had no hot water. I live with my gran [grandmother], she shouldn't have to boil water." Salma had a leak in her flat at one point and spent four days without any electricity because it had been turned off; eventually she and her daughter were moved to a hostel for several months while the work was undertaken. Poor housing included damp, leaks, inadequate heating and hot water supply, electrical hazards, infestation, and poor quality/non-existent repairs, as well as overcrowding. It is these conditions that are generally uppermost in London social housing estate residents' everyday problems and priorities (Watt, in press), while they also have a detrimental impact on health and well-being (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018; Wilson, O'Donnell, Bellis, & Barton, 2019).

Aylesbury residents felt that they were living in a poor physical environment, but also one which was if

anything deteriorating due to worsening housing services. A 2015 meeting involved a group discussion with twelve tenants and leaseholders regarding the regeneration. They despairingly emphasised the worsening physical environment, mainly regarding their own homes but also the estate in general. A male long-term council tenant said:

> My flat is in a massive state of disrepair due to many months of no heating and leaks from the neighbour upstairs. There's big holes in the floor, leaks and mould, but I don't want them [council] to do a bodge job as they've done in the past.

A female resident described how she had "water pouring down the wall due to private tenants next door." A young man with two small children reported water coming through the ceiling, but "the council said it's not an emergency and that I had to wait until Monday, the weekend [repairs] team cannot do it." An older woman described how when her sink unit collapsed, the worker who came to her flat had been told by his supervisor just to "look at it, but he felt sorry for me and he did fix it." Among the interviewees, Carol (council tenant, black) had no immediate repairs' issues, but described how the council had refused to mend her broken kitchen cupboards: "They said it's not their job, so I had to go B&Q and fix it privately because I got so fed up."

One recurrent complaint regarded the malfunctioning collective heating and hot water system:

> Three mums from the Aylesbury Estate's Calverton block have been contacting the *News* since December [2016] to vent their frustration about the ongoing problems. (News Desk, 2017)

> Residents of condemned flats have been left freezing in the snowy conditions after a temporary boiler fix failed to hold….Many say the boilers have been a continuing problem for months. (Porter, 2018)

Residents lobbied the council about this issue; one complaint contained 200 signatories (Southwark Council, 2018). The relevant Councillor admitted that "there have been issues on the estate, mostly with boiler and associated plant" (Southwark Council, 2018, p. 2). According to Johnston (2019), the council paid £334,666 in compensation to Southwark council tenants due to heating and hot water problems and the bulk of this—around £319,000—was paid out to the residents of just two larger estates—Aylesbury and Wyndham.

In the light of such persistent housing problems, it is hardly surprising that Aylesbury residents cynically felt the council was neglecting the estate due to its imminent demolition. Similar views had also been expressed at the nearby Heygate—"As an estate that has been earmarked for possible demolition and rehousing, many residents feel that equipment has been patched up rather than replaced, causing problems that repeatedly flare up in the cold weather" (Eighteen, 2002). A flourishing 'managed decline' narrative was prominent at the Aylesbury—

Figure 3. Aylesbury estate: Fortress and 'no demolitions!' 2015. Source: Paul Watt.

that "the area's problems could be solved by allowing the neighbourhood to get worse and worse until it was no longer viable and had to be pulled down" (Davidson, McGuinness, Greenhalgh, Braidford, & Robinson, 2013, p. 62). This narrative features in the above letter (Briden et al., 2005)—that the estate was being deliberately rundown via the actions and inactions of the council and its regeneration partners.

Residents felt they were being pressurised out of their homes due to the poor quality of maintenance and repairs; in other words, displacement as predicated on landlord neglect (Huq & Harwood, 2019). As mentioned before, Mohammed had several housing problems, which prompted a desire to leave his flat: "I'm tired of the Aylesbury estate, I want to stay in the area but I want something new." Because of her flat's infestation, Hurmine was using the bidding system to transfer to another council property. At a 2014 meeting, a long-term female tenant complained of vermin infestation in one block while she described neighbours suffering from water dripping down the walls: "You come across people who say they want to get off the estate or out of the block as fast as they can." Shona (temporary tenant, white British) had only been living in her flat for a few months, but was desperate to be rehoused: "I hate it here, I cannot wait to leave, I've got so many holes in my floors, I've got mice, my 1-year old picked it up!" Dennis (council tenant, white British) had left the Aylesbury and was living in a council flat elsewhere in Southwark: "I'm glad I got out when I did, because I had a friend who stayed on and he had a terrible time there, the heating and water went, he said it was a nightmare." Others, however, were holding out and trying to resist the managed decline pressures: "They just want it to run down completely, frustrate us and then we move out, but they're not going to get us!'' (Gesil).

One prominent physical aspect of managed decline is how the estate took on a forbidding fortress-like appearance due to supposedly enhanced 'security' (see Figure 3 with anti-demolition slogans): "We're fenced in, people think it's a prison" (female leaseholder, 2015 meeting; see also Southwark Council, 2016, leaseholder statements).

7. Conclusion

The Aylesbury estate has suffered from persistent and intensive territorial stigmatisation in Wacquant's terms—as a 'notorious/sink estate/from hell'—which has occurred via extensive distorted national mass media coverage (Campkin, 2013; Romyn, 2019). However, despite such reputational 'taint of place,' there is little evidence of the blanket resident internalisation of territorial stigmatisation of the kind that Wacquant (2008) identified in Chicago and Parisian social housing estates. Instead, Aylesbury residents have largely disregarded, rejected, or actively resisted such stigmatisation (see Baxter, 2017; Lees, 2014; Rendell, 2017).

The Aylesbury estate was clearly a deprived area during the 1990s and early 2000s, one characterised by poverty, unemployment, low education, crime, anti-social behaviour, and fear of crime. However, it was by no means unusual in this regard by the standards of inner-city south-east London, and was furthermore one of the least deprived of the national NDC areas. More recently during the 2010s, the Aylesbury still has extensive poverty while unemployment is above the borough average and is especially a concern regarding BAME residents (Murray, 2012; Social Life, 2017). Nevertheless, other area-based deprivation indicators—educational attainment, crime, and fear of crime, for example—have substantially improved at the Aylesbury since 2000, improvements which are, at least in part, due to the NDC and other regeneration-related community development efforts (ERS, 2010; Social Life, 2017). Aylesbury neighbourhood satisfaction levels increased since 2000 while place belonging is substantial and also well above the UK average, such that Wacquant's bleak 'dissolution of place' prognosis has scant applicability. On the other hand, housing (largely neglected within advanced marginality studies) has remained highly problematic for Aylesbury residents. The article emphasises their everyday difficulties and distress in trying to grapple with poor quality housing—non-functioning heating, damp, infestation, and inadequate repairs—despite their intrinsic valuation of their flats as spacious homes and for some with good views.

The research did not involve asking interviewees to directly compare territorial stigmatisation and housing experiences and this could be regarded as a potential weakness of the article; it is certainly something that future research should address. Nevertheless, the evidence strongly suggests that territorial stigmatisation is of relatively minor significance for Aylesbury residents in comparison to the frustration and sheer daily human misery they experienced due to the dilapidated, rundown state of their homes which itself reflects long-term under-investment in the estate and, as far as they were concerned, enhanced landlord neglect. Whereas territorial stigmatisation could be disregarded, residents could not disregard the dire state of their homes which also undoubtedly impacted upon their own and their family's health (Wilson et al., 2019). It is such poor housing which was forcing residents out of their homes—displacement—rather than territorial stigmatisation. Wacquant's comment (2008, p. 169)—that territorial stigmatisation is the "most protrusive feature" of residents' lived experiences in urban zones of advanced marginality—is not borne out in the Aylesbury case.

Two caveats are in order. First, I am not arguing that territorial stigmatisation has been of no significance at the Aylesbury estate. It undoubtedly has been significant, for example in helping to underpin the rationale for demolition and hence contributing to the resultant state-led gentrification in Southwark (Hubbard & Lees, 2018; Lees, 2014). Second, the focus on social housing should

not be interpreted to mean that this tenure monopolises poor quality accommodation. In fact, 38% of private renters live in poor housing in England compared to only 22% of social renters (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018). Private tenants in London, particularly low-income tenants, often live in poor housing conditions while they also suffer from exorbitant rents and routine evictions which social tenants are cushioned from (Watt, 2018a, in press).

This article's key arguments are supported by the larger research project on London estate regeneration from which this case study is drawn (Watt, in press). First, that many London social housing estates are stigmatised, even if not to the same extreme degree as the Aylesbury. Second, that such stigmatisation is in the main discordant from residents' everyday experiences of place and neighbourhood. Third, that London estates suffer from under-investment and if anything enhanced neglect as they await demolition during the lengthy regeneration process in which living conditions steadily worsen for those in the remaining blocks of flats. As such, 'regeneration' is a misnomer since residents instead experience 'degeneration' as the quality of their homes and estate environment deteriorates. Fourth, that the academic prioritisation of territorial stigmatisation represents an analytical over-emphasis relative to estate residents' own concerns, notably their material living conditions regarding domestic and public space. Fifth, while London estates are not 'problem places,' neither are they places without problems and especially poor housing conditions which residents, quite rightly, want their landlords to address (Watt & Allen, 2018). In conclusion, greater academic attention needs to be paid to highlighting social housing estate residents' own experiences and voices, especially regarding the material quality of their homes and neighbourhoods, while housing should be foregrounded, rather than neglected, in the analysis of the dynamics of urban advanced marginality.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

Historical and Spatial Layers of Cultural Intimacy: Urban Transformation of a Stigmatised Suburban Estate on the Periphery of Helsinki

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Abstract
Kontula, a suburban estate at the margins of Helsinki, Finland, has been plagued by a notorious reputation since its construction in the 1960s. At different moments in history, it has reflected failed urbanity, with shifting emphases on issues such as rootlessness, segregation, intergenerational poverty, and unsuccessful integration of immigrants. Unlike many other suburban estates in Helsinki, it has become a potent symbol of the ills of contemporary urbanity in the vernacular geography of the city. Based on ethnographic fieldwork, this article explores how its inhabitants experience the dynamic between the internalised stigma and their responses to it. The focus is on how historically formed and spatially defined senses of belonging and exclusion shape their everyday lives and how they have found ways to challenge the dominant perceptions about their homes and neighbourhoods. I argue that an understanding of cultural intimacy, conceptually developed by Michael Herzfeld, offers a useful way to approach the tension between essentialised categories and lived realities. Rather than simply limiting their agency, the shared stigma enables inhabitants to form powerful senses of belonging. The article emphasises how culturally intimate understandings employ both complex historical trajectories and shifts in relative location to question and confront the stigma in the language of mutual trust and belonging.

Keywords
cultural intimacy; ethnography; Finland; resistance; territorial stigma; urban marginalisation; urban transformation

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1. Introduction

"If you survive here, you survive everywhere," Jamal told me with a wry smile. He was one of the teenagers, just turned sixteen, hanging around the run-down open-air shopping centre of Kontula district almost every day. We were on the eastern periphery of Helsinki, accessible in only 15 minutes from the central districts of the city by a frequent metro connection, but rarely visited by non-residents. Tonight was special because an NGO with the aim of connecting with disadvantaged youths had arrived in Kontula: They had parked their bus by the metro station and would welcome everyone under eighteen for cheap (decaffeinated) coffee, tea and snacks with an opportunity to warm up inside, play board games, and chat. "We run this place. We don't care what the others think about us," Jamal continued with intense pride in his voice.

The bus had toured some other districts reputed to be "problem areas" and we discussed the range and scale of their issues with a group of volunteers, mostly from the local youth centre. One of the social workers told us that the situation with the youths in their previous location had been dire. After hearing this, Jamal interrupted us and wanted to know whether there were other places as bad as Kontula. Social workers took his question seriously and began to discuss the differences related to the size, demography, and other factors of the other districts but this did not satisfy him. He wanted to know which one ranked at the top in this sense and was sure that it

would be Kontula. The other youths gathered around to support his view.

I asked Jamal, casually, how well he knew these other places, had he seen their realities with his own eyes. The atmosphere suddenly became very tense and serious. This was not the right question in this context. We were no longer comparing different districts but alluding to the shrinking of the lifeworld into the narrow confines of the suburban estate. "The centre of Helsinki is just fifteen minutes from here by metro, but we rarely go there" Jamal continued, "we take the metro for just two stops to Itäkeskus [a big mall], almost never further. What is there in the centre for us? As a Somali immigrant I feel much more comfortable here." His boastful demeanour had changed into hesitancy and the discussion stopped. Jamal looked at the ground visibly ashamed. The silence was broken by Jesse, who had earlier taken pride in his grandparents being among the original inhabitants of Kontula: "Yes, there are people who say that we are stuck in this place. Maybe it is true but is it really a problem? Kontula has all I need. People say this is a shithole, but we don't care." The other youth agreed, the uneasy undercurrent had been driven away and it was time to move on.

This encounter brings together several key themes of my argument: the hierarchical relations between urban spaces; the sense of the peripherality of one's lifeworld and the ambivalence of pride; and shame associated with it. Here, the culturally intimate affirmation of survival skills, insistence on Kontula ranking at the top of Helsinki's problem areas, and the claim of not caring about the opinions of the others suddenly turned into consideration of isolation and marginalisation before the sense of pride was retrieved. Within the dominant spatial hierarchy of Helsinki, Kontula is at the bottom.

The reputation of Kontula is acknowledged by its inhabitants as well as Finns who have never set foot in the area. With its towering blocks of flats and busy but run-down shopping centre, it signifies urban marginality, distanced from the exemplary urbanity of the city centre, while simultaneously not qualifying for the category of lush suburbia, despite its pockets of wealthier middle-class neighbourhoods. The term suburban estate brings together the contradictory attributes of the whole district. Built primarily in the 1960s and 1970s to accommodate large-scale migration from the countryside to the cities, it has a long history as a symbol of urban rootlessness, social problems, and failed integration of the immigrants, to the degree that casual comments such as "if this goes wrong I will soon be living in Kontula" or "if things don't change, my neighbourhood will become like Kontula" are widespread and ubiquitous. However, the difference between the predominant representations and social realities are recognised by the inhabitants and often used to their advantage. It is hard work to find a balance between the denigrating and stigmatising discourses from those in power and the culturally intimate senses of belonging and local pride.

My analysis is based on a discussion of Loïc Wacquant's influential theories of territorial stigma, with emphasis on how their notions of agency can be expanded—especially in relation to the sociospatial orientation (Taylor, 1989, 1992, 1995), relative location (Green, 2012) and embodied senses of history (Faubion, 1993). Moreover, I discuss the possibilities of challenging the stigma in particular contexts and introduce a perspective influenced by Michael Herzfeld's (2016) theory of cultural intimacy, concentrating on successful attempts to challenge the dominant views from the margins and to establish powerful senses of community, founded largely on notions of their imperfection and shared colloquial sociality. The principal objective of the article is to study the prevalence of stigma in the everyday lives of Kontula's inhabitants, its relation to spatially and historically ordered senses of sociality and the attempts to reverse the stigma with various tactics and degrees of success. I begin with a discussion of the prominent theoretical streams on stigmatisation and the specific features of my ethnographic study of everyday life in Kontula, move on to examine how spatial hierarchies are related to historical changes and, in the last section of the article, observe different ways to challenge the stigma through culturally intimate notions of sociality.

2. Spatially Defined Stigma: Theory and Literature

Territorial stigmatisation is a loaded concept, its academic applications can be quite different from the essentialised media representations and, especially, from the first-hand experience of life in the near-constant presence of stigma. There is a vast literature on this topic, developed primarily with the theories of Wacquant (2007, 2008, 2010) and his associates (see especially Vol. 46 of *Environment and Planning A*, with several articles applying the theory to different geographic contexts). They have defined it as a specific historical condition of societies since the end of the 20th century, after the dissolution of neighbourhoods emblematic of the Fordist–Keynesian phase of industrial capitalism (Wacquant, Slater, & Pereira, 2014, p. 1270). My aim is to discuss how the theory relates to a Finnish case of urban marginality, a succession of historical changes that form a palimpsest in which visible traces of the earlier forms still influence the contemporary realities. My focus lies specifically in the hierarchisation of urban space and internalisation of the stigma as context-specific processes that escape the dominant designations in often surprising ways. A brief glance into the influences of Wacquant helps us to understand the dynamics of his theory.

The concept of stigma in the social sciences is ambiguous in relation to its fixity. Erving Goffman's (1963) widespread formulation does not include place of residence as one of the factors that can disqualify the individual, while Wacquant argues that "territorial infamy displays properties analogous to those of bodily, moral and tribal stigmata" (2007, p. 67). Even so, ter-

ritorial stigma differs from the other types for it can be quite easily dissimulated or even annulled by geographical mobility (Wacquant, 2007). Wacquant considers his theory of territorial stigmatisation as bringing together Goffman's view with Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power (Wacquant et al., 2014, p. 1272).

Furthermore, both Bourdieu (1999, p. 123) and Wacquant (2007, p. 68) emphasise the role of media and state-led campaigns to enforce the internalisation of territorial stigma. According to their findings, representations of stigmatised areas exercise immense power among both their inhabitants and the wider society, establishing a hierarchical view of the society that conditions their subjection to the dominant frameworks. This is often based on rumours and sensational stories, especially in the tabloid media. The consequences are devaluation of the self and corrosion of the social ties which lead to inhabitants' "strategies of mutual distancing and lateral denigration; they retreat into private sphere of the family; and they exit the neighbourhood (whenever they have the option)" (Wacquant, 2008, p. 116). In the same vein, Bourdieu sees no escape other than flight towards other sites, which is usually made impossible by a lack of resources (1999, p. 129). According to Wacquant, this dynamic presents a self-fulfilling prophecy when the negative representations begin to guide the lives of the residents who, in turn, end up reinforcing them (2008, p. 116). For both, the internalisation of the stigma is extremely powerful, and the hierarchy of different spaces remains straightforward and largely unquestioned. Stigmatised areas signify only problems and their residents are defenceless against the distorted media representations. In these analyses the geographic focus is on the French banlieues and the predominantly black neighbourhoods in the US.

In their article examining how territorial stigma is internalised in Aalborg East, Denmark, Jensen and Christensen (2012) draw attention to the differences between interactionist perspectives based on Goffman's work and those heavily influenced by Bourdieu's theories of habitus and symbolic violence. While the former address internalisation, they refer to awareness of the stigma, not necessarily the internalisation of worthlessness associated with it. In contrast, Bourdieu and Wacquant argue that the marginalised groups incorporate their social degradation as a result of their stigmatisation (Jensen and Christensen, 2012, p. 77). However, in his later work, Wacquant allows more room for strategies to challenge the prevailing order, ranging from recalcitrance to resistance, in order to defend the stigmatised area against accusations or to take an indifferent stance toward them (Wacquant et al., 2014, p. 1276). In the same article, he also defends the complementariness of Goffman's and Bourdieu's work: the first working from below, "across encounters and their aggregations into organisations"; the second from above, "following the flow of efficient representations from symbolic authorities" (Wacquant et al., 2014, pp. 1272–1273).

The aim of my analysis is not to discredit these approaches but to suggest how they could be made more sensitive to contradictions and the rapidly-changing contexts of everyday realities. While the powerful representations of the media, state actors and even researchers have been successful in designating the territorial stigma of Kontula, informal discussions with the residents in diverse contexts often reveal that reactions to stigmatisation are varied, with wide-ranging consequences. I find the theoretical framework of Wacquant flexible enough to accommodate these responses. In the same vein, Kirkness (2014), August (2014), and Kallin & Slater (2014) have examined the ways to question and to challenge stigmatisation creatively. I began with a depiction of an encounter with Jamal and his friends, in which boastful pride quickly turned into hesitancy, even shame, about isolation within the extended spatial hierarchy. If non-residents associate Kontula with strong territorial stigma, its inhabitants cannot be unaffected by it. However, the straightforward and reified designation from the outside, covering the whole gamut of urban ills, meets a diverse and complex social reality of the everyday lives of the inhabitants who have been exposed to the stigma daily. The spatial hierarchy is continually redefined along different scales, from neighbourhoods to districts and can be based on very different values. It establishes a specific order but not necessarily territorial stigma. As my ethnographic accounts show, the residents have become extremely sensitive to its different dimensions and understand its dynamics in a very detailed way.

The stigma is not frozen in time but always related to the sociospatial context and its power relations. Its location is relative, and its meaning "depends upon its relations with, and separations from other places" (Green, 2012, p. 6). In order to understand the value of the place, depending on its hierarchically ordered position relative to other places, we have to concentrate on the particular value system that is used to create an order (Green, 2012). Furthermore, the meaning does not depend on just the contemporary representations but on an immensely detailed history. All the shades of stigma over the years have implied shifts in the relative location of Kontula and its position in differently defined hierarchies. Inhabitants, especially those who have lived in Kontula for a long time, have become experts in reacting to the stigmatisation. The expertise consists of both embodied knowledge of appropriate behaviour and a distinguished ability to reflect upon its dynamics (cf. Taylor, 1992).

Michael Herzfeld's (2016) theory of cultural intimacy provides a thought-provoking framework to bring together the questions of spatial hierarchy, socioculturally appropriate practices, and the role of essentialism in social life. It helps us to understand the sense of local pride in a district that has suffered for decades from a stigma imposed from the outside. Herzfeld defines cultural intimacy as "the recognition of those aspects of an officially shared identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide in-

siders with their assurance of common sociality," "the self-stereotypes that insiders express ostensibly at their own collective expense" (2016, p. 7). It offers a way to express the value of informal social relations in everyday life, away from the gaze of the authorities and their strict definitions of appropriateness. As my field data show, there are moments when the long history of territorial stigmatisation turns into pride—hesitant or boastful—about the locality. Bourdieu's view of the downward spiral, of the "stigmatised area degrading its inhabitants, who, in return, symbolically degrade it" (1999, p. 129), leading to their common excommunication, does not recognise how the stigma can also result in a powerful sense of community that relies on its very stigmatisation for its solidarity.

3. Methods

My research is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Kontula during 2017 and 2018 (12 months/3 months). The principal method of participant observation has been supported by semi-structured interviews, historical studies of the area, media accounts, and statistical information. The ethnographic data presented here is founded on the patterns that have emerged from countless informal encounters with people from very different ages and backgrounds. I conducted over 30 interviews, mostly on the history and the urban transformation of the area (of durations lasting from half an hour to several hours); they acted mostly as support for participant observation. The core of my argument is mostly based on following the rhythms of everyday life, balancing between the ordinary and extraordinary, contradictions and paradoxes that are specific to particular contexts, rather than to stable opinions and identities—humanisation of the subjects instead of their depiction in abstract terms (cf. Duneier, 2002, p. 1575). These daily encounters were recorded comprehensively in my field diary and the more relevant sections of the interviews were transcribed. Many of the identified sociocultural issues were repeatedly brought up with the informants and discussed in different groups. Over the course of the fieldwork, I was able to reach people from very different backgrounds, but the focus remained on those who frequented the central open-air shopping centre and were active users of its services.

