The council estate and "being placed": Everyday resistances to the stigmatization of community

Abstract

Building upon contemporary analyses of the interconnections between stigmatized places and identity formation, this paper explores processes of place-based identity formation on a British council estate. Connecting post-structural theorisations of identity and space, the paper explores the tensions between structure and agency implicit within theorisations of place-based identity as community. Conceptualising the entanglement of structure and agency in place making as "being placed", this paper offers an analysis of contradictions inherent in a structurally located agency. Founded upon ethnographic research of the material and cultural conditions of "being placed" on The Estate, the paper explores everyday resistances to place-based identity and the stigmatization of community.

Key words: class, community, council estate, identity, place, stigma

1. Introduction

Representations of the council estate[1] are imbued with notions of community. The language of community is drawn upon to celebrate the council estate and deride its perceived failings in popular media (Lees, 2014), policy doxa (Slater, 2018) and academic analysis. There is an inherent paradox within ideas of community which through a need to "recreate or reinforce locally a sense of belonging, of consensus, inclusion and homogeneity" necessitates the "condemnation, exclusion and alienation" of those perceived as outsiders (Hill and Wright, 2003: 12). This contradiction has informed sociological critique of housing policies and their cultural and material consequences (Savage et al,

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[1] This paper refers to a site of social housing using the English terminology of "The Estate", this may be known as a "Scheme" in Scotland

2010). Yet community as a process of class formation often remains implicit in sociological accounts of council housing, where classifications of "working-class" and "community" can become conflated.

Building upon contemporary analyses of the interconnections between stigmatized places and identity formation (Wacquant et al, 2014; Paton et al, 2017; van de Wetering, 2017), this paper explores processes of place-based identity formation on a British council estate. The paper provides an analysis of place-based identity formation, connecting post-structural turns in theorisations of community (Walkerdine, 2010; 2016) and space (Massey, 2005; Murdoch, 2006). The paper offers an analysis of contradictions inherent in a structurally located agency, exploring everyday resistance as a practice entangled with power (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016). Conceptualising the links between structure and agency in place making as "being placed", the paper considers how the combinations of power/resistance shape the stigmatisation of community.

2. Histories and geographies of The Estate

This paper is founded upon ethnographic research on a council estate, located on the outskirts of a city in the South East of England. The research explores how everyday lives are shaped by the material and social conditions of "being-on" The Estate (Featherstone, 2013). The socio-political context of this research is often spoken of, both within academic and popular discourse, as "austerity Britain" (Atkinson et al, 2012; Mckenzie, 2015). As Skeggs notes, the "ideological politics of austerity have made class divisions and their consequences even more apparent" (Skeggs, 2015: 206) with cuts to welfare and services transforming the material (Harrison, 2009; Carr, 2013; Disney and Lao, 2017) and cultural conditions (McKenzie, 2012) of The Estate.

Following Hanley's argument that "class is built into the physical landscape of the country" (Hanley, 2007: 18), housing policy not only physically locates classed groups; it socially locates them. Whilst the commodification of social housing through the "Right to Buy" policies have resulted in gentrification through the incentives of capital accumulation (Lees and Ferreri, 2016) created by a

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"state-induced rent gap" in inner city London (Watt, 2009), this is not the case for estates located on less valued land (economically and socially). For the sprawling peri-urban estates which mark the boundaries of many towns and cities across the UK, the marketization of social housing has produced more subtle transformations of the social and material.

Thus the result of the privileging of market logic in social housing policies is the socio-spatial polarization between estates (Wacquant, 2008; Jones, 2010; Jeffery, 2016). In this way, The Estate of this research is socially constituted in its relative positioning in national political discourses and their localised manifestations. Despite the relative wealth of the region, The Estate is re-constituted within a context of increased competition for resources. The positioning of The Estate of this research on the periphery of the city has excluded it from processes of gentrification which shape the inner-city social housing and the complexities these shifting notions of value entail. Consequently, social housing in the city with better transport links and more integrated with other housing tenures have been more comprehensively privatised than The Estate. As a result, the city's most available social housing has become concentrated on The Estate, where geographical segregation has maintained a social and physical separateness distinct from other areas of social housing.