My own position during the fieldwork evolved from someone who was new to the area into one of the people who "were always around." As a white male with a university education and a steady income I stood out from the crowd, principally because many of the people got to know me as "Doctor," a nickname I was given during the early stages of my fieldwork. To counterbalance this, my childhood and youth as an inhabitant of another stigmatised suburban estate in Helsinki helped to facilitate the dialogue more than I expected. At some point, many of the discussions tended to touch on the difficulty of explaining the realities of Kontula to outsiders. In these situations, I heard frequently that I was someone who would know from experience "what it was like."

Following Alpa Shah, I consider participant observation "not merely a method of anthropology but a form of production of knowledge through being and action; it is praxis, the process by which theory is dialectically produced and realized in action" (2017, p. 45). The ethnographic method does not just confirm hypotheses but engages in producing a more detailed grasp of social realities with the informants. Its aim is to tease out the pragmatic logic of everyday life, how different practices make sense in ways that people are not necessarily aware of (Graeber, 2007, p. 305). To assess a phenomenon such as multifaceted as stigmatisation, long-term involvement in the lives of the informants provided different and often conflicting views compared to data from interviews and more formal questions. The gradual gaining of trust was essential in reaching beyond the expected reactions about the characteristics of the area.

Here, my findings are expressed in a form of three narrative accounts by local inhabitants whose names have been changed to protect their privacy. They were selected to represent the systematic collection of impressions, characterisations, and memories of spaces and traces of history, thus bringing together the diverse perspectives towards stigmatisation in the area. They are not based on experiences shared by all inhabitants but explore the ways in which stigma is encountered and reacted to, referring to several recurring patterns in my field data. In this case, the shared experiences of teenagers from both immigrant and native Finnish backgrounds, the native-born long-term residents in the social housing estate they love and an Afghani immigrant with a strong identification with Kontula, point to the range of variations. The analysis of my field data has followed the identification of the most prevalent themes in the everyday lives of my informants but also paid attention to the silences and situations in which they struggled to establish coherent narratives of their lifeworld.

The overriding focus in my fieldwork has been to understand how people accomplish a positive sense of belonging despite conflicting sociocultural norms and subjection to stigma (cf. Duneier, 1999, p. 341). This is not to belittle the serious social problems in Kontula, but the statistics regarding employment, health, and crime in the area place it above many other districts in Helsinki that do not suffer from territorial stigmatisation to the same degree.

4. Historical Layers and Spatial Hierarchies of Kontula

The Kontula suburban estate reflects closely the ideals of Finnish urban planning in the 1960s. Not modelled after the American suburbia, nor after the housing estates in the British context, the Finnish suburban housing estate (lähiö) combines characteristics of both (see Ilmonen, 2016, and Stjernberg, 2019, for a discussion of definitions). The emphasis was on constructing separate

housing areas with their own centres for essential services and allocation of blocks of flats around them, leaving room for green areas between the concentrations of buildings (Lento, 2006). Approximately one million Finns currently live in the hundreds of suburban estates, most of them built in the 1960s and 1970s (Stjernberg, 2019, p. 1). However, few of them carry any territorial stigma.

The local detailed plans for Kontula were released in 1963–1965 and the construction began principally with the aim of offering affordable housing in a city that was growing fast. For many of the original residents, moving into Kontula meant substantial improvement in their living conditions. Compared to small flats in the inner-city areas, Kontula offered spacious rooms, balconies as well as modern kitchen facilities and bathrooms, making suburban estates a popular option for working-class families (Kokkonen, 2002; see Kirkness, 2014, for similarities in the French context). Located on the urban periphery of Helsinki, at first accessible only by unsealed roads and irregular bus connections, Kontula quickly became a powerful symbol of both modernisation and urban rootlessness, a space somewhere between the city and the countryside, but not really part of either (Kokkonen, 2002). This kind of liminality is one dimension of the stigma that has haunted Kontula ever since. However, the narrative of segregation has gradually changed its form from the lack of transport connections into self-imposed isolation based on not being accepted in the other parts of the city. Even the newcomers to the area quickly adopt this narrative with its distinct historical emphases.

Since its construction, the media representations of Kontula concentrated on the social problems of the area, the lack of meaningful activities for its youth and the poor-quality construction (Roivainen, 1999). The stigma imposed by the media intensified at the beginning of the 1990s when Finland was in deep recession and the unemployment figures soared, especially in the areas with large working-class populations. Kontula became an emblem of recession and a favourite spot for journalists looking for a story about its consequences. In the 2000s, the stigma concentrated around claims of uncontrolled immigration and failed integration.

Despite changes in the media attention over recent decades, the reports often follow a similar line of argument. The most common approach to Kontula is to confirm its status as a problem area. The focus might be on why people are leaving; according to this widespread narrative, the reasons are substance abuse in the area and tensions within the multicultural environment (Jaskari, 2018). It can also be about how the ubiquity of low levels of education in the area normalises it among the youth (Vehkasalo, 2017a). In another recent case, reporting the crime statistics in different parts of Helsinki with a focus on Kontula did not really support the conclusions drawn from them but used Kontula as an example of a crime-ridden area (Pajuriutta & Saarinen, 2017). This variety of media representation expresses the "pathological discourse" that understands the problems rooted in the large spatial concentration of the poor and the marginalised (Hastings, 2004).

Another prominent type of discourse, focussing on the structural explanations of the problems (Hastings, 2004), often proclaims grave warnings about the future of the marginalised suburban estates, emphasising that the segregation development must stop (Lepistö, 2018). These narratives closely follow the themes and narratives Kearns, Kearns, and Lawson (2013) analysed as negative, mixed, and positive media representations in two inner-city mass housing estates in Glasgow. All the previous examples express the negative type. For the mixed representations, the most common varieties in both Glasgow and Kontula are the seemingly positive stories of community initiatives which, however, never fail to mention the social problems in the area and "working against the odds" by the inhabitants (Vehkasalo, 2017b; cf. Kearns et al., 2013, p. 590). Another type of mixed media representation regarding Kontula consists of readers' letters criticising the media portrayals and pointing out positive developments despite the problems. This is also the case in Glasgow. On the positive side the stories are few, mostly concentrating on individual success stories and the rapid regeneration. In an exemplary case, rundown pubs are being replaced by affordable but good quality Middle Eastern restaurants (Nelskylä, 2016).

Statistically, there is no real basis for explaining the stigmatised position of Kontula. Its socioeconomic status is low but not markedly lower than many other districts that have not become symbols of failure. Furthermore, the current socioeconomic factors are not enough to explain the stigma: Kontula was already stigmatised in the 1970s, when it was not evidently disadvantaged (see Stjernberg, 2019, p. 153).

A significant concentration of immigrants, low quality housing stock, or high proportion of social housing are also inadequate factors when explaining the stigmatisation of Kontula. In comparison with many districts in Europe, the percentage of inhabitants with an immigrant background is relatively low. However, the current figure is that 36.2% of people do not speak the official languages of Finland (Finnish, Swedish or Sámi) as their mother tongue, one of the highest in Finland (City of Helsinki, 2019). In 2018, the population of Kontula was 14418 but a better figure is 38771, the population of the larger Mellunkylä district, including adjoining neighbourhoods, often associated with Kontula and lacking clear boundaries in the minds of the inhabitants. In 2016, 18.5% of the inhabitants were unemployed (compared to 12% in Helsinki), the proportion of social housing was significantly higher than in the central districts and 20% of the inhabitants received welfare benefits, compared to 11.9% in Helsinki (City of Helsinki, 2018).

However, these reifications and statistics ignore the diversity of Kontula's neighbourhoods over the course of their history. Many studies of territorial stigmatisation and ghettoisation depict neighbourhoods in which poverty is an omnipresent condition (see Duneier, 2016;

Wacquant, 2010). While Kontula is routinely called a problem area or even a ghetto in media representations and colloquial conversations, its reality is vastly different. On looking more closely, it has a wide variety of housing options, ranging from the renowned concrete blocks to some wealthy pockets with spacious detached houses.

Even within the stock of social housing there is diversity that has historical roots. Following the values of the social democratic welfare state, the question of social mixing was integral to urban planning from the 1960s, the time when the building of Kontula began. In the 1960s and 1970s, the suburban estates had both non-subsidised and social housing and after 1974, the housing blocks had to contain both varieties (Vaattovaara & Kortteinen, 2003). In the case of social housing, the aim was to avoid locating the tenants with the lowest income levels in the same buildings (Dhalmann & Vilkama, 2009). It is important to note here that the policy of social mixing in this context operated differently from its contemporary variant, associated with New Urbanism, and often fostering gentrification (see August, 2014; Kallin & Slater, 2014). This internal variety is mostly lost in the mainstream media accounts. The following vignette presents a way of maintaining the balance between the reputation and social reality, acknowledging the boundaries within the district and the impact of the influences from the outside.

5. Challenging the Stigma

5.1. Hidden Paradise

Kirsi had been living in Kontula for a long time, almost three decades, and had just retired from her job as a nurse. Her flat was in one of Finland's largest concentrations of public housing which had a notorious reputation, even within the standards of Kontula. It was only fifteen minutes' walk from the metro station and the shopping centre, but the neighbourhood was rarely visited by non-residents. It was just forest and houses, as I heard many say, and social problems, as others would add. The local grocery store had closed years ago; in addition to the NGO-run clubhouse providing cheap food, newspapers, and handicraft workshops, there was just a local pub and a football field.

Kirsi was aware of living in the most stigmatised part of an already stigmatised district and had had time to think about what it meant. When we first met, I remember her complaining about the delayed building repairs, restlessness, and the lack of services. She told me later that she had thought I was working for one of the numerous projects to improve the disadvantaged area. After we got to know each other better, our discussions were often about the ambivalent relationship she had towards her neighbourhood. One day when we were walking alongside the almost identical grey tower blocks, she began to contemplate: "It is funny, when I am walking with you, I am constantly thinking about what you think about this place. For many, these are some of the ugliest buildings in Helsinki. When you ask people about their homes, they all say that they want to move away. However, I have lived here for almost thirty years—there are some people who have been living here since the beginning of the 1970s when this area was built."

During my fieldwork, I frequently came across discussions about the time people had lived in the area, an effective way to confirm the speakers would have grasp of the same social realities. "I am actually very happy to live here," Kirsi continued with a bit of hesitation in her voice, "I know that no one in their right mind would be saying that. I don't bring this up with people who don't live here. To be a decent person you must criticise Kontula….This is really complicated….I also find myself doing that….It happens almost automatically. I must tell you, sometimes I feel that I am stuck in the mood of complaining about how terrible life is here. I could move away if I wanted to, but I am not going to."

We came across Kirsi's neighbour Tanja and stopped to talk about the latest news. There were plans to paint three large murals—then a relatively new but fast-growing cultural phenomenon in Finland—on their buildings and the rumours circulated widely. Tanja went to the issue straight on: "Why are they coming here, of all places, with this art project? I don't get it." Kirsi replied with a sly grin: "I knew this day would come! We have been hiding here for so long without anyone noticing us. Now these famous foreign artists will come, and the media will follow. Everyone used to be afraid of this place but now they will come to see the murals. It might be that our secret is going to be revealed. Our small paradise will soon be crowded with visitors from all over the world!" We all started to laugh, and they called me another spy about to expose the truth about the neighbourhood.

The theme about being a hidden paradise was another recurrent narrative in Kontula, not limited to this neighbourhood. The residents often challenged the sensationalist media accounts of rampant crime and disorderly conduct in the area but even the official statistics would not help to persuade people who had already made up their minds. However, the demonising representations were countered in an informal register much more often, reversing the whole situation. In this case, the negative media portrayal would become a blessing, protecting the area from outsiders and keeping the place safe from gentrification, rising accommodation costs and the dismantling of its communal spirit. In this case, the supposedly positive public art initiative was experienced as something imposed from the outside, not really touching the everyday lives of the inhabitants. It also pointed to the differences of culturally intimate and more formal ways of approaching changes in the area.

Encounters with Jamal and Kirsi point to two broad themes that expose the dynamics of territorial stigmatisation and responses to it. First, I argue that the hierarchy of spaces is not absolute but is strongly influenced by the social relations of the actors in particular contexts. Following Charles Taylor, the sociospatial hier-

archies should not be seen as maps inside our heads that can simultaneously relate all points to one another without discrimination, but as moral frameworks that act as guides in changing physical environment, "practical ability unfolding in exercise" (Taylor, 1992, p. 217, 1995, p. 276). Finding an appropriate stance to diverse encounters does not follow pre-formed rules of social interaction but consists of embodied knowledge, spontaneous improvisation of everyday life (Taylor, 1995). Second, the historical layers of the place and its culturally intimate ways of challenging the clichés, stereotypes, and other essentialised representations need to be considered in any analysis intended to address the internalisation of the stigma. Wacquant's analytical framework acknowledges that "relegation in the city is not everywhere cut from the same cloth, in spite of mounting transnational forces and homogenizing discourses" (Wacquant et al., 2014, p. 1271). While I recognise the similarities in the neoliberal policies and their consequences in the global context, I wish to emphasise the role of widely different quotidian responses to territorial stigmatisation.

The responses of both Jamal and Kirsi point to the fine balance between official representations and lived realities. In both cases, the context defines the limits of the appropriate behaviour and rhetoric—the stigmatisation of the subaltern by the dominant sections shaped their encounters with the others, even when the experience of their everyday life did not support it. While Jamal's attempt to challenge the dominant order by claiming not to care about what the others think led to a clash of spatial hierarchies, hesitancy and even shame, Kirsi found a space in which she could express her authentic feelings about her neighbourhood. The question is not about standards of appropriate behaviour as "wired in" or totally imposed by society (Taylor, 1989, p. 9, 1995, p. 168) but about balancing between the official and informal registers in different spatial and sociocultural contexts. The same applies to history: The disorderly palimpsest of official and vernacular histories experienced in the course of everyday life cannot be formalised perfectly; rather than following a set of rules, it must be likewise embodied (Faubion, 1993, p. 62).

For Jamal, the value of his claim of surviving in a hostile environment (and thus everywhere) and "ruling" the milieu around the shopping centre with his friends, was under threat when set against a larger sociospatial hierarchy. At this level, his position in Kontula signified isolation, ignorance, and marginality. On this occasion, his friend Jesse reclaimed the pride by insisting on self-sufficiency ("Kontula has all I need") and ignorance of the values of the dominant hierarchy ("People say this is a shithole, but we don't care"). On the contrary, for Kirsi, the hesitant satisfaction over the homely environment changed into celebration about a hidden paradise, revealed only to people with an intimate connection to the area. Her rhetoric was appropriate in this context, as she said, "to be a decent person you have to criticise Kontula."

A cynical view would hold that these are just futile efforts to challenge the status quo, worthless efforts to fight against the stigma imposed by the dominant actors. However, long-term ethnographic fieldwork gives access to a lifeworld where the dominant understandings of the stigma were challenged by the culturally intimate register of everyday life that emphasised powerful ideas of belonging and local pride. What is notable here is that pride and belonging do not necessarily follow one another in a straightforward manner. Pride is often felt over the very imperfections of sociality rather than the widely recognised and conventional attributes. In the following account, the stigma is reversed and becomes a source of a powerful sense of belonging.

5.2. Stranger in a Strange Land

Hasan migrated to Finland from Afghanistan ten years ago and had lived in Kontula almost from the beginning. It had been difficult to find long-term work in Helsinki, but he managed to support himself by working for several companies on an irregular basis. He preferred to spend his time in Kontula and shunned the central districts of Helsinki. Once, we decided to have a beer at the Central Square of the shopping centre on an exceptionally hot summer day. A very drunken middle-aged man was having difficulties walking while singing a famous folk song with his raspy voice. "This is Kontula!", Hasan began smiling, "I really love this atmosphere, it is so unlike the lifeless districts around the city centre. And there is no need to be afraid, nothing has ever happened to me. If you know how to behave, nothing bad will come to you. Every city has a district with a bad name—never mind the reality, the name of the area is enough to remind people of Kontula's reputation. For them, one drunken guy means danger; for me, it means just relaxed normal life. In some other parts of Helsinki, people look at you in a bad way if you are smoking a cigarette while waiting for the bus."

These casual observations led into more fundamental aspects of life:

> You know, I have never felt like I belong to Finland. I know the language pretty well, I drink booze like a Finn and many of my friends are ethnic Finns. To some degree I feel that I belong to Helsinki but most of all I belong to Kontula. I can fit in here, but it is not just because there are other immigrants around. In the city centre I feel like an alien, perhaps just like people who are afraid of this place would feel here.

This was another recurring point that I had heard several times. To identify with Kontula more than with a national identity was common among my informants, including ethnic Finns. Many saw Finnish identity as largely ceremonial and distanced from their lifeworld. Hasan was quiet for a little while, took a sip of his beer, and looked like he wanted to balance his contemplation

with harsh humour: "You can write that I feel at home with the drunks, criminals, and terrorists so everyone will understand!''

Here, like in Kirsi's account above, the slight confusion between formal and informal speech culminated in capturing the (negative) essentialised image of the area and closing the gap between the official narrative and what everyone in Kontula knows is closer to the truth. He was simultaneously located inside and outside these overlapping contexts, a border figure who suffered from lack of recognition and had ambivalent feelings about his place in the society (see Koefoed & Simonsen, 2012, p. 632). Hasan did not want to be helped, nor understood. He wanted to be left alone by the people who would always misunderstand him because of their version of the truth.

What is remarkable in these culturally intimate contexts is their ordinariness. As Herzfeld (2016, p. 168) argues: "Skilled social performances are not necessarily dramatic or even particularly impressive; on the contrary, some of the most effective performances are among the least palpable." This is why they easily escape the more formal methods of data collection. Consisting of gestures, barely noticeable hints of irony and, at times, overblown exaggerations, they escape the official frameworks, but capture their essentialisations and turn them into powerful claims for belonging. In the accounts of Jamal, Kirsi, and Hasan, living in a "shithole," surrounded by the ugliest buildings in the country and drinking in a disreputable bar are not sources of embarrassment, but of intimacy and affection. Herzfeld's (2016, p. 34) phrase "fellowship of the flawed" captures in an almost poetic manner how the stigma can be challenged in an appropriate sociocultural context and the sense of solidarity and belonging enforced.

6. Conclusion

The district of Kontula in the eastern periphery of Helsinki has a long history of territorial stigmatisation. The awareness of the stigma is shared by its inhabitants, but its internalisation is strongly dependent on the context. It is possible to explore the trajectory of the stigmatisation of Kontula from the perspectives of media representations, political developments, and official statistics and question the validity of the stigma, but it nevertheless remains strong. Both residents and non-residents expressed their views alternating between normalising and pathologising portrayals (see Hastings, 2004): alternating between views that the marginalisation has produced a downward spiral of social problems over the years, but also claiming the population is no different from elsewhere in Helsinki and distancing themselves from behavioural explanations. I have argued here that understanding the territorial stigma in Kontula is strongly influenced by the context, that the inhabitants have detailed knowledge about the irreconcilable difference between the denouncements from the powerful actors outside their lifeworld and the embodied social realities of their everyday lives. While Wacquant's theory of territorial stigma has been important in identifying the structural developments of the neoliberal urban sphere, it does not consider the culturally intimate contexts of everyday life. In Herzfeld's work, the informal register is taken seriously and quotidian work of upholding shared notions of sociality is put into the centre of the analysis. According to this view, a stigmatised area like Kontula also offers opportunities for a positive identification but not necessarily in ways sanctioned by the authorities and the dominant society. In the case of Hasan, his identification was not based on being a Finn but on a more fluid and inclusive notion of living in Kontula and belonging to one of its neighbourhoods. This provides a powerful example of reversing the stigma on a culturally intimate scale (see Koefoed & Simonsen, 2012, p. 632).

My analysis of the social realities in the area suggests that Bourdieu's and Wacquant's analytical framework of territorial stigma should be complemented with an in-depth ethnographic analysis that focusses on the contextual paradoxes and contradictions that escape the more formal methods of data collection. I have explored the constant clash between the formal and informal perceptions of Kontula's neighbourhoods and the skilful balancing between the different registers in rapidly shifting sociospatial contexts. In Kontula, the experience of living in a marginalised and degraded location coexists with an authentic awareness of a vibrant community and a strong sense of belonging. Powerful senses of pride and shame alternate in the everyday lives of the inhabitants who are constantly adjusting their behaviour and rhetoric according to frameworks of appropriate practices. Their transformative potential lies in the ordinariness of these practices, occupying "a militant middle ground between the twin denials of social experience—the extremes of positivism and deconstruction" (Herzfeld, 2016, p. 31) which capacitates them to challenge the dominant discourses from ever-new angles, enabling culturally intimate forms of belonging to thrive.

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Conflict of Interests

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Article

Place Narratives and the Experience of Class: Comparing Collective Destigmatization Strategies in Two Social Housing Neighborhoods

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Abstract
A growing body of literature has investigated the various ways in which residents of stigmatized neighborhoods respond to and cope with stigmatization. However, these approaches have fallen short in tackling the question of how particular places shape responses to stigmatization. In this article, I take seriously the question of context and, based on a comparative ethnography of two social housing neighborhoods in Finland, show how residents in similar social structural positions differed in terms of the cultural milieus they inhabited, presenting them with different cultural resources for dealing with stigmatization. In the article, I suggest that non-recognition is an understudied but significant consequence of stigma related to social housing neighborhoods. Further, I suggest that depending on the historical and cultural context of the neighborhood, different destigmatization strategies are employed when residents face non-recognition. My data shows that locally lived collective place narratives informed residents' experiences of class: In one neighborhood, the defining element of the locally acknowledged place narrative was class struggle, whereas in the other it was middle-class aspiration. These narratives served as building blocks for their destigmatization strategies.

Keywords
class; culture; destigmatization; ethnography; housing; non-recognition; place narrative; social housing; stigma; territorial stigma

Issue
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1. Introduction

A growing body of literature has investigated the various ways in which members of stigmatized groups respond to and cope with stigmatization (Lamont, 2018; Lamont & Mizrachi, 2012; Moon, 2012) and more specifically territorial or housing stigma (August, 2014; Garbin & Millington, 2012; Kirkness, 2014; Kusenbach, 2013; Queirós & Pereira, 2018; Slater & Anderson, 2012; Wacquant, 2007, 2008). It has been argued that stigmatization is not a straightforward process whereby residents simply internalize negative representations of their neighborhoods; rather, they have various social and strategic tools for coping with, responding to and resisting stigma (Kirkness, 2014). The propensity to adopt this tool or that has been said to depend on individual differences in access to personal, social and economic resources which mitigate the negative effects of stigmatization (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 380), as well as on one's position and trajectory in social and physical space (Wacquant, 2011). However, focusing on the individual level, these approaches have fallen short in tackling the question of how places shape responses to stigmatization. Do different neighborhoods enable and constrain responses similarly, or are there context-specific differences? Given the academic consensus on the heterogeneity of poor neighborhoods and their varying effects on residents (Sharkey & Faber, 2014), we should not assume meso-level (Fine, 2012) strategies for coping with stigma to be context free either. Queirós and Pereira (2018) have recently stated the importance of collective work in confronting stigmatization in residential contexts

but focus only on more formal forms of resistance. In this article, by contrast, I argue that focus on everyday resistance (Scott, 1985) is the key to seeing how localities, identifications and collective destigmatization strategies work together.

Using ethnographic data from Steephill[1] and Fireweed Village, two social housing neighborhoods in Finland, I illustrate the power of place narratives (Brown-Saracino, 2015) as cultural tools or social imaginaries (Reed, 2017, p. 32) that lead residents to interpret and act in the world in a certain way. I show how residents in similar social structural positions possessed different cultural resources for dealing with stigmatization (Lamont & Mizrachi, 2012), depending on their neighborhood milieu. In one neighborhood, the defining element of the locally acknowledged place narrative was "class struggle," whereas in the other it was "middle-class aspiration." These narratives, as I will suggest, served as resources for collective destigmatization strategies employed by residents when faced with practices of non-recognition that, I assert, are the concrete but often unnoticed consequences of housing stigma.

The article contributes to the literature on cultural understandings of place and community, which recent approaches have seen grow in strength (Blokland, 2017; Borer, 2006; Brown-Saracino, 2011). Focusing on the understudied question of how the urban poor attempt to construct a meaningful living space and sense of self-worth and dignity in their lives (Gotham & Brumley, 2002, p. 268) the article sheds light on the locally constructed cultural repertoires people can turn to and mobilize to make sense of their experiences (Lamont & Mizrachi, 2012). Comparison of practices of "being-togetherness" (Binken & Blokland, 2013, p. 294) in two social housing estates allows us to see stigmatized low-income neighborhoods not only as containers of the numerous negative effects of poverty, but also as historically and culturally diverse milieus that residents collectively draw on in order to gain recognition.

2. Theoretical Approach and Literature Review

2.1. Stigmatization of Housing, Territory and Class

It seems that in most Western countries living in a social housing estate is a stigmatizing position (Wassenberg, 2004). Residents of these social housing estates often suffer from stigma that is a multidimensional construct (Link & Phelan, 2001; Pescosolido & Martin, 2015). I note three forms of stigmatization that are relevant to the scope of this article. First, social housing residents routinely deal with what has been called "housing stigma" (Blokland, 2008; Hastings, 2004; Palmer, Ziersch, Arthurson, & Baum, 2004; Slater, 2018; Vassenden & Lie, 2013). Especially in nations where homeownership is the norm and a strong marker of social and moral status, social housing is associated with social pathologies. Finland in this respect is an illustrative context, since it has been described as a country of homeowners in which housing policy serves to assist those who fail to secure accommodation on the open market by providing them with social housing (Hyötyläinen, 2019; Ruonavaara, 1996). Accordingly, this type of housing then is associated with marginalized people and perceived as a form of social assistance. Social housing is housing "not for normal people" (Hyötyläinen, 2019, p. 53).

Second, social housing in Finland, as in many other countries, has been located in peripheral housing estates (Hyötyläinen, 2019) that suffer from territorial stigma (Wacquant, 2008). In Europe, the declining working-class neighborhoods that have been impacted by deindustrialization and the fragmentation of wage labor, are in Wacquant's (2007, p. 67) words often "isolated and bounded territories increasingly perceived by both outsiders and insiders as social purgatories." A great deal of criticism based on empirical work has been directed at this statement, arguing that internal and external neighborhood images are two different things (see Wacquant, Slater, & Pereira, 2014; Wassenberg, 2004). Nevertheless, neighborhoods tainted by "the blemish of place" (Wacquant, 2007) might be able to cope with the stigma, even resist it; but their chances of escaping it entirely are negligible.

Third, both housing and territorial stigma feed upon, strengthen and reproduce existing inequalities of class (Mckenzie, 2015; Skeggs, 2004). Class stigma relates to what Wacquant (2008, p. 30) has described as "the curse of being poor in the midst of a rich society in which participation in the sphere of consumption has become sine qua non of social dignity—a passport to personhood." Urban residents living at the bottom of the class structure in stigmatized neighborhoods are thus affected by multidimensional forms of territorial, housing and class stigma. Consequently, their position exposes them to relatively high "stigma consciousness" (Pinel, 1999), meaning constant fear for multiple reasons of being looked down on and devalued.

2.2. Non-Recognition as Everyday Experience of Stigma

In their everyday lives, residents of stigmatized neighborhoods are often misrecognized as lazy, immoral, violent or whatever stereotype outsiders employ to separate "them" from "us" (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 370). As Lamont, Beljean, and Clair (2014, p. 12) have stated, stigmatization as a social process shapes everyday interactions and easily results in consequences that contribute to the unequal distribution of recognition—"the fact of being acknowledged and given validation, legitimacy, value, worth, dignity and cultural membership." With respect to stigmatized housing, being deprived of recognition is normally understood as *mis*recognition. Much less research has focused on *non*-recognition—effectively "being rendered invisible" (Fraser, 1997,

[1] All the names of places and people are pseudonyms for reasons of confidentiality.

p. 14). In this article, I show how residents of social housing neighborhoods were deprived of their sense of co-ownership of place (Brown-Saracino, 2011) and in this regard collectively bypassed. From this, I suggest that in contrast with findings from previous studies, stigmatization may entail these subtle forms of non-recognition that residents need to negotiate. As Mckenzie (2015, pp. 8–9) has argued, non-recognition becomes especially relevant when examining class inequality, since feelings of invisibility have been noted as being one of the most common experiences in a class relations context. Thus, in this article I aim to understand stigma as a lived everyday experience which—in the context of social housing neighborhoods—takes the form of non-recognition. It is not obvious when people are being bypassed and approached as irrelevant, but we should at least try to see when it happens and how, since this is one of the ways "stigma power" (Link & Phelan, 2014; Tyler & Slater, 2018) operates.

2.3. Place Narratives as Resources for Collective Destigmatization Strategies

A growing literature has acknowledged that residents living in stigmatized social housing neighborhoods are not helpless victims who end up internalizing the negative image of their neighborhood, but actors drawing on a multiplicity of strategies to resist, manage and cope with it (e.g., Arthurson, Darcy, & Rogers, 2014; August, 2014; Gotham & Brumley, 2002; Kirkness, 2014; Pereira & Queirós, 2014). Most of the research considering destigmatization strategies has focused on rhetorical and strategic tools deployed by individual members of stigmatized groups in reaction to perceived stigmatization (Pereira & Queirós, 2014; Wacquant, 2007). At the collective level, studies have argued that contrary to general assumptions, residents living in stigmatized territories often experience belonging and attachment to their neighborhood (August, 2014; Jensen & Christensen, 2012; Kirkness, 2014). However, understanding of neighborhoods as culturally significant, varied and collectively produced places (see Borer, 2006) in this literature has remained scarce. First, we lack a nuanced understanding of how and why residents' experiences and place attachments in different neighborhoods of an ostensibly similar social class background might vary (Cole, 2013, p. 66). Second, we know surprisingly little about how these experiences are lived and attachments come about in social practice (see Blokland, 2017). Simply put, we should not just study what people say, but focus on what they do (Jerolmack & Khan, 2018).

My point of departure is the work of Lamont and her colleagues (see Lamont & Mizrachi, 2012; Lamont et al., 2016) who have noted that responses to stigmatization vary across contexts depending on the locally available cultural resources people can employ to make sense of the world around them and thus strive at recognition. In their comparative work, Lamont et al. (2016) have focused on cross-national explorations concerning cultural repertoires that serve as resources for destigmatization. Here, I focus on cultural resources available at the neighborhood level by studying place narratives. The idea of the term narrative is that people tend to tell stories, and through them develop an understanding of themselves, their lives and environments, and other factors that shape their actions (Somers, 1994). As Lamont and Small (2008, p. 84) have stated, the narrative perspective is particularly useful in showing that action is not an automatic response to a stimulus but is made possible within the context of narratives around which people make sense of their lives.

With respect to neighborhoods, narratives are historically informed collective processes of place-making that, once dominant in a public discourse, affect what defines "the community" and what does not (Blokland, 2009, p. 1594). Brown-Saracino (2015, p. 41) has pinpointed place narratives as influential meso-level narratives providing models of who and how one should be in a local context. In practical terms, place narratives inform understandings of what kind of a place this is, what kind of people are living here and how people like "us" live. Of course, these narratives are not shared by everyone in the community. The focus of this article, however, is not on erasures and absent agents (Blokland, 2009), but on the idea of place narratives as practices through which residents interpret the stigmatized positions they are in. Approaching these narratives as cultural imaginaries that lead residents to interpret and act in the world in a certain way (Reed, 2017, p. 32), we can begin to understand them as resources for collective destigmatization strategies. These strategies, I will suggest, become identifiable in a comparative research setting relying on ethnographic methods.

3. Context and Methods

This article is based on the wide range of data sources collected for my ethnographic study of two social housing neighborhoods in Finland (Junnilainen, 2019). The study investigated what it means to live in neighborhoods that in the 1960s were burgeoning areas for working-class families but have now become places of concentrated disadvantage. This article is based on my empirical findings, which suggest that, first, stigmatization as an everyday experience also takes the form of non-recognition, and second, that neighborhood-specific place narratives serve as resources for collectively employed destigmatization strategies.

Steephill and Fireweed Village are located in two of the biggest cities in Finland: Helsinki and Turku. The municipality of Helsinki is the owner of Steephill, managing the housing stock through a city-owned housing company. The ownership and maintenance of Fireweed Village is organized through a housing company owned by the municipality of Turku in association with a couple of non-profit corporations. Both are prefabricated

high-rise areas built in the 1960s at a time of rapid urbanization in Finland. The neighborhoods were built for working-class families in need of decent housing, and just like most suburban housing estates in Finland, are situated in peripheral areas on urban fringes. The neighborhoods are both state subsidized rental housing areas, where tenants are chosen on the basis of social criteria laid down in legislation. The three key criteria are low income, low wealth and need for housing, with priority given to homeless applicants and applicants at risk of eviction. Consequently, the sites in my study resemble each other in socio-economic status: high levels of unemployment, low levels of education, high benefit dependency, and high levels of single mother-headed families. In the Finnish context, both areas are seen as "immigrant areas" despite the fact that 75% to 85% of the population are ethnic Finns. In a country that for a long time has remained relatively homogeneous in terms of ethnic composition, even a small ethnic minority presence in urban space seems to evoke a stigmatizing image of disorder (Jensen & Christensen, 2012, p. 83). This is one part of the complex story of the changing nature of stigma as it touches these neighborhoods.

For five years beginning in 2012 I conducted ethnographic fieldwork (Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland, & Lofland, 2001; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Jerolmack & Khan, 2018) in both neighborhoods. I studied daily neighborhood interactions, trying to understand patterns of encounters and interactions in the courtyards, cafes, pubs, supermarkets, libraries, schools, youth centres, community rooms and all other places where locals spent their time. I followed the functions of various neighborhood organizations and associations, attending dozens of public meetings. In addition, I volunteered for neighborhood festivals, a cooking course for local young people and a lunch cafeteria that hired people recovering from substance abuse. Over the course of my fieldwork I came to know a large number of people, most of whom I became familiar with within these contexts. Accordingly, publicly engaged individuals, long-time residents, and people attached to their neighborhood are overrepresented in the sample. With my key informants, I recorded 60 in-depth interviews asking residents to describe their life histories and resident careers, their locally embedded everyday lives, their social networks and relationships, and their understandings of their neighborhoods as physical, social, historical and symbolic places. I also interviewed dozens of people working at local institutions, such as landlords, janitors, teachers, social workers and the police. Interviews took 60 to 200 minutes, were transcribed and coded.

The way Small (2004, p. 196) has described, my approach to data collection can be thought of as "historically informed," since my aim was to interpret the observed present conditions in light of continuously invoked elements of the past. From the beginning of my fieldwork, I was surprised how much the history of the neighborhood colored the way residents saw the world, leaving me no option but to augment my data with knowledge of that history. Thus, I complemented general neighborhood histories with archival data including meeting minutes, action plans, reports, flyers and newspaper clippings that were made available to me by a couple of older local activists, neighborhood associations and city officials. I also studied census and archival records and analyzed 560 newspaper articles from the 1960s right up to the period of my fieldwork in order to get a picture of stigmatization processes at work in the media. All the data in my research has been translated from Finnish.

The locally emerging place narratives that I turn to next are the product of five years of historically informed ethnography and abductive reasoning (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014). During my fieldwork, I first noticed that the stories people told about their neighborhood were patterned, linked to the past and interactively reproduced in conversations with others. I then began collecting data on neighborhood histories, realizing that the better I understood the past, the better I understood the lenses through which residents saw the neighborhoods and themselves. The analysis was a back and forth process during which I continually produced new hypotheses based on surprising research evidence.

When describing my data, I talk about "residents" to make my argument, but this does not mean that the neighborhoods were two homogeneous communities. Instead of arguing that everybody in the neighborhoods perceived the areas the same way or recognized every aspect of the place narrative, I argue that residents similarly attached to their neighborhood shared a similar narrative that was context-specific. Further, based on ethnographic work that allowed me to observe patterns of behavior and local interactions, I argue that understanding the locally embedded place narratives gives us insight to comprehend the different ways residents in similar societal positions collectively responded to non-recognition.

4. Two Neighborhoods, Two Place Narratives

Fireweed Village and Steephill have always stood and still stand as symbols of social disorder, poverty and non-participation—as places for the "have-nots." In line with this narrative, those in power have named and identified these places as "problem neighborhoods." Residents in Fireweed Village and Steephill knew how outsiders saw them and were used to being approached as people of no value. "It is nice place even if outsiders think we are rubbish," a woman living in Steephill said to me, phrasing the widely shared experience in both neighborhoods.

Next, I briefly present the historical context of how the two similarly stigmatized neighborhoods have developed. The origins of their place narratives can be traced to different neighborhood histories that enabled different available cultural repertoires to emerge—one stressing stigmatization based on residents' class position and their difference from the middle-class, the other

stressing territorial stigma and residents' similarity to the middle-class.

4.1. Fireweed Village and the Narrative of Class Struggle

The place narrative of Fireweed Village was a narrative of class struggle. The area was originally built for working-class families in the 1960s and the people who moved in worked in local factories, at the shipyard and port situated close to the neighborhood, and for the municipality. Most of them had been living in old wooden houses, or in single rooms without indoor toilets or other modern conveniences, so modern homes with kitchens and bathrooms meant huge improvements in their living conditions. The first cohort typically got a job first and after that, their employer provided an apartment in one of the buildings reserved for its employees. An old-timer, Maija, who was a lady in her 60s and whose extended family I became familiar with, had ended up living her life in the neighborhood because her husband had worked for the telephone company, taking care of cables. "The union for local government workers was one of the big owners here, so it was obvious we would get the apartment. All we needed was a certificate of my pregnancy," she reminisced in an interview.

These processes ensured that Fireweed Village was from the days of its construction a distinctively working-class neighborhood, both in practice and in residents' minds. Social class was one of the central organizing principles of social life, one that on many occasions eclipsed other determinants of group formation and decisively shaped collective experience. The denigration of the newly built public housing neighborhood that soon took hold in local media was interpreted as an attack on working-class people rather than on people living on a public housing estate. In 1970, when local newspapers had been writing about disorder, irresponsible families and badly behaved youths disrupting the area, a resident responded in one of the papers (Kansan Uutiset, 1976):

> It is of course profitable for the bourgeois to abuse the working class, and Fireweed Village as a working-class area is a fantastic target for their ends. Their purpose is to break working-class dignity and cohesion. Therefore, residents of the Village should not yield to attempts to stigmatize their neighborhood, but fight to clear up the facts and put an end to the slandering of their neighborhood.

In the 1970s, working-class dignity and cohesion—the destruction of which the writer was worried about—were lived realities; most of the residents participated in a social life organized locally around sports, clubs and societies by leftist political parties. Consequently, social identifications were relatively local and a sense of community among residents easily sustained. From old-timers' stories comes a sense that the idea of social mobility was not something that pervaded their day-to-day lives. They were working-class people and what distinguished them from others was their societal position and the space that was classed as belonging to them.

In the post-industrial community of the 21st century, which Fireweed Village turned into and which I became familiar with, the word "class" was hardly mentioned. Most of the local factories—and the political parties once visible in the neighborhood—were gone. The only actors present were NGOs and occasional projects led by the city, both approaching the neighborhood as a place for the poor. Nevertheless, class consciousness was stored in the place narrative. Residents may not have used the word class any longer, but the sense of we-ness in the narrative of class struggle was still based on the idea of the fixed opposition between "us"—the people who make up the neighborhood, and "them"—the outsiders, who in their privileged position have become estranged from our lives and struggles. In the course of my fieldwork, I observed how the place narrative was transmitted forward, and adopted by newcomers who got involved in local life. Erik, who was a 40-year-old trucker, moved to Fireweed Village with his family and became neighbors with the old-timer Maija mentioned above. They became acquaintances and within a year Erik, who said his first impression of the neighborhood had been "a hellhole," had reformulated his perception about the place. "Work is gone but we (the residents) will not fold. This is a good place. I want my kids to grow up in an environment where nobody looks down on you," he told me in an interview.

4.2. Steephill and the Narrative of Middle-Class Aspiration

In Steephill, the place narrative was a narrative of middle-class aspiration. While Fireweed Village was situated close to factories of national importance, Steephill was built in the 1960s far from worksites in the middle of nowhere. People that moved in were janitors, bus drivers, cleaning ladies and nurses. Some, too, were factory workers, but most of them belonged to the class of privatized workers, distancing themselves both from country people and from the traditional working-class. For them, moving to Steephill was an (inevitable) step in their trajectory towards the middle class. Moving from filthy, noisy and cold 20 square meter rooms in the city center to new 60 square meter apartments was concrete proof of imminent upward social mobility.

"We didn't participate in anything here," Eeva told me. She had moved to Steephill at the end of the 1970s when she was expecting her third child. In an interview, she described me how she and her peers had devoted themselves to family and work, not the neighborhood. "There was nothing like that (community activism) since this was a rising neighborhood after all. We just moved here and lived here."

Families living in Steephill spent hours commuting to work and back, living their lives and trying to make the best of what they had. Politically, residents were to the left, but unlike in Fireweed Village, class consciousness was not a strong source of explicit collective identity. Instead, rapidly growing territorial stigmatization, based on generalized prejudices against public housing, served to draw the residents of Steephill together. In the 1980s, when residents already were used to moral attacks against their neighbourhood, a number of them publicly defended it in the national media. One resident wrote to the newspaper (Helsingin Sanomat, 1989):

> Steephill is one of the nicest areas in the city, so much better than its reputation. Its bad reputation is based on unjustified public denigration that has nothing to do with the people living in it. Perfectly ordinary citizens live here.

The resident wanted to correct (from her point of view) unfounded prejudices: Steephill was no different from other areas and was inhabited by people no different from anyone else. Unlike in Fireweed Village, where the place narrative evolved around residents' working-classness, in Steephill the urge of being like others consisted in aspiration towards the middle class.

Consequently, territorial stigma in the place narrative of middle-class aspiration is not explained by social hierarchies but by outsiders' prejudices against a specific residential area. More than the people living in a place, it is the place itself that generates the stigma. When I interviewed Anna, who had been living in Steephill since 1980s, she explained to me:

> The reputation is still like, "Steephill, oh my god, that's terrible," but people who say that don't know what they are talking about. In this neighborhood, we think that the real problem is people who have these wrong ideas. But we know it's not like that, we know how it really is.

In this place narrative, the origin of the sense of we-ness is more in the place than in the people. What outsiders don't know is that Steephill from the point of view of the residents is "in reality" no different from other areas, and it is this consciousness of place that brings residents together. In Steephill being "like-minded" did not mean shared social position but a willingness to stick up for your neighborhood. Unlike in Fireweed Village, where residents tended to point out their position in contrast to that of outsiders, the people of Steephill were more likely to blur the boundary. It made no sense to confront the middle-class since (in line with their place narrative) residents saw themselves as belonging to it—or at least being on the way there.

So it was that, over time, in two places that suffered from very similar housing stigma, different understandings of what kind of people live in those areas came into being. These place narratives, as I will argue, explained the different destigmatization strategies residents collectively employed to cope with practices of non-recognition.

5. Destigmatization Strategies in Action

In this section, I turn to ethnographic vignettes describing non-recognition arising as a consequence of interaction of people with unequal relational positions. The vignettes come from community meetings involving residents and outsiders discussing neighborhood matters. In Fireweed, the discussion concerns energy efficiency improvements that had been made in the neighborhood, and that from the perspective of residents, lowered their standard of living. In Steephill, the discussion centres on future relocation of residents living in houses set to be demolished. Rather than these immediate issues, I explore community meetings as examples of routine actions where non-recognition happens as a side effect of other ongoing activities (Lamont et al., 2014). In the course of interaction, residents' sense of co-ownership of place (Brown-Saracino, 2011) is similarly ignored, bypassed and denied in both neighborhoods. This is remarkable considering the decades long activation of residents who, in line with the ideals of participatory democracy, had repeatedly been encouraged to become attached to their residential communities and take part in local decision making (Luhtakallio & Mustranta, 2017). Nevertheless, the ethnographic vignettes illustrate how residents expecting to have rights towards the neighborhood they belonged to in practice faced invisibility.

Both meetings were processed not just in situ but also outside the meeting rooms, where residents both prepared for the meetings and gave their reactions. A closer look at what happened before and after the meetings reveals that similarly non-recognizing situations were in fact experienced, perceived and interpreted in different ways (see Moon, 2012). Leaning on my ethnography, I suggest that the responses reflected local place narratives that served as a sort of cognitive filter shaping participants' understandings of what happened in the meetings and why. First, let us take a closer look at Fireweed Village residents' responses to a community meeting which was interpreted as confrontation between themselves and outsiders.

5.1. Community Meeting in Fireweed Village

In Spring 2013, a community meeting was called jointly by the landlord and the residents' committee. The housing company had recently hired an energy conservation company to lead a year-long project to make the area more energy efficient. The company had installed devices on all the water taps in the neighborhood to slow down the flow of water. Residents had been told that saving energy would mean sacrifices, but that economic savings would be achieved, too. However, they had not been

happy about the changes to their facilities. "A hot shower is one of the little amenities I can afford, and they are taking it away from me," one woman explained before the meeting. In the invitation to the meeting, residents had been told that a consultant would be there to clarify the rationale behind and aims of the project and to answer their questions. Almost eighty residents turned up.