Therefore, being housed on The Estate entails a structural positioning within a specific social, cultural and political milieu. The Estate of this research is constructed on de-valued land, it is set within a harsh physical environment, its development stunted by its enclosure within a valley. A dead-end, located on the fringe, the surrounding landscape forms the city's "backstage"; it is a place for the dirty work of waste disposal, with the city dump adjoining The Estate. The Estate's physical dislocation is further entrenched by its transport links; it is served by one looped bus service. Travelling between the city centre and The Estate, the bus service has become notorious in the local area, its number a short hand for The Estate, featuring in jokes and folklore. The "last bus", a late-night service which runs from the city centre to The Estate, featured as the title of a radio chat show (1998-2004), with the host

commenting that the "last bus" *has the reputation locally of being a rough ride, fully of lippy birds and nutty geezers - just like the show in fact*". In this way, the physical disconnection of The Estate is interwoven with social and cultural disconnections. The attachment of particular values to the place of The Estate and the people of The Estate, is extended to these mobile representations, such as the singular bus; these social cues indicate difference and distance between estate residents and the city's wider population. Thus, The Estate's specific peri-urban geography and its physical and social distance from the city have shaped its construction in the local imaginary and national discourse. The physical dislocation of The Estate produces a social distancing whereby the "proximate stranger" (Bhabha, 1996) is imagined through repeated cultural representations (Raisborough and Adams, 2008). The research explores the ways in which dominant discourses which produce The Estate as "other" (Featherstone, 2013; Mckenzie, 2015) circulate on The Estate and are drawn upon as resources in everyday struggles for recognition. Thus, the material of The Estate is mediated through dominant value systems which give meaning to its structured materiality. Dominant discourses which stigmatize The Estate are mobilised and reproduced through everyday practices on The Estate, where housing, location and tenure inform judgments by which residents' mark distinction (Bourdieu, 1984; Robertson, 2013).

Such processes of social and geographic distinction are entwined with the formation of territorial stigmatization, a regime of advanced marginality which becomes increasingly concentrated in "isolated and bounded territories" (Wacquant, 2007: 67). The long history of spatial distinction (Engels ([1845] 1993; Damer, 1974) has become further entrenched, "emblematic of the Fordist–Keynesian phase of industrial capitalism" (Wacquant et al, 2014: 1273), documented in contemporary analysis of the United States ghetto (Wacquant, 2014), traditional working-class territories within and on the peripheries of European cities (Garbin and Millington, 2012), and urban segregation in Latin America (Bayón and Saraví, 2018). Within the UK, territorial stigmatization becomes activated in the discursive formation of the "sink estate" (Slater, 2018), where the ideological foundations of The Estate are devalued in media and policy doxa. It is within this context of territorial stigmatization that everyday practices of

community formation on The Estate may be understood as 'stigma-responsive identity work' (van de Wetering, 2017: 4).