The (re)configuration of "them" and "us" was present and reproduced before the meeting as residents gathered in front of the building. Many people had come well in advance, forming a crowd in which conflict was fomented through discursive practices. "We'll see whether her majesty [the landlord] has the guts to attend from the beginning. Last time I remember her arriving not until it was her turn to speak," somebody said, making those around him laugh. People collectively recalled meetings that had ended in conflict before, criticizing the landlord and her inability to understand them. They effectively reconstructed an indignation stemming from the social-structural hierarchies that marked their past. Not everybody participated in this us-them reconstruction, of course, but certainly nobody present could dismiss the experience of repression loudly expressed by old-timers and other locally influential residents. When the meeting began, the audience were waiting as quiet as mice.

An energy consultant representing the energy conversation company opened the meeting. He presented a slideshow illustrating the neighborhood's energy consumption in complex figures, but soon the audience grew restive. The graphics illustrating correlations between decreased energy consumption and savings at the local level provided no answer to the problems inconveniencing them in their everyday lives: cold apartments and low water pressure. Joni, the 36-year-old chair of the residents' association, interrupted the consultant from the front row: "Now that you have installed these gadgets all over the place, when exactly are we going to see the results?''

The consultant explained that he would only be able to say anything for certain after a couple of years. A man sitting at the back cried out: "But by then we'll have been paying for this craziness for three years!" He verbalized the experience shared by the people around him who perceived the project as a collective investment supported by the residents. The audience wanted to know when and how the promised savings of the project would materialize. "There goes our fucking money," somebody complained.

At this point, the landlord stood up: "You need to remember that you are only renting your properties, while we need to secure the future of this company." There was of course nothing incorrect in her argument, since the owner of the company was the one responsible for decision-making. Nevertheless, her framing of the situation discounted residents' concerns along with their experiences and expressions of co-ownership of the place. Even though they were "just renting," residents approached the place as their own.

After the community meeting, we slowly spilled out into the cold March evening. Most of the residents began to head home, bidding each other good night and commenting on the meeting in words that reflected their collective irritation. "Who does he think he is, coming here and telling us he *knows* how we feel?" somebody said. "Well, this was another of *those* meetings," said another. Not everybody was in a hurry, however, and at least fifteen of us stayed in the yard, lighting cigarettes and gathering into smaller groups of two to five people. Everybody was talking about the meeting. I stood there with an older lady who had been living in the neighborhood since the 70s. "How did it go?" I asked her. "Well," she said, taking a long drag on her cigarette: "Just like these meetings always are. Nothing ever changes, because everything has already been decided in advance. We only come here to listen to what they have to say." A man I did not know who had been standing close to us turned and observed laconically: "Masters decide, we whine." People around him burst into collective laughter. Understanding the situation through the lens of the narrative of class struggle empowered residents, enabling them to collectively work on their emotions. This was a different strategy from that at Steephill, where the roots of collective destigmatization strategy lay in the place narrative of middle-class aspiration.

5.2. Community Meeting in Steephill

A year later in 2014, I observed a community meeting in Steephill where, as part of a ten-year-long reconstruction project, a number of buildings were to be demolished. The landlord had called a meeting to inform residents of the schedule and give details of the demolition project only four months before they were due to leave their homes. Uncertainty about the project had preyed on residents' minds, since they were unaware of the location of their temporary accommodation and whether they could move back to the estate or not. The practices of non-recognition during the meeting were similar to those at the meeting in Fireweed Village, but the way residents both collectively prepared for the meeting and responded to it afterwards was different.

Before the meeting began, the landlord sat in front of the audience in conversation with the architect who had made the plans for the new buildings. Beside them, behind a long table, were two young women from the house management agency responsible for the practicalities of relocating the residents. An official working for the city sat with them; her role was to explain how residents were to be selected. The audience of around 80 residents arrived between five and ten minutes before the meeting. The atmosphere was expectant, but not at all hostile. Most residents had been looking forward to the meeting. "I don't care where I go as long as I get the new [apartment]…a year or two somewhere else, at this age, it's all the same, but once I get back I'll only be carried out in a box," one of the two ladies chatting next to

me said cheerfully. The other echoed her, saying that she believed "it's all been taken care of." Their conversation was interrupted by a third lady who swept into the room, took the seat that the two had been reserving for her, and expressed her hope that the meeting would be over before her favorite TV series. "It's too exciting to miss," she said. As the landlord finally took the floor, he had to clear his throat several times before the audience settled down to listen to him. There was no sign of organized opposition, as the residents cheerfully chatted about their everyday business.

Compared to the meeting in Fireweed Village, the interaction at Steephill followed a very similar pattern. Residents expressed ownership of the place and felt that they had already paid for the rebuilding with rent rises, whereas the outsiders reminded them of their status as mere renters of the apartments. The subject came up towards the end of the meeting as the landlord asked everybody who wanted to move back to Steephill to raise their hands. Almost everybody did. A longtime resident wanted to know what meant the expression of old residents having "priority" to move back. "It means that we may not be able to return, right?" he inquired. The officer representing the committee to choose the new residents answered: "Yes, the final decisions are always made in the committee." Then she gave a long account of the principles according to which the committee makes decisions, but without referring to this particular case, leaving residents uncertain as to whether they could move back to their homes or not. The audience expressed disquiet, given that this information was the very reason they had come to the meeting in the first place.

One resident took the floor: "But we have already paid for the rebuilding, since that's why you raised the rents in the first place," he said. The landlord sighed: "But if you're renting, it's not your money. The owner of the property has the right to use the money as they like." He moved away from the subject and said that most of the current two-room apartments would be replaced with three-room apartments, so "either way, you will probably not get the same kind of apartment you left." Then he added: "Besides, some might not even want to move back, or if their life situation has changed, some might even *want* the three bedrooms." One man became angry: "Yeah, and some might win the lottery, too. We probably can't afford to come back." The landlord began to lose patience. As a resident begun saying that "you have been using *our* money…," he interrupted saying: "Nobody has personal accounts here. The money is common money."

After the meeting everybody rushed outside. There, residents asked each other whether anybody had received information on when and where they would be moving. However, nobody had. One might expect that the frustration caused by this uncertainty would have spilled over; but nothing happened. Instead, residents smoked their cigarettes and talked about the detailed reconstruction plans presented at the beginning of the meeting: "What I'm wondering is whether they're going to knock down every tree around here," a man said. "As far as I could tell, the new apartments looked really nice," one woman said. "I suppose the architect man there didn't quite know what he was doing. I just think he didn't know the place where he's going to put the new buildings," she reasoned. By talking about their knowledge of a place that the planners were not thoroughly familiar with, the residents underlined their ownership of the place, at the same collectively ignoring the fact that their rights with respect to it had just been questioned. If there was anger, it was active only on the individual level; collectively, the residents' strategy for dealing with non-recognition was to understate—almost ignore—it. They simply refused to assume the position of powerlessness that outsiders were trying to impose on them.

5.3. Becoming Persons of Value

Strategies for coping with non-recognition in the two neighborhoods were different in the residents' meetings described above, as they were in the other encounters with outsiders I observed during my fieldwork. The narrative of class struggle in Steephill produced a repertoire of confrontation residents turned to when perceiving non-recognition. In contrast, the narrative of middle-class aspiration produced a repertoire of negotiation that enabled residents to rationalize the situations and suppress their stigmatized position. Both of these collective level strategies to respond to non-recognition allowed people to protect their sense of dignity and become persons of value. According to Lamont and Mizrachi (2012, p. 372) members of stigmatized groups appear to confront the tension between emotional outcomes resulting from stigmatization (anger, feelings of worthlessness, loss of dignity) on the one hand and the need to gain recognition as an individual and as a member of a group on the other. In Fireweed Village, the residents' strategy for constructing dignity was to highlight their oppressed class-position, mutual equality and sense of pride. Conforming the meeting to their narrative of place, their self-esteem remained unscathed by outsiders' non-recognizing behavior—even if perceived as unjust. In Steephill, conversely, residents refused to represent themselves as victims or reproduce a class division, this way maintaining their dignity and preserving control over their own lives. In their perceived equality with everyone else they remained untouched, even if non-recognized on the basis of their place of residence.

6. Conclusion

The topics discussed in the community meetings in the neighborhoods in my study serve specifically to confirm my argument. In Fireweed Village, where the place narrative of class struggle worked as a cultural resource for dealing with non-recognition, the participants discussed the inconvenience of low water pressure. Meanwhile in Steephill, where the place narrative of middle-class as-

piration was present, residents were told to leave their homes and forced to live in uncertainty as to whether they could move back or not. The significance of the topic under discussion was much smaller in Fireweed Village, and yet the collective response was stronger. This suggests that the cultural repertoires people turn to when making sense of their experiences are interconnected with the larger matrix of relationships and stories that shape their lives.

In this article, I have focused on neighborhood-level repertoires suggesting that in two similar social housing neighborhoods residents' collective interpretations and habitual responses to similar practices of non-recognition were related to locally constructed and historically formed place narratives. These narratives mattered because they were stories residents identified with, informing their understandings of both themselves and their relations to others. In Fireweed Village, where the remnants of its politically charged working-class background still pervaded the cultural milieu of the neighborhood, residents approached the meeting more as a opposition between "us—the oppressed" and "them—the oppressors," whereas in Steephill, where consciousness of a shared social position had never really gained a footing, rather than highlighting their unequal position residents seemed to trivialize it. In terms of their social structural positions, residents' stigma consciousness (Pinel, 1999) differed in that in Fireweed Village residents expected to be stereotyped by others based on their class position, whereas in Steephill they did not. Thus, neighborhoods that appeared similar in statistics and in their positions on urban margins diverged in their collective experiences of classed selves.

Consequently, destigmatization strategies varied across places because despite their statistical similarities their cultural milieus differed. The empirical findings of my study suggest that first, stigmatization in terms of social housing should also be understood as taking the subtle forms of non-recognition. Second, the identities people use to makes sense of non-recognition change salience in response to the places and their narratives. And third, the collective nature of destigmatization strategies has hitherto been underestimated.

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Article

"A Good Place for the Poor!" Counternarratives to Territorial Stigmatisation from Two Informal Settlements in Dhaka

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Abstract
With many cities in the Global South experiencing immense growth in informal settlements, city authorities frequently try to assert control over these settlements and their inhabitants through coercive measures such as threats of eviction, exclusion, blocked access to services and other forms of structural violence. Such coercive control is legitimized through the discursive formation of informal settlements as criminal and unsanitary, and of the residents as migrants and as temporary and illegitimate settlers. Using findings from ethnographic research carried out in two informal settlements in Dhaka, Bangladesh, this article explores how informal settlement residents engage with and resist territorial stigma in a rapidly growing Southern megacity. Findings show residents resist stigmatising narratives of neighbourhood blame by constructing counternarratives that frame informal settlements as a "good place for the poor." These place-based narratives emerge from shared experiences of informality and associational life in a city where such populations are needed yet unwanted. While residents of these neighbourhoods are acutely aware of the temporariness and illegality of unauthorised settlements, these narratives produce solidarities to resist eviction and serve to legitimise their claim to the city.

Keywords
counternarratives; Dhaka; informal settlements; megacity; territorial stigma

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1. Introduction

Across the world, one in every four urban dwellers now lives in some form of informal settlement (UN-Habitat, 2015). These settlements, commonly referred to as ghettoes, slums, refugee camps or squatter settlements, comprise the majority of the urban population in many megacities of the Global South and are a vital part of the economy and social life of those cities. Yet, residents of such neighbourhoods are invariably marked by a stigma of place that affects their relationship with the wider city, their life chances and sense of collective self (Smith, 2010; Wacquant, 2007). In cities segregated by the unequal geographies of formal and informal, such territorial stigma serves as an instrument to maintain hegemonic control through actively producing and reproducing geographies of difference and maintaining spatial and social division (Ingen, Sharpe, & Lashua, 2018). Territorial stigmatisation is a form of violence from above deployed by urban elites to sustain relations of power and domination, and legitimise reproduction of social inequalities and injustices (Tyler, 2013; Wacquant, 2008). Discourses of vilification consisting of deeply discrediting narratives that circulate in political, bureaucratic and journalistic fields produce the dominant imaginings of urban poor neighbourhoods (Butler, 2019; Parker & Karner, 2010; Wacquant, 2008). Such narratives portray informal settlement residents as undesirable in the city, and systematically exclude them from essential urban amenities and opportunities in-

cluding access to employment, education, and medical care (Keene & Padilla, 2014). Through territorial stigmatisation informal settlement residents become an "obnoxious and repugnant other, always underserving and tainted" (Auyero, 1999, p. 65), an out-of-place population to be removed from the city.

There has been considerable interest in academia about how territorial stigma is produced and how people living in stigmatised places cope with it. However, the primary focus has been on stigmatised places in cities in North America and Europe. In comparison, this issue is comparatively less explored in the context of Southern cities. In this article we introduce an ethnographic study carried out in two informal settlements in the megacity of Dhaka, Bangladesh, to highlight the ways in which residents of such neighbourhoods understand the stigmatising discourses used against them, and how they in turn construct more positive and productive discourses about their own neighbourhoods.

By focusing on informal settlements in Dhaka we aim to contribute to the growing literature on territorial stigma and broaden the understanding of the issue in the context of the Global South. We argue that while residents are aware of the illegality and temporariness of their neighbourhoods and internalise stigmatised identities, they also produce various counternarratives to present a different view of their neighbourhoods. These counternarratives challenge dominant discourses and work to legitimise informal settlement residents' claim to the city. In this article, first, we will review key literature on territorial stigma from the Global North and the South. We will then introduce the study sites and discuss the methods used in the study. Following this, we will describe the dominant discourses on informal settlements in Dhaka and how these discourses are used to rationalise the state's use of coercive power over residents. Drawing on participant accounts we will then elaborate on how the residents of the two neighbourhoods experience and contest territorial stigma. Finally, we will conclude by emphasising the importance of recognising the counternarratives produced by urban informal settlement residents.

2. Managing Spatial Stigma

According to Goffman (1963), for the stigmatised, identity management is a key strategy for coping with and managing the effects of stigma. Goffman's conceptualisation of stigma along with Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power serve as foundational basis for Wacquant's (2007, 2008) theoretical framework of territorial stigma which provides critical insight for understanding how people living in defamed housing settlements manage and cope with stigma. In the case of territorial stigma, studies carried out in cities of the Global North show a range of identity management strategies used by the residents of discredited neighbourhoods/suburbs. To cope with stigma and construct positive identities they often physically and symbolically distance themselves from their neighbours and the neighbourhood (Wacquant, 2008). When people from outside a neighbourhood/suburb stigmatise residents, at times, they will hide their address in an attempt to dissociate themselves from the stigma. They may avoid having relatives or friends visit their home (Palmer, Ziersch, Arthurson, & Baum, 2004; Wacquant, 2007; Warr, 2016). Some residents accept the criminalising narratives of their neighbourhood and constantly isolate themselves from others (Blokland, 2008; Osborne, Ziersch, & Baum, 2011; Warr, 2016). Residents who internalise stigmatising narratives frequently use lateral denigration, reproducing a faceless stigmatised other—usually a certain group of people or areas within the neighbourhood—and thrust the stigma onto a demonised other (Blokland, 2008; Popay et al., 2003; Wacquant, 2007) by producing 'micro-differences' (August, 2014; Thomas, 2016). Even when residents do not internalise the stigmatising narratives themselves, they may internalise an awareness of the stigma imposed on their neighbourhood (Jensen & Christensen, 2012). Residents' response to territorial stigma, however, is not limited to submission and internalisation (Hastings, 2004; Jensen & Christensen, 2012). Stigma can be "negotiated and resisted in everyday lives" (Tyler & Slater, 2018, p. 735). As studies show, in many discredited neighbourhoods, residents resist stigma through self-affirmation, sense of belonging and community, and pride of place (Jensen & Christensen, 2012; Slater, 2017; Slater & Anderson, 2012).

In comparison to the global North, a relatively small number of studies have explored the issue in Southern cities. These studies, many of which examined the experience of territorial stigma by *favela* residents in Brazil, revealed similar accounts of internalisation of stigma (Araújo & Costa, 2017; Auyero, 1999; Caldeira, 2000; Gama, 2018) as did studies in Botswana (Geiselhart, 2017), China (Zhang, 2017) and India (Ghertner, 2010). In many neighbourhoods deflecting stigma to other residents was common as well (Auyero, 1999; Gama, 2018). When residents talked about other residents "a certain suspicion was always expressed, in ambiguous ways" (Caldeira, 2000, p. 79). Despite this, residents of stigmatised settlements also present a somewhat different insider view of the place where they live. These insider narratives indicate community, friendship, and belonging that result from the shared experiences of everyday life (Geiselhart, 2017; Zhang, 2017). Be it in a neoliberal city of the Global North or a 'developing' or 'emerging' city in the Global South, insider narratives by residents of discredited neighbourhoods offer important insight for understanding how they manage and contest territorial stigma. Building on the work discussed here, we now turn to Dhaka, one of the fastest growing megacities in the Global South, to examine insider views of residents from two informal settlements and understand how they engage with neighbourhood stigma and resist the dominant discourses.

3. Methods

In this article, we present ethnographic accounts from fieldwork carried out in two informal settlements in Dhaka over a period of seven months in 2017. Our first study site, Korail, is home to nearly 100,000 people living on approximately 90 acres of public land. Located next to two of the most affluent urban enclaves in the city, it is the largest informal settlement in Dhaka. Our second study site, Town Hall Camp, is surrounded by a middle-class suburb in a different part of the city. It is a densely packed neighbourhood where approximately 5,000 people live on barely one acre of land. Figure 1 shows the locations of Korail and Town Hall Camp in Dhaka city.

Korail residents mostly consist of rural migrants who came to Dhaka from different parts of the country in search of work. Unable to find affordable housing in the city they started to build makeshift houses at Banani lakeside during the latter part of the 1980s, which gradually became the massive settlement it is today. As residents do not have legal claim to this land, Korail is considered by the city authorities as an illegal settlement. Town Hall Camp is one of the 30 Bihari camps in Dhaka that were set up during 1972–1973 to accommodate Bihari refugees. In recent years many rural migrants have also moved into the camp due to low rents. Biharis are an ethnic minority community consisting of Muslim refugees who originally migrated from Bihar and the surrounding states of India. They have been subject to continued state discrimination and deprivation due to their stance against Bangladesh's independence in 1971. Residents of informal settlements like Korail and Town Hall Camp constitute the majority of the informal sector workers in Dhaka. Apart from a handful of affluent local leaders and businessmen, they are mostly poor and make a living from low wage, low skilled and labour-intensive work (e.g., rickshaw pullers, street vendors, housemaids, cleaners, day labourers, and transportation workers).

Findings presented here are drawn from field notes from participant observation in Korail and Town Hall Camp as well as numerous informal conversations with the residents of these neighbourhoods. 46 in-depth interviews (28 in Korail and 18 in Town Hall Camp) and two focus group discussions (one in each study site) were also carried out with the residents. Interview participants were selected purposively and included general residents, community-based organisation members, and local social and political leaders (female = 22, male = 24, ages ranging from 18 to 65). The semi-structured interviews explored residents' everyday life experiences of living in an informal settlement and their modes of engagement with various formal and informal state and non-state actors. The average duration of interviews was one hour. Additionally, eight in-depth interviews were carried out with non-government organisation (NGO) and local government officials (male = 8, ages ranging from

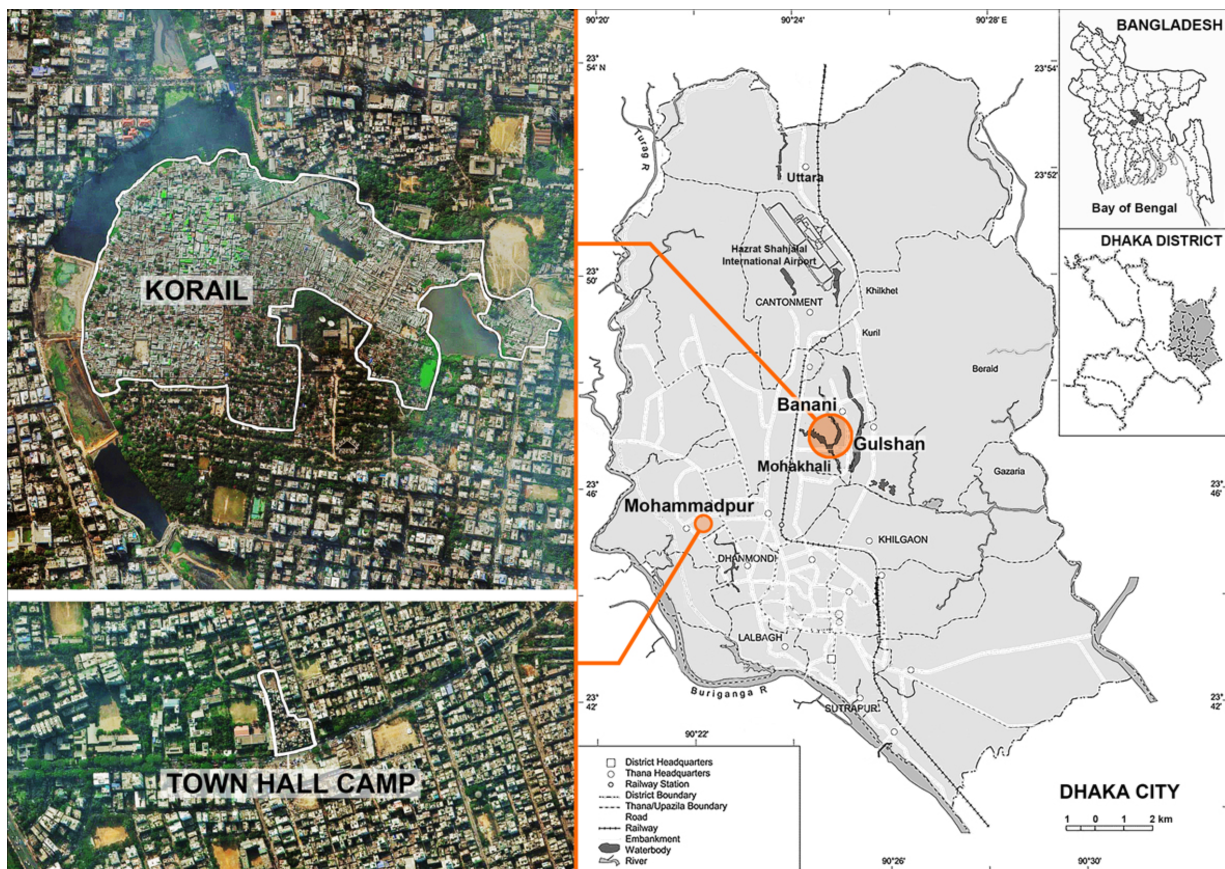

Figure 1. Map of Dhaka city showing study sites. Source: Worldmap (n.d.) and Google Maps.

30 to 60). All interviews were conducted in Bengali by the first author. They were audio recorded except for a few cases where participants did not want to be recorded. The interviews were transcribed in Bengali to ensure authenticity of data and only selected quotes were translated to English after data analysis. An inductive thematic analysis approach was used to make sense of the data and find key themes (Creswell, 2007). Pseudonyms were used for all participants in the article.

3.1. A Note on Terminology

We used 'informal settlements' as a neutral term for low-income settlements instead of contested terms such as 'slum,' 'ghetto,' or squatter settlement. While presenting participant accounts, and in some other instances, we used *bosti*—the local Bengali term for such settlements. Instead of the more widely used spellings such as *basti*, *baste* or *bustee*, we chose *bosti* following Hossain (2013), as it is closer to the way participants in the study sites pronounced the word. Also, we acknowledge the contested nature of the term 'Global South' (Dados & Connell, 2012). We identify Dhaka as a 'Southern' city, which allows us to locate the city in its postcolonial present where differential economic and social structures and processes maintain "large inequalities in living standards, life expectancy, and access to resources" (Dados & Connell, 2012, p. 13).

4. Territorial Stigmatisation of Informal Settlements in Dhaka

Dhaka's emergence as a megacity is largely due to the massive influx of rural migrants since the 1980s. According to various estimates around 30% of the city's nearly 18 million people live in some 4,000 unplanned and unauthorised housing settlements often referred to as 'slums' and camps (Ahmed, 2014). Rural to urban migration is a feature in the growth of many megacities in the Global South as labour moves from stagnant or mechanised rural farming sector into modernising urban economies. The social contours of these migrations differ. In Dhaka, rural migrants tend to gravitate to rural kinship groups who have established themselves in the city, resulting in concentrations of strong but inward-looking communities in many informal settlements (Lata, Walters, & Roitman, 2019).

People living in informal settlements make significant contributions to the gross domestic product (GDP) by serving as a major source of cheap labour (Rahman, 2012). They make possible the production of goods for export to developed countries at a globally competitive price and also provide low cost services and products to city dwellers (Bork-Hüffer et al., 2016; Rahman, 2012). Informal settlement residents are closely tied to the economic and political interests of the national government, city authorities, urban elites and middle classes. However, while the city relies on informal settlement residents for survival and continued growth, in their aspiration for a modern and developed city, urban elites and middle classes find them incompatible with the city's vision. This is obvious in the works of authors such as Siddiqui et al. (2010, p. 15) who condemn informal settlements for making Dhaka city "a most dismal spectacle." Informal settlement residents in Dhaka thus find themselves in a complex relationship with a city where they are needed, yet unwanted.

City authorities often seek to address the complex challenge informal settlements pose to urban governance, policy and planning practices by using violence and repression. While they allow these neighbourhoods to continue and even to flourish, they frequently use coercive power to assert control and authority over them. This phenomenon is not unique to Dhaka. Coercive power is used by state apparatuses in the form of constant threats of eviction, blocked access to services and resources, non-recognition as rightful residents of the city, frequent criminalisation and structural violence to shape the everyday life experiences of informal settlement residents across many cities in the Global South (Bhan, 2014; Bork-Hüffer et al., 2016; Moser, 2004; Sanyal, 2014). Acts of violence and repression are rationalised by designating these neighbourhoods and their residents as an undesirable other and a threat to the 'ordered' city. As Wacquant (2007, p. 69) noted: "Once a place is publicly labelled as a 'lawless zone' or 'outlaw estate,' outside the common norm, it is easy for the authorities to justify special measures, deviating from both law and custom."

The most common portrayal of informal settlements in Dhaka is that they are illegal, or 'slums' unlawfully constructed on public land (Bertuzzo, 2016; Suykens, 2017). The residents are frequently referred to as 'land grabbers' and 'encroachers.' By unlawfully 'encroaching' and 'occupying' land they have become illegal. We interviewed Mr. Lokman, an elected local government official (Ward Councillor) whose seat was secured thanks to a large number of votes from Korail residents in 2015. He immediately pointed out their illegality: "Does anyone in Korail live there legally?...All of them are illegal."

Mainstream media plays a key role in presenting informal settlements as hotspots of crime, reinforcing narratives that criminalize the urban poor (e.g., Hasan, 2018; Khan, 2013; Mahmud, 2018). A popular television crime show called *Taalash* ('search') that aired on prime time during 2013–2014 used the term 'crime factory' to emphasize that the informal settlements are a source of criminality and lawlessness. In 2016, when a group of Islamist extremists carried out a deadly terrorist attack at a restaurant in Gulshan claiming 29 lives, fingers were immediately pointed at Korail as a possible breeding ground for such extremists. Although none of the people involved in the attack were found to have any connections with Korail, law enforcement agencies took measures that severely restricted the mobility of Korail residents. This involved shutting down boat trans-

portation on Banani Lake which was the most convenient and affordable way for Korail residents to commute between Korail and the adjacent Banani and Gulshan areas where they worked. Strict restrictions were imposed on rickshaw pullers who worked in Banani and Gulshan. Heightened security measures resulted in many rickshaw pullers from Korail being unable to work in these two areas. Some of them had to move to other parts of the city in search of livelihoods.

Discourses of environmental degradation add to the narratives of criminality by highlighting unsanitary living conditions and pollution, and present informal settlements as a public health risk (Jahan, 2012). Also, though many informal settlement residents have been living in the city for decades, they are still viewed as migrants, and identified with distant rural areas from where they or their parents arrived (Local Government Division, 2014; Siddiqui et al., 2010). Moreover, NGOs working in the urban space present informal settlements as a manifestation of underdevelopment by selectively highlighting residents' low literacy, poverty and unemployment (Hossain, 2013). Through their very mandate of 'improving' these neighbourhoods, NGOs also take part in the process of stigmatising them.

Ethnicity plays a significant role in the process of territorial stigmatisation (Jensen & Christensen, 2012). For the residents of Bihari camps, the burden of stigma is intensified in manifold ways due to their ethnic identity. They are frequently identified as non-citizens despite having national identity cards and regularly casting votes in local and national elections. Mainstream media refers to them either as Bihari refugees or stranded Pakistanis which strengthens the narratives of stigmatisation and creates grounds for discrimination. Babu, a young man from Town Hall Camp, described the differential treatment Biharis received outside the camp: "'They are from the camp—Biharis!' At once we become something different in the eyes of everyone. We become separate!" Additionally, Bihari camps are frequently identified as 'dirty' and unsanitary places that are hotspots of drug dealing and petty crimes.

As in many other rapidly growing megacities in the Global South (Ghertner, 2008; Ong, 2011), Dhaka's elite and middle classes identify informal settlements as incompatible with the idea of becoming a modern and developed city. With steady economic growth in Bangladesh and a state-produced aspiration to become a middle-income country by the middle of the next decade, they indulge in a mass vision of a 'slum' free city with no place for informal settlements.

5. Managing and Countering Stigma in Korail and Town Hall Camp

The subjective accounts of those living in stigmatised neighbourhoods are likely to be different from the accounts of those who live outside such neighbourhoods and subscribe to the discourses of stigmatisation. To understand how residents of stigmatised neighbourhoods engage with socio-spatial stigma it is necessary to focus on how they experience and reflexively interpret everyday life as insiders (Warr, 2005). The everyday modalities of living with and managing neighbourhood stigma is also influenced by the socio-economic and historical contexts of the place and the people. The insider accounts presented below show that in Korail and Town Hall Camp, the residents internalised certain stigmatising discourses and consciously attempted to differentiate their neighbourhood from other informal settlements in the city. However, they also resisted the stigmatising narratives by producing various counternarratives that presented these neighbourhoods as good places to live, but only for the poor.

5.1. Internalising and Deflecting Stigma

People living in stigmatised places can very well "reproduce and reinscribe majoritarian stories and master narratives" (Muñoz & Maldonado, 2012, p. 296). In Korail and Town Hall Camp, many residents internalised the meanings of the stigmatising narratives of informal settlements. Through internalisation of the discourses of legality and illegality they accepted themselves as illegal and/or temporary residents in the city. Moreover, they recognised this illegality/temporariness as a justification for the government's intention to evict them. In Korail, Ataur, an unemployed transport worker in his sixties, remarked: "This is public land, we are living here illegally." Mofizur, a man in his early forties who worked as a support staff for a local TV station and lived in Korail for more than 20 years, expressed similar views: "This place is illegal. The government did not allocate it to us or anything like that. That's why the government is not building anything here." In Town Hall Camp, despite having citizenship documents, several participants believed that they were "refugees" because the state viewed them as such.

Internalisation of the discourse of illegality was particularly common among younger participants in Korail. These internalisations run so deep that some participants even justified being searched by police on their way in or out of the neighbourhood or at the security checkpost set up at the entrance of Banani, an upscale neighbourhood next to Korail. Shiuli, an undergraduate student and primary school teacher, thought it was okay for the police to stop and search her and her friends when entering Banani from Korail:

> Some days ago, my friends and I were going there and then they stopped us [at the checkpost]. They asked to search our bags….I appreciated that they did this. This should be done, because there are many different types of people. We were going there with good intentions. Some people might have bad intentions.

Hasan, another undergraduate student who moved to Korail about six years ago from his hometown, was

stopped by the police one evening on his way out of Korail. He had a high fever and was going back to his hometown to stay with his parents until he got better. Though he informed the police that he was ill, they took a long time to search his bag, which he found to be very stressful. Despite this he thought such activities by the police were necessary:

> I do not think conducting searches is bad....Even a decent person like me could be involved with different types of crime. It is not unusual. In Dhaka city, if there are crimes [taking place] or militants [living] in a flat, why wouldn't they be in a place like a *bosti*?

Such internalisations normalise the securitisation of informal settlements by the state and perpetuate the criminalising discourses of these places. Consequently, discriminatory acts such as targeted security checks, stop-and-search procedures become normalised as part of the routines of Korail residents' everyday life.

However, both in Korail and Town Hall Camp, participants consistently dissociated their neighbourhood from the dominant imaginings of informal settlements. They emphasised that their neighbourhood was not like the other *bostis* or camps. In Korail, participants often commented that various types of criminal activity such as drug dealing, mugging and brawls may take place in some other *bosti* in Dhaka, but not in Korail. Shahadat, a security guard appointed by a local residents' association to patrol the neighbourhood at night, remarked:

> Nowadays crimes or illegal activities do not take place in Korail. There was a time when those happened a lot but now it is very rare....Korail is now a safe neighbourhood, safer than many other neighbourhoods. Even in those neighbourhoods a lot of bad things happen. But not in Korail.

The need to have privately recruited security guards to patrol the neighbourhood, however, contradicted Shahadat's claims. Reports of drug raids in Korail also appeared quite frequently in the newspapers (Mahmud, 2018). Nevertheless, participants repeatedly used words such as "different," "more developed," and "better" to differentiate Korail from other informal settlements. Through such discursive distancing from other *bostis*, the residents of Korail tacitly accepted the stigmatised construction of informal settlements and simultaneously deflected the stigma to other neighbourhoods. While doing so they simply referred to unnamed *bostis* in the city by saying, "a few *bostis* might be like that" or "probably happens in just one or two *bostis*."

In a similar manner, Town Hall Camp residents claimed that their camp was "cleaner" and "better managed" than other camps and was also "free of drugs." Such claims reflected a similar sense of "collective pride in the neighbourhood, often in response to external defamation," that Slater and Anderson (2012, p. 540) observed in a stigmatised neighbourhood in Bristol. As Monir, an elderly man who lived in the camp since it was established in 1972, said, "There are camps everywhere. But no other camps are as nice as this one—Dhaka's Town Hall Camp!"

Camp residents often deflected the stigma of place onto *bostis* and described their camp using expressions such as "this is not a *bosti*" or "a camp is not the same as a *bosti*." As Sanyal (2014) noted, camps that have existed for many years can gradually begin to resemble 'slums' which is also the case with the Bihari camps in Dhaka. To an outsider the Town Hall Camp appears no different from a *bosti*. However, several participants emphasised that it should not be viewed as a *bosti* because camps are not as 'bad' as *bostis*. Julekha, a small grocery shop owner who lived in the camp since its establishment, commented: "If you call me a stranded Pakistani that is alright. But you cannot call this place a *bosti*. I will not take that." Some of the participants in Town Hall Camp were not comfortable even with the camp identity of their neighbourhood. One of them, Jamila, an honours student who also worked as an administrative assistant at a business firm in a neighbouring upscale area, explained:

> Our camp is a camp only in the name, not in the way things work here. That means there are no illegal dealings, fighting or quarrelling, no stabbing each other, no police business or drug dealing here—nothing of that sort. So, what we have here is not really a camp.

Town Hall Camp residents frequently blamed a nearby Bihari camp with a reputation for open sales of drugs for giving a bad name to all camps. During fieldwork in Town Hall Camp, however, it was not uncommon to randomly come across small groups of young men smoking marijuana on roof tops or in secluded corners, contradicting residents' accounts.

5.2. Countering Stigma

Residents' reflexive understanding of everyday life experiences in Korail and Town Hall Camp are characterised by simultaneous acceptance and rejection of the dominant discourses of neighbourhood stigma. They not only internalised such discourses but also resisted them. They did so by producing their own narratives of the place where they lived. These counternarratives 'answer back' (Clarke, Newman, Smith, Vidler, & Westmarland, 2007) to the dominant narratives with a sharply contrasting internal image that highlights certain aspects of informal settlements which make these neighbourhoods liveable for the urban poor. Using such internal images of Korail and Town Hall Camp the residents produced their own narratives that constantly challenge the dominant narratives of informal settlements. These counternarratives emerge as resistance against "an oppressive identity and attempts to replace it with one that commands respect" (Lindemann, 2001, p. 6) by discursively con-

structing Korail and Town Hall Camp as 'good' neighbourhoods for the urban poor.

Many of these narratives are based on a 'before and now' comparison, where once conditions in the neighbourhood were bad, but had now changed for the better. As Aziz, a local leader in Korail, commented: "Many of the things you heard about Korail were there. They were there in the past. Things have changed now. You will not find those here anymore." Similarly, in Town Hall Camp, Foyez, a street vendor who sold shoes from a cart in a nearby bazaar, said: "Things are a lot better now. When so many people live together there's bound to be problems....It used to be really bad. But that was before." Both Aziz and Foyez had lived in their respective neighbourhoods since they were children and grew up there. Bilkis, in her fifties, head of a community-based organisation, shared similar views and gave another example:

> We used to lag behind in education—Our children didn't study that much. But now, I am telling you, several thousand students from Korail are studying in different colleges....We live in a *bosti*, yet we are studying, and getting involved with different types of work.

The idea of a good place for the poor in the city was firmly grounded on the possibility of affordable living. Accommodation was much cheaper in a *bosti* or a camp. According to Foyez: "Outside the rent is 6,000 or 8,000 [takas]. But in the camp, you can pay 4,000, 3,000 or even 2,000 [takas]" (1,000 Bangladeshi takas = 11.76 US dollars).

Affordable living was also about cheaper daily essentials. In the large bazaar inside Korail many of the commodities were sold cheaper than in the markets set up/authorised by the city corporation. Some of the vendors there collected rejected vegetables from the city's wholesale market and sold them in Korail much cheaper. Aziz informed: "When one part of a vegetable goes bad, they cut it off and sell the rest here. You can buy it very cheap." Town Hall Camp too had a small makeshift bazaar where prices of commodities were cheaper than outside. Participants from the camp drew attention to the increasing number of Bengalis living there for cheaper rent, which to them was another indication that the camp was not a bad place to live. In Korail, participants spoke about how inexpensive or free education and healthcare services provided by NGOs made life more affordable. Hasina, a young community organiser in Korail, remarked: "You can get free treatment here. If someone has a serious illness, we can get help by asking an NGO. Nowadays there are advantages—many advantages."

A view commonly shared by participants in Korail and Town Hall Camp was that being free of crime and drugs made a neighbourhood a good place. Their claims about an absence of drugs and crime also served to refute the dominant imaginings associated with these issues. Participants in Korail in particular often argued that so far, law enforcement agencies had found no militants in any of the *bostis* in Dhaka. The fact that the deadly terrorist attack in Gulshan in 2016 involved men from very well-off families gave further grounds for them to claim that they were unfairly blamed for crimes committed by the rich. As Bilkis explained:

> There was a time when the very word *bosti* made one think about a place where criminals live, where drugs are sold....Yes, there might be one or two [persons] like that but there is good and bad everywhere. It doesn't mean that everyone living in the *bosti* are criminals....They used to say all the violence is in the *bostis*. But now you can see it happening in well-off neighbourhoods like Gulshan, Banani, Baridhara.

In both sites, at the beginning of an interview or informal conversation, participants often spoke about overcrowding and their dislike of the frequent quarrels around them. As the conversation progressed, gradually they pointed out things that they liked about their neighbourhood. Common among these were a sense of community, belonging and attachment to place. This played an important role in constructing the narrative of a good neighbourhood. Several participants said that unlike the city's affluent neighbourhoods where no one knows anyone, people in Korail and Town Hall Camp knew and looked after each other. Particularly in Town Hall Camp, everyone literally seemed to know everyone. In Korail, even if the residents didn't know many people from different neighbourhoods, they knew each other within the smaller neighbourhoods. Later in the interview many of the participants rationalised the never-ending quarrels they complained about earlier by saying that such things were bound to happen when so many people lived in such a small area. According to participants, despite having numerous problems they all lived together as a community and neighbours always came to aid when someone was in trouble. As Foyez said:

> Suppose the father and mother works outside. They do not have to worry about who will look after their children when they are at work. Some neighbours will look after them. If something happens to a child someone or other from the camp will take them to a hospital and get everything taken care of.

Such community cohesion is rooted in the associational life in informal settlements that relies on social networks and kinship relations, and the shared experiences of struggles against state deprivation, oppression and structural violence. In contrast to outsider narratives of deplorable living conditions in informal settlements, many residents speak about residential satisfaction and place attachments (August, 2014; Jensen & Christensen, 2012). In Korail or Town Hall Camp, not everyone lived there because of they could not afford to live outside. Many of them continued to live in these settlements because they had developed an attachment to their neighbour-

hood and neighbours. For example, Hasina who lived in Korail for more than 20 years, described the closeness she felt to the neighbourhood:

> I like it here. Been living here for so long, I feel a closeness to it. I do not feel this much attached even to my village. That is where I am from, but I do not feel any attachment to that place. I feel it here….Here I have my neighbours, I have everyone.

There were many other elements that made up the counternarrative of a good place. Living in Korail or Town Hall Camp allowed ample livelihood opportunities inside the settlement and neighbouring areas. Participants described the people in their neighbourhood as decent and hardworking, commenting that the neighbouring affluent suburbs were dependent on them for their labour and services. Such claims refuted the idea of Korail or Town Hall Camp residents as criminals or unworthy residents of the city and instead presented them as a group of hardworking people who were serving the city's needs. These micro-narratives and many others produced a shared understanding of a good place to live in the city.

Of course, people living in these neighbourhoods were keenly aware of their socio-political reality and highlighted many problems for example insecurity of tenure, absence of paved roads, barred access to utilities, and harassment by police. When they claimed their neighbourhood to be a good place, they immediately added that it was good for people who could not afford to live anywhere else in the city. As Shabana, one of the first to settle in Korail, commented:

> Life in Korail is more or less good for us. We are poor so it's good for us, because we cannot afford to live anywhere else as the rent is high….The advantages that people have living here, they wouldn't get those anywhere else.

Similarly, in Town Hall Camp, residents were well aware that there was no scope for romanticising the camp as an ideal place to live. They made it clear that the camp was a good place only for those who were poor. When conversing with a group of young men in the camp they made this evident:

> Alam: Life in the camp is bad.
>
> Babu: It's bad but…
>
> Rayhan: Life in the camp is bad but it's good for us. You will not be able to live here.
>
> Researcher: You are saying life in camp is bad but still good for you. How so?
>
> Alam: We have been living here since we were kids. We like living here.
>
> Rayhan: If we stay outside [the camp] house rent would be 10,000 takas. I earn 6,000 takas. Then how will I manage it? So, we are quite happy here.

Such claims are not very different from the way residents of a stigmatised low-income town in South Wales assert that "it's not that bad" (Thomas, 2016, p. 5) or the residents of a *favela* in Brasilia declare that "here it is heaven! It is mother's lap" (Araújo & Costa, 2017, p. 158). As Lomax (2015) points out, by producing such counternarratives the urban poor do not necessarily present a false view of their neighbourhood or misrepresent it as something that it is not. Likewise, in Korail and Town Hall Camp, the residents were acutely aware of the illegality/informality of their neighbourhood and the numerous problems and challenges that constituted the everyday reality of living in such places. Due to this awareness they often accepted and internalised the meanings of dominant, stigmatising discourses. However, they also discursively resisted such discourses by producing counternarratives about their neighbourhoods. These place-based narratives were rooted in shared experiences of everyday practices and associational life in neighbourhoods that are deeply discredited. These serve to legitimise informal settlement residents' claim to the city, allow negotiating with authorities for gaining access to services, and create solidarities for resistance against eviction drives. More importantly, these narratives discursively resist the marginalizing effects produced by the hegemonic narratives constructed by state apparatuses.

6. Conclusion

In many cities, public officials, city authorities, urban planners, media and the affluent and middle-classes constantly and selectively present informal settlement residents as illegal, criminal, and illegitimate members of the wider city. This is done discursively and through various direct coercive measures of exclusion and intimidation, and underdevelopment. Our findings show that while residents of the study sites accepted and internalised the stigmatising narratives, they also resisted them by producing counternarratives of a good place for the urban poor. People living in stigmatised locations are no different to others who deal with challenging circumstances. As a way of individual and collective survival, they frequently vacillate between competing discourses about their identities in relation to their communities and their cities and in response to different audiences.

This may appear as contradictory to Wacquant's (2007, 2008) theorisation of how people living in discredited neighbourhoods respond to territorial stigma. As Jensen and Christensen (2012) point out, contradictions arise when the attempt is made to universalise Wacquant's theories whereas he himself emphasised the importance of national and local contexts. People produce new spatial meanings and narratives about their neighbourhood through everyday interactions and vari-

ous exchanges which are often shaped by a city's socio-political and cultural processes and structures. The place-based grassroots narratives of informal settlements that the urban poor produce, contrast sharply with those produced and imposed by the city's elites. As this article shows, the insider accounts from Korail and Town Hall Camp residents present different imaginings of these neighbourhoods that refute the dominant narratives imposed by urban elites. These counternarratives offer the possibility of discursive resistance by urban informal settlement residents against territorial stigma. At the same time, they are instructive in recognising the elements such as affordable housing, safety, and associational life that disadvantaged urban populations in Dhaka regard as essential for a good life in the city.

In this article, we examined residents' subjective experience and response to territorial stigma in two informal settlements in Dhaka. Dhaka is a city with nearly 4,000 informal settlements. Although we would expect to find similar competing discourses across many of these places, and these discourses resonate with other stigmatised places in the literature, they are highly diverse in terms of socio-economic conditions, location and population dynamics. Their residents are likely to experience and respond to territorial stigma in varied ways. Further research focus from urban scholars, both at the local and global levels, towards Dhaka's informal settlements would allow for further theoretical generalisation about the territorial stigma in the context of Southern megacities.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

"Trailer Trash" Stigma and Belonging in Florida Mobile Home Parks

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Abstract
In the United States, residents of mobile homes and mobile home communities are faced with cultural stigmatization regarding their places of living. While common, the "trailer trash" stigma, an example of both housing and neighborhood/territorial stigma, has been understudied in contemporary research. Through a range of discursive strategies, many subgroups within this larger population manage to successfully distance themselves from the stigma and thereby render it inconsequential (Kusenbach, 2009). But what about those residents—typically white, poor, and occasionally lacking in stability—who do not have the necessary resources to accomplish this? This article examines three typical responses by low-income mobile home residents—here called resisting, downplaying, and perpetuating—leading to different outcomes regarding residents' sense of community belonging. The article is based on the analysis of over 150 qualitative interviews with mobile home park residents conducted in West Central Florida between 2005 and 2010.

Keywords
belonging; Florida; housing; identity; mobile homes; stigmatization; territorial stigma

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1. Introduction

In 2006, a full-page advertisement by the National Center for Family Literacy in the *New York Times* showed a grainy black-and-white picture of an extremely crowded and dirty mobile home park with one home missing. The text at the bottom said: "The best way out is by coming in," suggesting that *this* is the kind of environment one is able to leave behind by taking advantage of the Center's services to improve one's literacy skills. While not all depictions of mobile home living in American culture are equally extreme, the general, negative message they deliver has remained virtually unchanged for several decades. In the United States, where displays of material wealth indicate respectability and success, living in a mobile home and mobile home park is a sign of failure, instability, and moral inferiority. This article investigates some of the views and experiences of lower income Americans who are living in mobile home parks. The ubiquitous "trailer" stigma in American culture is an example of social marginalization that is based on a type of home (the "trailer") and a type of neighborhood (the "trailer park"), both resulting in a tainted category of persons ("trailer trash"). The workings of this particular stigma are currently understudied in the relevant scholarly literature, and the most vulnerable target—low-income whites living in non-urban areas—is a population that is frequently misunderstood (Hochschild, 2016). The primary goal of this article is to examine three typical responses to the stigma among those who are most affected.

Even though stigmatization is a powerful form of othering (Link & Phelan, 2001), it would be wrong to assume that place-based prejudice and discrimination affect everyone who is generally targeted in similar ways and degrees. Certain subgroups and individuals within the larger category of mobile home dwellers manage to successfully distance themselves from the stereotype while drawing on positively valued social memberships (Kusenbach, 2009). However, others are more vulnerable and must come to terms with the housing and neighborhood-based stigma they experience as a serious challenge, often among many other obstacles. In this article, I focus on the latter, especially disadvantaged group of mobile home residents. More precisely, I seek to an-

swer the question of how the “trailer trash” stigma affects those who cannot isolate themselves from it by drawing on advantageous spatial or social boundaries (Lamont & Molnár, 2002). The following analysis reveals that issues of agency and identity play large roles in determining how stigma is experienced and managed, and how it affects someone’s sense of belonging in the larger community, including perceptions of, and interactions with, neighbors.

The article proceeds as follows. First, in the next section, I offer some general information on mobile home living and the “trailer trash” stigma, followed by a brief review of the relevant literature on housing and neighborhood stigma and belonging. I then describe the article’s research methods and data. Next, in a first analytic section, I discuss the particular directions and targets of the trailer stigma. In the following parts, I examine three different responses by those who are targeted the most—here called resisting, downplaying, and perpetuating—and their effects on residents’ interactions and senses of belonging at the neighborhood level. I end the article with a short conclusion.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Mobile Home Living and the “Trailer Trash” Stigma

In the United States, mobile homes are a very common form of private housing for people with lower incomes, and mobile home parks are a widespread neighborhood type. According to the latest estimates (American Community Survey, n.d.), approximately 17.7 million people live in 8.5 million mobile homes in the United States. While mobile homes exist in every state and region, they are most concentrated in the Sunbelt across the Southern border. Florida has the highest number of mobile homes of all states, nearly 840,000 in total. Within Florida, the highest concentration of mobile homes—nearly 250,000—can be found in the Central Gulf region, the area in which the research for this article was conducted.

Miller and Evko (1985) report that the negative image of trailers dates back to before World War II, a time when makeshift accommodations on wheels originally meant for vacationing became popular permanent homes for low-income retirees and migrant workers. The use of trailer homes expanded during World War II by providing housing for defense industry workers near manufacturing plants. Due to the serious housing shortage after the war, the use of many such homes and communities, originally meant to be temporary, continued. Thousands of soldiers and military service workers were stationed in Florida during World War II and many stayed or returned to Florida afterwards, leading to high pressure on the housing market and a record number of mobile homes particularly in this state (Irby, 1999). According to Irby (1999), the label “trailer trash” was first recorded in the 1950s and it has been in use ever since.

Images of trailer living as transient, deprived, and morally deficient persist in American mass media and popular culture. Popular movies offer detailed depictions of the myriad inadequacies of mobile home residents and communities. Newspaper articles and TV stories frequently report on crimes, accidents, and disasters in these places. Advertisements (such as the opening example), books, cartoons, games, and even recipes featuring trailer-themed problems or jokes are abundant. The majority of media images propels the message that people living in these places are indecent and objectionable due to a range of personal and cultural deficiencies. Understandably, many mobile home residents take issue with such negative views.

2.2. Housing Stigma, Neighborhood Stigma and Belonging

According to Erving Goffman (1963, p. 3), a stigma is a “deeply discrediting” attribute that renders its carriers less socially desirable and respectable than so-called regular people. Stigma is formed when certain characteristics come to be viewed by others as flawed within the context of historically and culturally specific beliefs. Mobile home residents are prone to experiencing two (of three total) kinds of stigma described by Goffman: “blemishes of individual character” and “tribal stigma” (Goffman, 1963, p. 4). These two kinds of stigma vary in the perceived origin of the discrediting attribute (personal character versus group membership) and, accordingly, in the emotions stigmatized individuals might experience—such as guilt and shame for blemishes of individual character, or humiliation and anger in the case of tribal stigma. Unlike some bodily, tribal, and associational (courtesy) stigmas (e.g., Green, Davis, Karshmer, Marsh, & Straight, 2005; Kusow, 2004), the discrediting attribute—in this case, living in a “trailer” and “trailer park”—is neither always immediately apparent, thus allowing for some degree of “passing” (Goffman, 1963, pp. 73–91), nor can it be hidden permanently from everyone, resulting in a rather complex example of housing and neighborhood stigma.

Overall, Goffman’s classic conception is an important source of inspiration for studying and theorizing housing and neighborhood (or territorial) stigma today (e.g., Vassenden & Lie, 2013). Even though Goffman did not explicitly develop a spatial understanding of this form of social injustice, one could argue that “tribal” stigma, as a collective category, might conceptually contain housing and neighborhood stigma as subtypes. However, the fact remains that Goffman did not examine housing or territory as potentially stigmatizing attributes. This particular gap in Goffman’s theory was recognized and filled by Loic Wacquant’s (see, for instance, Wacquant, 2008a, 2008b; Wacquant, Slater, & Pereira, 2014) groundbreaking concept of “territorial stigmatization,” which largely builds on the work of Pierre Bourdieu and, in difference to Goffman and his followers, emphasizes sym-

bolic power and structural inequalities over identities and emotions. The state's complicity in creating and then using the stigma against its targets is of particular interest to this new and influential approach to stigma (for detailed discussions, see Jensen & Christensen, 2012; Kirkness, 2014).

Inspired by the works of Wacquant and his colleagues, a large share of the contemporary literature on housing and neighborhood stigma is devoted to examining low-income, urban, and (typically) minority neighborhoods (for exceptions, see Allen, Powell, Casey, & Coward, 2007; Kudla & Courey, 2019; Vassenden & Lie, 2013). Overall, the literature is substantial and growing quickly internationally; it is thus too large to be fully reviewed here. One of the most vibrant strands of research on territorial stigmatization examines public (or social) housing contexts (see, for instance, Arthurson, Darcy, & Rogers, 2014; Hancock & Mooney, 2013; Hastings, 2004; Kirkness, 2014; Palmer, Ziersch, Arthurson, & Baum, 2004). Research on stigma in privately settled low-income communities also exists (see, for instance, Horgan, 2018; Jensen & Christensen, 2012). One important finding is that, contrary to Wacquant's (2008b) predominant views, targeted groups and individuals typically do not fully internalize the stigma they are exposed to but find ways to battle and overcome it, at least to some extent (e.g., Hastings, 2004; Jensen & Christensen, 2012; Kirkness, 2014). In this regard, the vast existing literature on homelessness, a severely stigmatized housing condition, offers special insights into the complex issue of managing and resisting cultural stigmatizations of certain places, materialities, identities, and conduct (see, for instance, Anderson, Snow, & Cress, 1994; Roschelle & Kaufman, 2004).

At least one recent study has confirmed that neighborhood stigma exists independent of racial stigma (Besbris, Faber, & Sharkey, 2019). Indeed, this is the case for the "trailer trash" stigma discussed in this article which is primarily aimed at whites. Unlike the cases of territorial stigma examined in Wacquant's work and in a large share of contemporary studies, the "trailer trash" stigma is not aimed at minorities, not aimed at renters (most mobile home residents are homeowners), not primarily urban or suburban, exclusive to a specific type of dwelling, virtually unchallenged in media and popular culture, and involves the state only peripherally—thus making it a very different and particularly interesting case of housing and neighborhood stigma. Due to its many differences, examinations of the "trailer trash" stigma will substantially broaden the existing literature and may even introduce new theoretical insights into this field of study.

In contrast to the above body of research, the literature specifically on the "trailer trash" stigma is small overall. Three recent books (Dunn, 2019; Salamon & MacTavish, 2017; Sullivan, 2018) on mobile home living in the United States provide some theoretical discussion and empirical coverage of how the cultural "trailer trash" stigma, besides many other structural inequalities and injustices, impacts the lives and identities of mobile home residents (see also Saatcioglu & Ozanne, 2013). Some scholars have investigated the impact of the stigma on youth and in schools (MacTavish & Salamon, 2006; Miller & Evko, 1985; Morris, 2005) and in family contexts (Edwards, 2004). In addition, autoethnographic accounts (e.g., Callahan, 2008; Dunn, 2019) offer insightful details on personal experiences with, and resistance to, this stigma. Even though incomplete and largely embedded in other academic discourses, these publications offer valuable insights that have enriched my own research and analyses.

Another key concept in this article is "belonging" which signifies the existence of a meaningful connection between a person and a particular social-spatial environment. One belongs where one is deeply familiar and comfortable with the surroundings and its people, where one fits in. A thoughtful, scholarly definition offered by Savage, Bagnall, and Longhurst (2005, p. 12) describes belonging as "[a] socially constructed, embedded process in which people reflexively judge the suitability of a given site as appropriate given their social trajectory and positions in other fields." In other words, in establishing belonging, people make judgments about their personal fit within a given setting—may it be a type of home, a neighborhood, a city, or a country. These cognitive and emotional interpretations draw on, and align with, other life experiences and identities, and are firmly embedded within larger cultural and social structural contexts, i.e., systems that provide normative views of what is deemed appropriate for whom and regulate access to social statuses (see Yuval-Davis, 2006, on the "politics" of belonging). The relatively new, but fast growing, literature on "belonging" predominantly focuses on larger geographies; only few studies of belonging at the local and neighborhood level exist to date (for recent examples, see Davis, Ghorashi, & Smets, 2018; Kusenbach, 2018; Watt & Smets, 2014). To contribute to this body of work, this article aims to link residents' varying responses to the trailer stigma with different senses of belonging (and unbelonging) in the neighborhood context, thereby connecting housing and territorial stigma with belonging.

3. Methods and Data

Research for this article was conducted between 2005 and 2010 in a total of 24 mobile home communities located in four counties (Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk) on the Central Gulf Coast of Florida. Following a pilot study, research conducted between 2008 and 2010 was supported by a National Science Foundation grant titled "Community Resources and Disaster Resilience in Florida Mobile Home Parks." The larger goal of the funded study was to investigate community and disaster-related issues among working and lower-middle class Florida residents living in mobile home communities. Research overall included the collection of qualitative and quantitative data sets, such as household interviews and surveys, observational fieldnotes, visual data, as well

as an analysis of United States Census data and other community level information. All components of the study were approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of South Florida. This article is based on the analysis of 151 qualitative interviews with mobile home households that were conducted during both the pilot and funded research stages. 103 of these interviews were completed between 2008 and 2010 in four family communities in Hillsborough County in which residents owned their homes but rented a plot of land (which is the most common community type), while the rest were conducted earlier across a larger variety of communities and locations within the four-county area. Primary household participants in the interviews were sixty-eight percent white, twenty-two percent Latino, and ten percent African American, Native American, or other. Over sixty percent of primary interviewees were female, and over one third of households included children under the age of 18. Ages of primary interviewees ranged from 18 to 89. In about one fourth of the interviews, other household members—typically partners, adult children, or other family members—participated as well.

All interviews lasted between thirty minutes and two hours, with an average of over one hour. All interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Five of the interviews were conducted in Spanish and later translated into English. Almost all interviews were conducted at the homes of participants; in less than a handful of cases, interviews were completed at a nearby location such as the park's clubhouse. The interview schedule included open-ended questions on four topics: personal life history and background information; mobile home living in general; community issues; and disaster experience and preparation. All names of participants and communities used in this article are pseudonyms.

Two graduate research assistants, Juan (who identifies as a male Latino) and Marc (who identifies as a male person of mixed race/ethnicity), conducted about half of all interviews, and the author (who is white and female) conducted twenty of them. The remaining interviews were completed by a diverse group of undergraduate students who had received in-depth research methods training and were supervised closely. Interview transcripts were analyzed according to the steps and principles of grounded theory analysis (Charmaz, 2014). This process involved several rounds of open (or initial) and focused coding, both manually and in the qualitative data analysis software program Dedoose, as well as writing memos. Various themes and subthemes were repeatedly grouped and regrouped until larger patterns clearly emerged.

4. Analysis

A complex picture emerged from the overall interview data regarding the issue of housing and neighborhood stigma. Many—in fact, most—mobile residents largely bypassed a discussion of the trailer stigma and told very positive stories about living in their homes and neighborhoods (Kusenbach, 2017, 2018). In contrast, other participants were clearly affected and felt that the stigma targeted and disadvantaged them in many ways, resulting in a broader variety of views regarding living in mobile homes and mobile home communities. The following analysis aims to examine these nuances in more detail and is divided into four parts. The first subsection delivers information and evidence on the particular directions and targets of the trailer stigma, in an effort to provide some helpful context for the following sections. The three main analytic subsections examine three typical responses to the stigma that were observed among low-income mobile home residents—resisting, downplaying, and perpetuating—while also discussing related consequences regarding neighborhood belonging and interaction.

4.1. Directions and Targets of the Trailer Stigma

In our study, mobile home residents of all backgrounds shared the common understanding that "trailer trash" as a stigmatizing label is primarily applied to white people. This was indicated, for instance, in researcher Marc's interview with Jane, a white woman in her fifties, following the question of whether she has ever experienced a negative reaction due to living in a mobile home:

> Jane: I kid around and say, "I'm 'trailer trash'!" I don't know [pause] no, no! [laughs]
>
> Marc: What does that mean, what does "trailer trash" mean?
>
> Jane: "Trailer trash" is kind of like "ghetto," I guess, it's similar. But it's probably white. "Trailer trash" would be white, whereas "ghetto" would be more [pause] minority groups.

Jane's impression that the label "trailer trash" applies only to white people was echoed in interviews and conversations with many other informants, including Latino/as and African Americans. The above excerpt also exemplifies humor as a universal strategy of coping with stigma that cannot be examined further in this article. Similarly, in their recent book, Salamon and MacTavish (2017, p. 122) argue that:

> For African Americans who live in trailer parks the trailer-trash slur lacks power to tarnish either the family's identity or its achievement of homeownership. In fact, these racially integrated parks informed our understanding that the stigma has a particular sting for white families but not for blacks or Hispanics.

This, of course, does not imply that African Americans and Hispanics living in mobile homes do not experience other forms of stigma and discrimination in their daily lives.

The particular racial affinity of the label "trailer trash" is revealed by its frequent combination with the historically and regionally significant insult "white trash." Analyses of the "white trash" label (e.g., Gibbons, 2004; Hartigan, 2003; Neewitz & Wray, 1997) indicate that it is most often utilized by whites in order to distance themselves from other white people who are feared and despised because of their economic and physical proximity to minority groups. According to Neewitz and Wray (1997), the (racist) stigmatization of white people as "trash" fundamentally challenges the presumed universal privilege of white racial identity. In this interpretation, in the contemporary United States, "trailer trash" and "white trash" are both serious insults because they threaten the targeted persons' membership in the privileged white racial group and imply that they are similar or equal to poor minorities at the bottom of the social order.

However, by far not all study participants who were white felt targeted or impacted by the stigma. There were many other privileging attributes and social categories that offered protection and isolation from the sting of the "trailer trash" stigma, such as residency in an age-restricted (so-called "senior") mobile home community, living in a high income neighborhood, living in a normative nuclear family household (two heterosexual parents with their own children), working full-time work in a respectable job, and full ownership of a new mobile home. In a previous article (Kusenbach, 2009), I examine the distancing strategies that were associated with these and other privileging—as opposed to stigmatizing—conditions in more detail. People with these advantageous attributes typically believed that "trailer trash" lives elsewhere but that they could not possibly be considered part of this group. There is broad support in American culture for the view that high-income neighborhoods, full-time work, good health, full homeownership, and normative family status are deeply intertwined with moral respectability. In the eyes of many Americans, especially those who can claim them, these "virtuous" characteristics outweigh the potential blemishes associated with living in a mobile home.

But how does the trailer stigma affect those who cannot successfully distance themselves from it via the distinctions of geography, neighborhood type, family type, or other privileging memberships? What about those mobile home residents who were white, had low incomes, lived in older homes that had little value, often in less "mainstream" families and households, did not work full-time in rewarding jobs, and often struggled with illness and disability—in short, those others who, at first glance, "fit" the stereotypes that Americans typically hold regarding people who live in mobile homes and mobile home parks? What were their perceptions and responses?

4.2. Resisting the Trailer Stigma and Finding Belonging

In describing the first response of low-income white informants, I draw on the strategy of "normalizing" as proposed in Hastings' (2004) study of neighborhood stigma in the United Kingdom. Hastings (2004, p. 244) explained that even though normalizers "admitted that some residents could be problematic, they were keen to emphasize that these were in the minority." Likewise, in this study, a group of study participants who ostensibly fit the "trailer trash" image of being white, poor, and lacking stability, fought back against the validity of the stereotype in order to reclaim their own and their neighbors' respectability. They refused the idea that their current place of living reflected an inferior moral character. Due to its contrarian views and actions that, in effect, challenge the dominant beliefs, I refer to this response as "resisting" the stigma, and to members of this group as stigma "resisters."

Consider the following example in which Russ—a married white man in his fifties who lived in a low-income community—denied the stigma's accuracy. When asked how mobile home residents are shown on TV and in movies, Russ explained:

> [They show] the negative side of your "trailer trash." Mobile homes have the highest crime rate, it's where most of the murders happen….They depict mobile home parks as trashy, alcohol [filled], drug-related, only poor people live there, your ladies of the night live there. And that's nowhere close to how the majority of the mobile home parks actually are.

Another representative of this group was Arnold, a young white man in his early twenties who lived in a small mobile home that needed repairs together with his girlfriend and their infant son; a second child was on the way. Arnold also resisted the negative image of mobile homes and mobile home parks but took a more comparative approach:

> You can go to million dollar houses and still get scum from the bottom of your foot living in them! Or you can go to cheap, garbage places, like this one next door. She's got a real small place but she's an awesome woman at heart, you know what I mean? I don't look at it like that, never have, never will, 'cuz it's not right. Don't everybody get a chance to excel in life and have everything, the fame, and glory, and shit! People get screwed up in situations, got to do what they got to do to survive. It's life. It isn't a bad thing to live in a trailer park.

Arnold explained that his own, and his neighbor's, character did not correlate with their (modest) material success in life or their current place of living, and that the same was true for high income neighborhoods. He appears to say that good people can live in bad places and vice versa, thus making it wrong to judge a person's character based on outside circumstances. Some people experience challenges through no fault of their own and, as a result, must cope with living in less than ideal situations

while doing the best they can to survive. In her article, Hastings (2004, p. 245) notes that within the normalizing discourse a neighborhood's problems are explained as a "consequence of external structures and influence, rather than as resulting from the internal tendencies and characteristics of residents." A similar belief is implied in Arnold's account.

Like several other participants, in addition to defending himself against the stigma, Arnold went on the offensive as well, by downplaying the views of people who did not carry his responsibilities—such as maintaining a home and supporting a family—and looked down on mobile home residents like him:

> Of course, people always got their opinions. It's not a big deal 'cuz half of these motherfuckers that say shit, they're living with their parents! They're 24 and 25 [years old] and shit. It's like: "Dude shut up!" I'm happy, I'm happy with what I got.

It appears that, in Arnold's view, by living with their parents and depending on outside support, other young men of his age have lost the right to judge his living situation. As seen, stigma resistance can take various forms and include both defensive and offensive efforts, as well as diverting blame away from individuals.

In general, mobile home residents who utilize this form of discourse liked their neighbors and were well integrated in their community. They regularly interacted with others in the park and considered many of them to be friends. In Arnold's words:

> Everyone in here helps everybody, and everyone looks out for everybody. There was a couple of guys robbing and stealing here, but they finally got those guys out of here. But generally, everyone around here is really nice….Ain't nobody out there for themselves. You know, we help each other around here. It's just what it is, it's a neighborly thing.

As implied in this last excerpt, resisters often emphasized the high degree of community belonging and satisfaction they and many other locals experienced in their daily life. In other words, in addition to attacking the dysfunctional image of mobile home residents and communities, resisters offered alternative descriptions of positive community life that facilitated interaction, support, and belonging among neighbors—in short, they depicted functional places that were appropriate and desirable environments for decent people.

4.3. Downplaying the Trailer Stigma and Community Indifference

Another group of informants, many of them middle-aged to older men (often living alone following divorce) or couples, expressed to interviewers that the trailer stigma did not affect them in any way. They tended to downplay or ignore the negative image of their homes and neighborhoods. Consider, for instance, the following excerpt from Marc's interview with Harry and Marisa, a white couple in their forties:

> Marc: What do you believe other people think about those who live in a mobile home?
>
> Harry: I don't care.
>
> Marisa: They don't like it, oh well! [laughs]
>
> Harry: I mean, I've got friends who live in nice houses. I've got friends who live in worse places than I am. You know, it's just the person. Other than that, I don't care what they think.

Here, without denying or resisting the stigma, Harry and Marisa conveyed that whatever other people might think did not affect them in any way. Harry's second statement implies that one's place of living should not matter at all, and that his own friends were not selected based on housing but rather based on personal qualities.

In another example, Harley, a single white man in his seventies who selected his own pseudonym, expressed a similar position. He explained:

> I just don't care what people think. It doesn't matter to me what you think of me! It doesn't matter to me what you think about where I live. The only thing that matters to me is what *I* think, and *I* think I'm fine, so I don't give a shit what you think [laughs]. You know, and most people should think that way. If more people thought that way, there would be a whole lot less violence in the world.

Harley here reiterated the belief that, when matters of his own life are concerned, only his own opinions counts, and that opinions held by others were not relevant. He also implied that this kind of non-engagement with other people was a positive stance that would benefit everyone, leading to less "violence" and conflict overall.

Overall, Harry, Marisa, and Harley represent a group of participants that did not reveal much about their members' personal views of mobile home residents while consistently claiming that those views should not matter. Saying that these views were irrelevant may not have meant that they had no validity—in fact, there appeared to be a mild acceptance of the stigma—only that these participants preferred to downplay the issue and tended to deny any influence of the "trailer trash" stereotype on their lives.

As could be expected, a preference to ignore the opinions of others was often coupled with a high degree of withdrawal from engagement and social interaction with neighbors. For instance, Harry and Marisa told Marc that they did not have, nor cared to have, any friends in the park because "too many of them are into bad things."

Or consider how Larry, a single man in his seventies, described his contacts with neighbors:

> The ones that I wave to, I get along fine. The ones who want to stop and yak, I don't get along with too well….All things considered, I stay by myself, I'm perfectly happy as long as it stays that way.

While it appears that Larry was comfortable with a minimum level of interaction (waving), he disliked and avoided more focused contacts with neighbors. As in other cases, in Larry's case it remained unclear whether he simply disliked social interaction with neighbors or whether this preference was rooted in the belief his neighbors were not worth any attention (as was implied by Marisa), thereby signaling some degree of acceptance, and perhaps internalization, of the stigma.

What clearly distinguished people like Harley, Larry, Marisa, and Harry from members of the following (third) group was a basic satisfaction with their personal lives that was, however, not rooted in their participation in, and enjoyment of, the neighborhood community. These people were not seeking to move out or actively denigrate their neighbors; they did not feel a need to explain how "good" people like them had landed in a "place like this"—this lack of a defense perhaps confirming that they truly did not care. In any case, accounts by downplayers revealed that they had some sense of choice and control in their lives, and that they had achieved some degree of satisfaction regarding their living situation, coupled with a high degree of indifference toward their community and social environment.

4.4. Perpetuating the Trailer Stigma and Feeling Unbelonging

A third and final discourse in which residents engaged while responding to housing or neighborhood stigma is similar to what Hastings (2004) earlier described as "pathologizing." While I do not use the same term here but rather prefer the concept of "perpetuating" the stigma, our study confirmed that a small, yet not insubstantial, group of participants reacted to the stigma in the opposite fashion of resisters, leading to a different outcome regarding belonging. As Hastings (2004, p. 245) explained, this group believed that "the poor are to blame for their own misfortune," thereby expressing a "classic behavioural" view in contrast to the more "structural" interpretation of stigma offered by resisters.

Due to a very poor perception of their social and spatial environment, mobile home residents in this category—many of whom were women heading single-parent families—struggled considerably with their current living situation. Because they fully accepted the validity of the "trailer trash" stigma and believed that it was a correct depiction of their community, they did not attempt to distinguish between image and reality.

For instance, Myrtle, a woman in her forties who lived in a blended family with two teens, told researcher Marc during the interview:

> Myrtle: I don't like living in mobile home parks.
>
> Marc: Why is that?
>
> Myrtle: Well, because you live too close, trailer park drama.
>
> Marc: How would you describe this park?
>
> Myrtle: You work for it, or are you affiliated with *Happy Place* mobile home park in any way? [laughs]
>
> Marc: No, no, this is anonymous research.
>
> Myrtle: I hate this park! I hate, hate, hate it!
>
> Marc: What do you like best about living here?
>
> Myrtle: Nothing! There's nothing positive about this place.

Here, after making sure that Marc was not affiliated with the park owners or managers, Myrtle admitted "hating" her community due to the "trailer park drama" that is typically found in such places, thus implying that she believed in the accuracy of the stigma.

Other participants were even more outspoken—for instance Betty, a single mother in her thirties who lived with her four children and her oldest daughter's baby in a crowded mobile home:

> I think, really, the biggest mistake I have ever made in my life was moving into this park….When I saw it, you know, it looked nice. And it looked clean, so I thought it wouldn't be like living in a trailer park, you know. I thought it'd be a better place [pause] it's not. It's just like any other trailer park! It's full of trailer trash.

Betty strongly regretted moving into her community due to the, in her opinion, low quality of fellow residents, something that surprised her because she had not expected it based on the "clean" look of the park. This is one of the few examples in our entire study in which the insult "trailer trash" was used by a mobile home resident to denigrate her neighbors directly. Betty confirmed the accuracy and appropriateness of the stereotype, a response that could be described as perpetuating the stigma.

In general, what characterized the third group of residents is a strong dislike for both one's particular community as well as mobile home parks in general. Both actual and typical residents were described as "low class" or "low quality" people, "riff-raff" or even "trash," as seen above. In some cases, these judgements were backed up

by accounts of personal experiences that involved verbal conflicts, violence, drugs, theft, and other problems. In all of these stories, other residents were depicted as inferior and blamed as culprits, making them classic instances of "othering."

Importantly, participants in this last group did not consider themselves to be typical mobile home residents but rather "good" people who were only living in a "bad" place due to some kind of mistake or outside force, such as an evil former partner, a bad parent, or someone else's misdeeds. One interviewee explained: "These people are trailer dwellers, you know. I'm just out of place in a time warp living here." Due to their conceived lack of fit and a very low opinion of nearby others, it is not surprising that these residents had, and sought, very few contacts with their neighbors, and that they did not participate in neighborly social activities. A strong sense of unbelonging and social distance characterized their accounts, contrasting both the high level of neighborhood belonging displayed by resisters and the more neutral sense of place satisfaction shown by downplayers. As indicated, a final feature of this discourse is a profound feeling of victimhood and passivity, of being "stuck" in a terrible place that one cannot escape. What united Myrtle, Betty, and others was their strong desire (yet inability) to move out as soon as possible and find a social environment they considered to be more "appropriate" for themselves, away from "those" people the vast majority of whom they despised.

To offer a final observation on the three examined responses, it was interesting to note that varying reactions to stigma could be combined by individuals to a degree—as in the case of downplayers and perpetuators who both did not challenge the stigma—and also change over time, typically in the direction from perpetuating toward resisting. Consider, for instance, the following story told by Ruth, a white woman in her thirties who shared a home with her husband and two children:

> I guess my thoughts have been kind of evolving about it. Honestly, when I first moved in here, I had kind of a snobby attitude. I thought "these are all trailer people, I'm not like them!"….I guess the longer I'm here, the more I think "you know, these are all people," and, "you know, we're all just people," and it's where we live, so! [laughs] That's how I think about it now. I was embarrassed to tell people what we decided to do, even though my husband thought it was the right thing for us to do, to move here.

Ruth described how she "evolved" from disliking her community and looking down on her neighbors to valuing her neighborhood and developing a sense of belonging. During her journey of becoming a resister, over time, Ruth learned that the cultural stereotypes that initially had made her feel "embarrassed" were undeserved and needed to be challenged, signaling a growing sense of agency and control over her life.

5. Conclusion

This study confirms a finding observed in some of the previous relevant literature, namely that a full understanding of housing and territorial stigma must account for "the agency of the urban poor" (Jensen & Christensen, 2012, p. 90), in addition to a consideration of social, structural, and political forces. Even when desirable social memberships are absent or fail to protect people from cultural stigmatization and social discrimination, some members of stigmatized groups manage to mobilize defenses that not only prevent self-stigmatization yet appear to facilitate the development of positive personal identities and senses of belonging. As other scholars have shown (Hastings, 2004; Kirkness, 2014), resistance to housing and territorial stigma is as possible as it is common—however, it is not universal, as some stigmatized people seem to fully or partially legitimate negative stereotypes in their own treatment of others. Even though there are some demographic and situational similarities within the various subgroups, there are also considerable differences (for instance in age, gender, family status, and resources), making it difficult, if not impossible, to predict which mobile home residents develop views and actions that undermine mainstream cultural stereotypes and which ones do not. In the future, I suggest that more research will need to be devoted to exactly how strategies of stigma resistance develop on the ground, and which exact background and situational factors foster these alternative responses. I believe that both current theoretical strands of stigma research—interaction and identity-focused research drawing on Goffman, and structure and conflict-focused research building on the works of Bourdieu and Wacquant—are needed to fully understand stigma and stigmatization as part of our effort to, ultimately, develop and support successful strategies of destigmatization.

Further, in this article, I have attempted to connect research on housing and territorial stigma with the emerging multilevel and multidisciplinary discourse of belonging. In the limited space available, I have not been able to go into much detail in this regard beyond scratching the surface, nor make meaningful connections to related discussions of home and, more generally, place. Much more work remains to be done in the future to describe the connections between stigma and belonging across a larger variety of settings, in order to bring together these two vibrant and innovative areas of study, as well as develop constructive exchanges with other discourses in the study of cities, places, migration, politics, and emotions.

Lastly, my article shows that housing and territorial stigma can impact members of social groups that are typically associated with structural positions of power and privilege, such as whiteness, native citizenship, heterosexuality, mainstream family values, and even homeownership. Likewise, it shows that not all instances of housing and territorial stigma involve the state or related insti-

tutions as central agents. Past research on housing and territorial stigma appears to have, somewhat narrowly, prioritized research on public housing, minority communities, contexts of migration, and impoverished urban neighborhoods in particular. It is time to broaden this focus and strategically examine different locations and types of communities, and undertake new comparisons, in the hope that this will help us develop more differentiated theories of housing and territorial stigma that do not conflate this particular form of injustice with other structural inequalities yet recognize it as a distinct and complex form of othering and discrimination in contemporary global societies.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

Exploring the ‘Spoiled’ and ‘Celebrated’ Identities of Young and Homeless Drug Users

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Abstract

Young people experiencing homelessness and who use drugs are vulnerable to being attributed with ‘spoiled identities’ due to stigmatising attitudes by wider society. This article is underpinned by a symbolic interactionist account of self-identity and stigma. It draws upon ethnographic research in a UK-based supported accommodation hostel for young people and explores how the residents in the hostel related to the labels of ‘homeless,’ ‘drug user’ and ‘youth’ and how these were expressed through their self-identities. Over a period of seven months, in-depth participant-observation, semi-structured interviews and a focus group were conducted involving 22 hostel residents, aged 16 to 21 years old. The data highlight how the residents engaged in processes of ‘distancing’ or ‘othering’ by making disparaging remarks about other people in similar situations based on stereotyping. These processes reinforced spoiled identities while enabling the residents to dis-associate from them. However, residents also appeared to embrace and celebrate certain features of each label, indicating an acceptance of these more positive features as forming a part of their self-identities. The article concludes by arguing for a nuanced approach to understanding stigma and identity among homeless people, one that accounts for more than just a person’s housing situation.

Keywords

drug use; Goffman; homelessness; spoiled identity; stigma; youth

Issue

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1. Introduction

Young people experiencing homelessness are socially constructed as simultaneously vulnerable and deviant. Vulnerability evokes images of exclusion and helplessness, whereas deviance portrays an image of danger and a threat to the moral order. Based on the work of Wright (1997), and highlighting the interlinked nature of homelessness and poverty, Farrugia, Smyth, and Harrison (2016, p. 241) summarised this dual narrative in arguing that:

> The very term ‘homelessness’ has had contradictory consequences, drawing attention to a significant form of poverty whilst simultaneously constructing symbolic and moral boundaries around a population of disordered, unruly subjects that attract more moral condemnation than those who are ‘merely poor.’

These contradictory narratives weave their way into legislative and policy responses as well as the public imagination meaning they exert powerful influence over how people are viewed, treated and interacted with. Yet what these top-down narratives cannot tell us is how they are experienced by those subjected to them, nor can they tell us what it is like to be homeless as a young person. Research exploring the identities of people experiencing homelessness has documented its associated stigma and the strategies that people use to cope. In their classic study, Snow and Anderson (1987) used the phrase “salvaging the self” to describe some of the ways in which street homeless people eschew negative stereotypes to

preserve their self-respect and dignity. These strategies involved: (1) distancing oneself from roles, associations and institutions that are inconsistent with a person's actual or desired self-conception; (2) embracing a role, association or institution that is consistent with a person's actual or desired self-conception; and (3) fictive storytelling in which a person tells stories of their past, present or future that contains a fictional element. Subsequent studies have developed Snow and Anderson's (1987) work by identifying yet further strategies used by those experiencing street-based and shelter-based homelessness to preserve their sense of self-worth and protect against stigma (Meanwell, 2013; Rayburn & Guittar, 2013; Roche, 2015; Terui & Hsieh, 2016); some of these have focused exclusively on young homeless people (Farrugia et al., 2016; Kidd, 2007; Roschelle & Kaufman, 2004).

This article adds to this existing 'identity work' literature by drawing on ethnographic research with a group of young homeless people living in a supported accommodation hostel. Drawing on symbolic interactionism and labelling, the article illustrates some of the ways in which the young people in the hostel talked about their homelessness. However, unlike existing homelessness literature, it also attends to two other identity labels that were significant for the participants—being a drug user and being young. Drug use and youth studies represent academic disciplines in their own right, and it can be challenging to condense them and bring them (along with homelessness) together into one conversation about identity. Yet, this ethnographic research revealed that these three identity labels were prominent in the participants' lives and although they could be discussed separately, this would fail to recognise that they were each significant in their identity work. Thus, it is argued that when considering the stigma faced by homeless people and their attempts to cope with it, it is important to recognise other identity categories that operate alongside homelessness.

2. Spoiled Identities: Homelessness, Drug Use and Youth

A symbolic interactionist account of identity asserts that narratives, perceptions and constructions held by society or the 'generalised other' (Mead, 1934) influence the self-identities of those they are imposed upon. Identities are formed and developed in response to understanding the views of others (Mead, 1934). Rather than being an innate quality, a person's identity is the product of a unique and infinite combination of interactions that they encounter throughout their life. Through these interactions, a person internalises attributes that others impose upon them and these attributes are reflected in the person's subsequent behaviours, actions and interactions. When such imposed views are understood as stigmatising, an individual is perceived to have a 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1963) and this can have a detrimental impact on their wellbeing.

Goffman's (1963) concept of spoiled identity involves a person being attributed with a negative or stigmatising characteristic by the generalised other. This is linked with labelling processes in which people who depart from socially accepted norms and rules are labelled as 'deviants' or 'outsiders' (Becker, 1963). According to Goffman (1963), those with 'discredited' spoiled identities are those whose negatively-perceived characteristics are visibly on display—for example, those experiencing street-based homelessness (Snow & Anderson, 1987)—while those with 'discreditable' spoiled identities are those whose negative characteristics are hidden. In day-to-day life, discredited people engage in processes of managing their spoiled identities, whereas discreditable people are concerned with keeping their hidden flaws concealed. These self-preservation activities are often achieved through processes of 'distancing' (Snow & Anderson, 1987) or 'othering' (Rødner, 2005) in which people attempt to deflect attention from themselves by voicing disapproval of other people or situations.

As discussed, a substantial body of literature has investigated how these ideas relate to those experiencing homelessness. Rayburn and Guittar (2013), for instance, found that rough sleepers try to conceal their homelessness, and the associated stigma of being smelly and dirty, by maintaining personal hygiene through showering and shaving. This finding was replicated by Terui and Hsieh (2016) who additionally found that not using drugs or alcohol, maintaining family or partner relationships and being responsible were also virtues emphasised by homeless people in their identity work to evidence that they did not fit with negative stereotypes. Likewise, as others have done (see, e.g., Roche, 2015), Terui and Hsieh (2016) found that individuals emphasised their past or present employment (or their desire to obtain employment) as a means of distancing themselves from the laziness that can characterise derogatory images of homeless people.

In line with symbolic interactionism, people alter their identity expressions in accordance with the social situation they are in (Goffman, 1959). This has also been recognised in the homelessness identity literature. For example, Perry (2013), who conducted ethnographic observations in a doughnut shop which remained open during the night as a homeless shelter, provided detailed examples of the ways in which the homeless visitors performed non-homeless identities in the shop. For instance, some purchased coffee and doughnuts which enabled them to enact a 'patron identity,' while others stated that they were not homeless but temporarily 'displaced.' These visitors also made disparaging remarks about other homeless people such as criticising their poor hygiene and behaviours like eating food out of bins. Parsell (2011) likewise highlighted the importance of context in influencing people's performances by noting that rough sleepers' body language and expressions exhibited gratitude and neediness when in the setting of a charitable outreach service, but they were more as-

sertive when making use of a local café. He concluded, as Goffman (1959, 1963) argued, that enacted identities, or performances, are context-dependant and are influenced by an understanding of normative ways of acting in different settings.

Homelessness, and its associated stigma, clearly represents a significant lens through which to examine and understand people's selves and the identity work they engage in to preserve a sense of self-worth, self-respect and dignity. However, this article argues that when someone is homeless, homelessness is not necessarily the only, or the dominant, label which influences their identity. While labels and attributes that people impose upon others do not denote a person's identity in its entirety (Lawler, 2014; May, 2013), aspects of a person's sense of self are often expressed in reference to labels. Furthermore, when an ethnographic approach is taken, the researcher attempts to understand the research participants and the contexts within which they are situated in a holistic, inductive manner. What emerged from the ethnographic work at the centre of this article was that, in addition to homelessness, two other labels—drug use and youth—were significant for the participants. Thus, before documenting the ethnographic study that informed these arguments, it is relevant to briefly consider drug use and youth as two identity labels.

Much of the identity work pertaining to drug use mirrors that of homelessness. For example, the participants in Rødner's (2005) study distanced themselves from the label of drug 'abuser' by emphasising that their drug use was the result of an informed, rational decision-making process and by arguing that they could exercise self-control. Using Snow and Anderson's (1987) concepts, these individuals distanced themselves from the negative connotations of being a drug 'abuser' while simultaneously embracing the less stigmatising role of drug 'user.' Similarly, one of the most well-known studies concerning drug use and identity explored the 'junkie' label, a pejorative word referring to heroin users (Radcliffe & Stevens, 2008). The authors demonstrated how 'junkie' is associated with criminality and degeneracy and the heroin users in their sample distanced themselves from the label by openly endorsing the association that 'junkies' are dirty, smelly and thieving, as a way of showing that they themselves were not the same. Significantly, some participants had dropped out of drug treatment because they believed that accessing treatment was proof of their 'junkie' status. The stigma of the label and the need to create distance overpowered the need to receive help. This was supported by Livingston, Milne, Fang, and Amari (2012) who explained that self, social and structural forms of stigma have been linked to adverse physical and mental health, non-completion of substance use treatment, delayed recovery and reintegration, and increased involvement in risky behaviours. Kidd (2007) likewise argued that the stigma associated with being homeless contributes to loneliness, low self-esteem, feeling trapped and suicidal ideation. Thus, given that stigma has such detrimental consequences for people's health and wellbeing, the 'distancing' or 'othering' efforts made by those with spoiled identities serve a protective purpose.

Finally, unlike homelessness and drug use, the third label of concern in this article—youth—is not usually viewed as a form of deviance (and therefore is stigmatising) in and of itself. However, young people's positions in society mean they are often framed as being involved in deviant activities. Cohen (2002) argued that young people have historically been denoted as scapegoats in that they are blamed for many of society's ills such as drug use and antisocial behaviour. Deviant features of youth have typically been discussed in relation to how young people spend their free time, linking young people to activities which are constructed by adults as having little benefit, or being detrimental, for society (Wilkinson, 2015). MacDonald and Marsh (2005) examined leisure transitions and found that young people typically move from socialising with their friends on the streets to visiting pubs and nightclubs. However, since access to the night-time economy is restricted by age and income, the authors identified a sub-group of young people who, over time, became entrenched in a street culture characterised by drug taking and petty crime. They concluded that long-term involvement in this form of cultural leisure resulted in these young people becoming increasingly excluded from mainstream society. Young people, particularly those from poorer backgrounds, are, therefore, bound up in discussions of street-based cultures, homelessness and drug use, and the stigma associated with these activities.

3. Fieldwork Site and Research Methods

This article draws on data collected for a UK-based Doctoral study funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. The study took an ethnographic approach to explore the experiences and substance use of young people living in homeless accommodation. Kelldale (a pseudonym)—the fieldwork site—was a supported accommodation hostel in Scotland run by a charity. It was situated on the outskirts of a city centre in an area of high deprivation (ranked in the top quintile of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation). As well as providing physical shelter, Kelldale offered support for those residing there in the form of staff helping the residents to engage in a wide range of activities including managing money, engaging with healthcare providers, mental health support, and accessing education, training or volunteering. These provisions were delivered with the intention of helping the residents to move into longer-term or permanent housing and was based on a 'staircase model.' The staircase model posits that homeless people move through a series of different forms of housing which each become more 'normal' as the individual progresses and is based on the philosophy that people need to be equipped with the skills to manage their own home

before they are given a home (Johnsen & Teixeira, 2010). Kelldale represented a transitional step on the staircase between precarious living and long-term housing.

Kelldale accommodated 14 young people at any one time, with each resident being given their own bedsit in the hostel. A bedsit was a self-contained flat with its own lockable door and within each bedsit was a bed, table and chairs, a set of drawers, wardrobe, basic cooking facilities (a hob, microwave and kettle) and an en-suite shower room. Although the residents' social security Housing Benefit was paid directly to the hostel to pay for their place, each individual was expected to pay a service charge of £10 per week to cover the cost of items like toilet paper and laundry detergent. This money was typically paid from other social security benefits the residents received.

Fieldwork took place over seven months in 2013 and during this time 22 residents participated in the research. Of these, 16 were male, 19 were White and had been born in the UK, 1 was British-Pakistani and 2 were migrants from Europe and Asia. All were aged 16 to 21 years old, and their length of involvement with the study ranged from 3 to 28 weeks. Most of the residents had moved into Kelldale from another hostel. Some of the older residents had been homeless for years and had spent periods of time moving between different hostels, couch surfing and living with their parents. During these periods, some had also lived in their own flat before being asked to leave, usually on the grounds of antisocial behaviour. A small number had been in local authority care. None of the residents had lived with their families directly prior to living in Kelldale but some younger residents had lived in only one hostel in between moving out of the family home and into Kelldale. Two of the residents had slept on the streets but not for any prolonged period (a night or two here and there).

During the fieldwork period, I visited Kelldale 64 times and interacted with the residents on 200–250 occasions. During the first four months, I visited 3 or 4 times per week for 4 to 8 hours at a time before reducing the frequency of my visits in the final three months. Participant-observation was the primary data collection method. This involved 'hanging out' with the residents by spending time in their company, engaging in conversation and joining in with recreational activities. Upon arriving in Kelldale, I would position myself in the reception area or I would go into the 'lounge' which was a communal area for the residents. The residents spent a lot of time in these locations and given that I was, initially, an unknown face, my presence there typically sparked conversations with those who were curious to know who I was and why I was there. When the opportunity arose, I explained my research, my status as a PhD student and asked for their consent to be involved. I had initially been unsure about how I would be received because my middle-class position and stable background were at odds with the socioeconomic and precarious backgrounds of the residents. However, being a White Scottish female who was closer in age to the residents (I was 28 years old at the time) than most of the staff were, helped us to find some common ground (for example, we had similar tastes in music). As familiarity grew, residents began to invite me to hang out with them in their bedsits. In between these interactions, I took opportunities to scribble fieldnotes which I later typed up. In most cases, I was a participant in the conversations between residents, rarely did I sit back and take a wholly observational role. The aim was to understand the social world of Kelldale by immersing myself in it and learning about it inductively from the perspective of those who were 'insiders.'

Participant-observational data were supplemented by semi-structured interviews in the latter stages of fieldwork which were completed with six residents, and a focus group with six residents, only one of whom had also completed an interview. The purpose of these additional methods was to probe further into themes emerging from the participant-observations and to 'fact check.' Some topics, such as the young people's family lives, were not commonly spoken about in day-to-day interactions, at least not when I was present, and the interviews presented opportunities to ask directly about these more sensitive topics. My approach to the interviews and focus group was to inform the residents of topics that had arisen during fieldwork and to ask for their help to 'fill in the blanks.' Usually this was enough information to prompt the residents to talk further about the topics, without much need for probing questions.

The data analysis followed Becker's (1970) sequential approach which involves beginning data analysis while fieldwork is ongoing and using the latter part of fieldwork to conduct checks on prominent themes that have emerged. NVivo10 software was used to store, manage and code the data which was done inductively and thematically.

4. Findings

The following findings are structured in relation to the three identity labels at the centre of this article—being homeless, a drug user and young. These were not the only identity characteristics expressed by the residents, as ethnicity, gender and being a parent were also important, however these only applied to a small number of residents and their discussion is beyond the scope of this article. Although the concept of identity has been criticised for being deterministic (i.e., if someone is labelled as 'young' then this will determine how that person is understood by researchers; May, 2013), the ethnographic approach meant that the emergence of these identity labels came from the residents themselves. In alignment with an interactionist position, it was possible to observe how the generalised other attitude had become intertwined with the residents' expressed self-identities and corresponding behaviours.

4.1. An Ambivalent 'Homeless' Identity

'Homelessness' is the first label to be considered since the bounded nature of Kelldale meant that living in supported accommodation dominated the context of the study. Due to existing evidence about homeless identities, it was important to understand if, and how, Kelldale's residents incorporated this label into their sense of self. Since the participants in this study were not rough sleepers, it was expected that their self-identities would reflect the homelessness setting of Kelldale.

When asked directly about what being 'homeless' meant to them, some residents made a distinction between rough sleeping and their own situation:

> Homelessness to me is you're asked to leave the family home and having nowhere else to go and being put in here. Not like the jakes in the street that walk about with the cups trying to run up to you like that 'geez money' wi' no shoes on!...There's two different sorts of homelessness. You've got the people in the hostels, then you've got the people in the street that are basically roofless, so we are a low homeless. (Nathan)

Nathan considered him and his fellow residents to be 'low homeless,' conceptualising a spectrum of low–high homelessness based on whether someone was a rough sleeper or not. His association with the label of 'homeless' was weak; he recognised that he was technically homeless but his 'low homeless' comment offered a means of distancing himself from the label. This is similar to 'categorical distancing' (Snow & Anderson, 1987) in which people make distinctions about different types or stages of homelessness and position themselves as being favourably different from those perceived to be in a different category. Furthermore, Nathan's comments endorsed a stereotypical view of rough sleepers as being poor, partially clothed and begging, an image that was far removed from his own expressed identity. This is consistent with a tendency amongst homeless people to engage in downward comparison or 'othering' as a coping strategy for a spoiled identity and the avoidance of stigma (Boydell, Goering, & Morrell-Bellai, 2000).

Consistent with Nathan's narrative was Jordan's explicit separation from the label of 'homeless' but, unlike Nathan, Jordan made the comparison between being 'homeless' and having a 'home'. Jordan explained:

> Now it's like I don't really class myself as homeless now cause, like, even though this is a homeless unit that I'm in, in honesty it does feel sort of like home in a way because the people that are in here, everyone's just so friendly to you, like, everyone just gets on and the staff are so funny and all that, plus they're always there, any time of day that you need them they're always going to be there.

Jordan related his feeling of being 'at home' with the relationships he had developed with his fellow residents and members of staff suggesting that he characterised homelessness as synonymous with isolation. This feeling became incorporated into Jordan's sense of self and he later explained that living somewhere that provided stability and relationship opportunities helped him to feel as though he was living the life he wanted. Feeling 'at home' in supported accommodation was also a finding reported by Farrugia et al. (2016) who linked this to the 'moral self' in which the stability offered by such services enabled young people to feel able to exercise responsibility and orderliness.

Cara also referred to the hostel as her 'home.' Cara was strict about not letting other residents socialise in her bedsit and she enjoyed keeping her own bedsit as a separate space:

> As well as not liking the mess, she said she prefers going to other people's rooms because she spends enough time as it is in her own room. For her it's like going to someone else's house. I asked her about overnight stays and she said it was the same thing. Sometimes if she's at a friend's house the friend will invite her to stay, whereas other times she will message one of her friends saying: "I need to get out of this house can I come and stay with you?"

Cara had constructed her bedsit as a private space that was similar to a kind of home. Her feelings of going to another person's house when she left her bedsit were akin to Kelldale being a small community and visiting her neighbours. However, her need to sometimes get away from the hostel acted as a reminder that her bedsit 'home' and the wider hostel could function as both a pleasant place and an environment that could become stifling. Feelings of being stifled were expressed by many of the residents throughout the fieldwork:

> This place gets to you after a while. You don't know what day it is, what time it is, whether you're coming or going. (Stephanie)

These types of statements highlighted the volatility of feeling at home in Kelldale as, within a short period of time, the residents' actions and statements could fluctuate between expressing a sense of feeling settled and 'at home' and a need to 'get out.' Sometimes, such statements were accompanied by pacing around a room which mimicked the idea of an animal trapped in a cage. Although there was nothing to stop the residents from walking out of the front door, they often had nowhere else to go and therefore feelings of being stifled or trapped were indicative of a much larger barrier: that although Kelldale could assist in distancing themselves from the 'homeless' label and its negative connotations, Kelldale was also not fully their 'home.'

The temporary nature of their living situations, shared living with people they did not choose to live with, and a lack of alternative options all fed into an ambivalence about whether they were 'homeless' or 'at home.' Indeed, although approximately one-third of the participants had explicitly indicated that they either did not view themselves as 'high homeless' (to use Nathan's phrasing) or they felt 'at home' in Kelldale, notably the remainder of the residents barely spoke about their homeless status. Instead, they were more inclined to focus on the future and where they would live next, or they would talk about their past lives which they constructed as being chaotic:

> Andy told me about the socially-rented flat he had once lived in and explained that he was evicted for having lots of parties which became out of control. He explained that he would get so drunk that he would pass out or have no idea what was happening which meant people he didn't even know would gatecrash the party and cause trouble.
>
> [Later] Andy explained that he has put his name down to get a flat about 30 miles away to live in the same town as his dad who he only recently met for the first time. In Kelldale, he has learned about 'door control' to stop people coming into his space if he doesn't want them to. He is confident he can exercise door control when he gets his new flat.

Meanwell (2013) argues that homeless people construct their past selves as morally problematic as a means of constructing the present self as morally virtuous. In Andy's case, his past self was characterised by chaos and immaturity, his present self was more settled and mature, and this, he believed, laid the foundations for a morally responsible future self. Thus, not only do homeless people preserve their identities by distancing themselves from other people and situations, they also create distance from their past selves. In the case of Kelldale, while some talked about feeling as though they were neither 'homeless' nor 'at home,' most did not talk about these as features of their current identities at all but rather, like Andy, avoided stigma by comparing the past to the future.

4.2. The 'Drug User' Self and 'Junkie' Other

Homelessness was not the only label that emerged from the data as being significant for the residents' identities. Drug use is considered as the archetype of deviance and, consequently, is highly stigmatising (Becker, 1963). While 'drug use' encompasses the ingestion of many different types of substance, some more harmful than others, their position as illegal substances (in the UK) mark them all as morally problematic and, therefore, their use as potentially stigmatising in the eyes of the generalised other. Drug use was pervasive in the lives of Kelldale's residents; while a small number periodically used ecstasy, cocaine and amphetamine, cannabis was the dominant drug, used by at least half of the study's participants daily. None of the residents claimed to have used heroin and there was no observational evidence of heroin use although, as will become apparent, heroin use was highly stigmatising meaning that residents were unlikely to admit to taking this substance even if they had. Thus, the phrase 'drug use' in the context of Kelldale refers to the illicit substances that the residents used and this will be contrasted with heroin use.

Being a drug user also influenced the residents' self-identities but, unlike homelessness, was embraced (Snow & Anderson, 1987) or celebrated. This was apparent when some boasted about their drug use:

> I can smoke four joints and it's not obvious that I'm stoned because I can act normal. (Jordan)

The bragging nature of such statements suggested that some readily internalised a 'cannabis user' or 'drug user' self-identity. Boasting about, or celebrating, their drug use was further evidenced when some of the residents changed the lyrics of a pop-song by Daft Punk from "we're up all night to get some" to "we're up all night to get stoned" and excitedly wandered around the hostel singing it loudly and repeatedly. Further evidence of the residents' acceptance of the 'drug user' identity was their conversations about who looked more intoxicated in comparison to others:

> Tom commented that it's funny how some people can smoke weed and not look stoned whereas other people are obviously stoned. I said that it's obvious when Matt's been smoking because his eyes go puffy. Danielle said: "Aye and Chloe and Craig's eyes used to go dead bloodshot." Tom replied: "We wouldn'ae let them come down to the office when they were stoned because we would get caught."

While those engaged in substance use typically embraced and embodied the drug user dimension of their selves, this had its limits. Notably, they made clear distinctions between their own drug use and that of 'junkies.' As discussed, the word 'junkie' is a highly stigmatising term as it not only refers to the use of heroin but heroin users' associations with criminality and immorality (Radcliffe & Stevens, 2008). It is common for users of certain drugs to distance themselves from those who use other drugs (Furst & Evans, 2015; Palamer, 2014) so, they can minimise their 'spoiled identity.' In Kelldale, the residents frequently teased each other and made jokes about being heroin users. For example, Stacy pretended to be a heroin user and claimed that she needed to get her "green juice" (methadone), and Craig joked that he takes "smack" all the time. Consistent with the embodied aspect of drug use and their playfulness, residents sometimes mimicked a 'junkie' by changing their voice to

an exaggerated and nasal Scottish accent that involved elongating certain words. These impressions always involved asking for money or drugs which was consistent with the image of 'junkies' as 'scroungers' (Radcliffe & Stevens, 2008):

> Jordan did an impression of a junkie which involved putting on a whiny voice that sounded like he was holding his nose: "Awriiiiite, you got any spare change pal?"

Although the residents engaged in identity work to distance themselves from heroin use, by making fun of it, they were also aware that heroin use was a part of their lives. This was partly due to the overlap between homelessness and heroin use, and partly due to people close to the residents being heroin users:

> Andy explained he had once lived in a hostel which was full of "old junkies": "It's basically a five-storey building full of junkies." The other boys nodded in agreement. Andy said that one time he was leaving his room at the hostel when a guy asked him if he wanted to buy a bag of "smack." Andy replied to the guy saying: "Naw, do I look like a junkie?" He seemed insulted and annoyed by being offered a bag of heroin. The three residents generally talked about junkies in a derogatory and disdainful manner.
>
> During the focus group, when I asked why 'junkies' are so bad, Tom replied: "Everyone might slag them and hate them, I don't know about them, but I've got one or two in the family." Chloe responded: "So do I." And Craig agreed by saying "ninety-five percent of my family are junkies, true story." Danielle added "it's just another thing, isn't it. Some of my pal's mums are kit heids [heroin users]."

Identity work around substance use was, therefore, an important feature of the resident's lives. They embraced and even celebrated their cannabis use while simultaneously denigrating those who used a different substance, heroin. When this was probed further in the focus group, the residents agreed that this is because heroin is more "addictive" than cannabis meaning that people resort to "robbing old ladies" and begging for money on the streets. However, paradoxically, some of the focus group residents also talked about the measures they had taken to buy cannabis when money was tight. These included going hungry because they had used their food money for cannabis, spending their service charge money on cannabis and accruing arrears as a result, selling personal items, stealing items like mobile phones from friends to sell, drug dealing to make money for cannabis and lying to family members about what they needed money for (e.g., food, a haircut, a bus fare) so they would lend to them. Despite these details, they continued to embrace their cannabis user identities, indeed it appeared as though the focus group participants competed with each other when listing these money-making activities rather than representing them as problematic. Meanwhile, they continued to construct heroin users as being worse. This was summed up when Tom claimed that if someone tried to bring heroin into Kelldale they would be "disowned" by the group but if they brought in cannabis, they would be invited to join them.

4.3. The 'Young' Self

Youth identities emerged during conversations about the ages of the Kelldale residents in relation to my own. At the time of fieldwork, I was 28 years old (6 to 10 years older than the residents) and my age was regularly raised as a topic of conversation by the residents in relation to themselves. The following exchange occurred in one of the bedsits where a group of residents were socialising:

> They laughed about a bird pooing on Ryan's shoe and this led to a string of conversations [which were] peppered with laughing and singing. Music was playing in the background and now and again Cara or Ryan would sing a line of a song….At one point Cara and Ryan started trying to hit each other's sunburned areas (Cara's arms and Ryan's chest) in a friendly play-fighting manner. Ryan turned to me and said with a smile: "I bet you wish you were our age again!"

My leisure interests and ideas of fun were regularly perceived by Ryan and others as different from theirs because of our age differences. This highlighted how the residents enacted distinctive forms of leisure and playfulness that they perceived as being appropriate for their age but not mine. Using Goffman's (1959) argument that performances can be indicative of a person's self-identity, this extract (along with several others that were similar) suggests the residents held ideas about what it meant to be young, and they embraced these characteristics of a youthful self-identity.

For Liam and Jordan, who were both 17 years old, being young formed a strong feature of their identities and it further intersected with their belonging to the 'Goth' subculture (Hodkinson, 2002). Liam and Jordan portrayed their Goth identities through wearing dark clothes, baggy jeans, hoodies and t-shirts emblazoned with the logos of heavy metal, punk and rock bands. They had several body piercings, tattoos, dyed their hair in bold colours and wore heavy eye liner. They frequently referred to themselves as 'Goths' with a fierce sense of pride. The intersection of this Goth subculture with being young was illustrated when they talked about an upcoming 'prom' at an under-18s nightclub that was known to attract members of the Gothic subculture:

> Liam said that he's wearing a dress to the prom and Jordan said he's wearing his Spongebob Squarepants pyjamas….They had put the Kerrang channel on the TV

> and a song by the band Bullet for My Valentine came on. Jordan stood up and announced he was going to do the "[name of nightclub] dance." This involved him mouthing the words to the song and making dramatic arm movements.

As is apparent from this extract, Jordan and Liam's worlds were constructed by them as fun and youthful. This was most clearly demonstrated by Jordan dressing up in cartoon pyjamas; a strong symbol of childhood and one way of challenging adult norms of looking and behaving in certain ways. They held a distinct non-adult sense of self and a perception of adulthood as representing the antipathy of fun, subcultural belonging and being carefree. In a conversation with Liam about the adult responsibilities of budgeting, the 17-year old responded: "Fuck being a grown up! I never want to grow up!"

In contrast to Liam and Jordan, Matt was approaching his 18th birthday and was excited to enter the world of legal adulthood so that he could drink alcohol in pubs and nightclubs. For two weeks, Matt spoke enthusiastically about his upcoming birthday and explained that his older friends and relatives were planning to celebrate with him by going to the pub. Turning 18, for Matt, symbolised a sense of freedom to engage in the legitimate drinking culture. Although turning 18 enabled the residents to drink alcohol legally, most had been drinking from a younger age. The following conversation between Liam and Jordan (aged 17) and Danielle, Chloe and Garry (all aged 21) revealed some of the complexities of youth leisure, legality and identity:

> Liam and Jordan told us that they're going to the nightclub tonight for the prom. Danielle and Chloe overheard this and asked if they could go too. The boys said yes but Jordan pointed out that it's an under-18s night. Danielle replied: "Oh we'll get done for being big paedos!" Garry asked if that meant there wouldn't be any alcohol. Liam said yes, but that everyone just gets [drunk] before they get there.

Despite the shared interest in going to nightclubs and drinking alcohol, the four years that separated these residents in age was significant due to the 18-year old legal marker which divided them. This marker was embedded in the self-identities of the residents and this extract revealed its power over the behaviours of those involved. As well as the marker influencing the drinking behaviours of the residents, Danielle's comment about the older residents being paedophiles suggested that she viewed the older residents as adults and the younger residents as children. Therefore, despite the residents' shared interests in nightclubs and drinking, age served as a powerful structure in constructing the boundaries of 'child/young person' and 'adult/young person' identities.

Furthermore, some older residents constructed the under-18 residents as being more vulnerable due to their age. On one occasion, Tom (aged 21) had heard a rumour that Matt was going to be evicted from the hostel for not paying his service charge (referred to, by Tom, as "rent"). He expressed his thoughts to a staff member:

> That's shite though. He's a 17-year old boy who's been used to living with his [mum] and you are kicking him out for not paying rent to somewhere where he needs to pay for his [electricity] too!

By contrast, though, sometimes their age was taken as an indication that these residents were more likely to cause trouble, endorsing a deviant narrative of youth: "There's gonna be riots in here man with so many young ones in here just now." (Danielle)

Overall, in Kelldale, age and youth strongly featured in the conversations and behaviours of the residents indicating that they were embedded within their self-identities in different ways. In line with a symbolic interactionist stance, it was apparent that the residents constructed the youthful features of their self-identities in relation to their understandings of the generalised other attitude. In other words, they were aware of how youth is constructed in society and this understanding intersected with how their youthful status was internalised. For Ryan, Liam and Jordan, being young was felt positively and in this sense could be viewed as a celebrated identity. For Matt, being under the legal drinking age was a cause of frustration but turning 18 would enable him to access the adult forms of leisure while still being considered as a young person. Danielle and Tom, on the other hand, thought of themselves as adults and they reinforced the (adult-dominated) generalised other attitude that young people are simultaneously vulnerable and deviant.

Notably, these youth self-identities were enacted and discussed in relation to youth narratives broadly and were not specific to the context of homelessness. This is significant because one might expect that when someone experiences homelessness, this component of their lives overrides everything else. Studies of youth homelessness typically focus on the homelessness and the extremes of vulnerability (such as emphasising the negative effects of homelessness on a young person's well-being) or deviance (such as the toughness required to negotiate living on the streets or in hostels). They rarely recognise the features of youth which are visible regardless of a person's housing status such as playfulness and a desire to be a part of the legitimate night-time economy. Therefore, when considering the self-identities of those who are homeless, it is apparent that other features of people's lives, such as their age, are likely to exert a strong influence on how they see themselves.

5. Conclusion

This article has focused on a group living in a supported accommodation hostel and explored their self-identities as they relate to the 'generalised other' labels of 'home-

less,' 'drug user' and 'youth.' Vulnerability and deviance are concepts which penetrate these labels as those who are young, drug users and/or homeless are simultaneously believed to require help and social control to ensure their lives align with acceptable, normative standards of behaviours. However, these labels are not just used to describe people's objective positions in society, they are layered with assumptions about *who* people are and what their 'natural' selves encompass. Symbolic interactionism is valuable here as it argues that people's self-identities and intertwined behaviours are the product of an infinite and unique combination of interactions. Despite people often framing other's self-identities as innate and fixed, interactionists demonstrate how they are dynamic and influenced by the people they interact with.

Given the power of labels, it is necessary to understand how those on the receiving end of them experience these processes. This is particularly important when the labels have stigmatising implications that are damaging for people's wellbeing (Kidd, 2007; Livingston et al., 2012). The analysis in this article revealed the nuanced ways that the participants related to different labels. Despite the stigma associated with homelessness, drug use and youth, there was little evidence that the participants had internalised stigmatising attitudes into their self-identities or were negatively impacted by them. Data pertaining to each label indicated that the residents were aware of such stigma and reinforced it by making disparaging and stereotypical remarks. Such endorsements are consistent with processes of distancing (Snow & Anderson, 1987) or 'othering' (Rødner, 2005). Homelessness and drug use were caricatured by drawing on their extreme forms—rough sleeping and heroin use—and reinforcing stereotypes of begging and poor personal care. In doing so, the residents were able to distance their forms of homelessness and drug use and portray these, and themselves, as 'better,' more fortunate, and with higher morals than 'junkies.' The 'youth' label also revealed some 'othering' behaviours; with younger residents rejecting adulthood (i.e., Liam's statement of "fuck being a grown up") and older residents drawing upon vulnerability and deviant narratives when describing younger residents, arguably as a means of positioning themselves as more capable and mature.

In addition, participants (re)defined the labels in positive ways and expressed accounts which could be deemed as celebratory. Claims of feeling 'at home' in Kelldale, whilst being laden with ambivalence, can be understood as attempts to positively internalise what many would see as a difficult living situation. This is largely due to some residents experiencing Kelldale more favourably relative to their previous living circumstances. The use of cannabis was bragged about, formed a large part of everyday conversations and was the subject of a song that was performed throughout the hostel. Youth was likewise celebrated by some residents taking advantage of subcultural activities provided for, and associated with, young people. Thus, 'spoiled identities' and 'celebrated identities' sat closely alongside each other with the residents managing to avoid stigma associated with their marginalised positions by focusing their attention on more positive formulations of the labels.

Overall, the nuances of self-identity explored in this article suggest that people in marginalised housing situations, such as homelessness, should not be understood only on the basis of these situations. Just because someone is experiencing homelessness does not mean that homelessness dominates their sense of self. Likewise, it is not possible to understand people's self-identities only from the perspectives of being young, using drugs or any singular identity category. An ethnographic approach offers an inductive way of understanding how different labels and associated identities simultaneously come into play in a person's life. This is important when considering the impact that stigma has on people's wellbeing and the identity work they engage in to protect against stigma and preserve a sense of self-worth and dignity.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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