2.1. Methodology

The ethnographic methodology of the research informs its focus on the "production of everyday life" (Lather 2001: 481). Through an analysis which connects "meaning, social structure, power relations and history" (Lather, 2001: 481) ethnography is a means to pay attention to the "livable life" (Butler, 2014; Back, 2015). Through an interpretation of the ways in which agency produces structure (Willis, 1977), ethnography enables an articulation of "hidden" knowledges and everyday resistances (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016). As an account of processes, ethnography is necessarily conducted across time and space, with the in-depth nature of ethnographic research allowing an exploration of the complexity of individual lives and the intersections of multiple identities (Skeggs, 2001). The ethnographic fieldwork on which this paper draws, was conducted over a period of eighteen months (2013-2014) in multiple sites on The Estate, with the Community Centre and the Primary School forming two key spaces of more sustained and intensive participant observation. I gained access to the Community Centre in June 2013 and spent two days a week there until September 2014. During this time, I took on the role of "helper" at youth clubs for primary and secondary school aged children, participating in both the everyday and the celebrations which marked the passing of the year. The Community Centre provided a space for the development of enduring research relationships, however there are no neutral sites where you may access everyday life on The Estate. The use of the Community Centre shaped who was included in the research, with strong kinship networks and shared histories excluding those who do not easily identify with the "community" or are more transitory in their trajectory. As a result, the research participants were mainly White British, with a minority Black and Minority Ethnic British, and very few first-generation immigrants. During the summer months of 2014, I conducted in-depth interviews (two youth workers, eight secondary aged and three primary aged) which drew upon a range of methods as appropriate for the participant, including; drawing (Greene and Hogan, 2005), the discussion of photographs (Rose, 2016), walking conversations (Jones et al, 2008)

and semi-structured interviews (Heyl, 2001). As Pool (2017) notes, ethnographic data covers a broad ontological range, founded upon a hybrid of "hard" and "soft" data, whereby verbatim transcripts are interpreted through memory and experience and reflections are objectified in the writing of field-notes (Pool, 2017: 283). Thus, the paper is founded upon an ethnographic data set which draws together field-notes, reflexive notes, photographs, documented conversations and interviews in the representation of The Estate.

The ontological and epistemological foundations of ethnography within a conception of the everyday as producer of structure, invites a critical stance on the ethnography itself as a powerful representation, a writing into being. This critical engagement with the practice of ethnographic writing as only ever "partial truths" (Clifford and Marcus, 1986) requires a "doubled epistemology" (Lather, 2001: 481) where the text becomes a site of the failures of representation. It is therefore beyond the methodological parameters of this research to claim or seek representativeness, rather the selection of data is guided by a situated ethics founded upon a research sensibility that permeates practice beyond the ethnographic moment; in the writing of fieldnotes, the analysis of data and the writing of the research (Simons and Usher, 2000; Miller et al, 2012). Here accountability may be achieved through reflexive practices which make visible the positionality of the researcher and question how that position might have impacted the research process (van de Port, 2017: 298).

2.2. Theorising community: identity and place in post-structural thought

This paper engages with contemporary theorisations of place-based identity located within two distinct yet interconnected fields of study. The paper draws upon a conceptualisation of community developed within feminist post-structural sociological accounts of place, identity and affect (Walkerdine, 2010; 2016) and a theorisation of space informed by the post-structural turn within the field of social geography (Massey, 2005). In this section, I locate the paper within these two broadly defined fields outlining a theorisation of community as a "socio-spatialised" position (Featherstone, 2013).

The interconnections between class and geographies are often implicit within sociological conceptualisations of community (Studdert and Walkerdine, 2016). Nevertheless, a tradition of critical engagement with normative readings based upon sameness and unity, has made explicit that "members may have commonalities and related histories along with different lived experiences and perceptions" (Brann-Barrett, 2011: 6). This conceptualisation of community as inter-relations captures the connectedness of people within a geographic space and their relationship with those positioned outside that space, drawing analytic attention to the social, cultural and emotional structures which shape community (Brann-Barrett, 2011; Wise 2015). Further developing this concept, Walkerdine theorises community as "interelationality", webs of relations which construct the subject at their centre, challenging the assumption of a "pre-existing stable subject that is simply linked to others" (Walkerdine, 2010: 5). In this sense, community is a system of relations which produce both people and community, what Walkerdine characterises as "communal beingness" (2010: 5). In this framework, community is understood as:

> the outcome of constant sociality enacted in common and created and sustained in common through the inter-relational linking of action, materiality, subjectivity, speech and the world of accepted meanings (Studdert and Walkerdine, 2016: 613).

This work develops a theorisation of community identity as process, a "moral project" (Back, 2009: 4), reflecting a broader post-structural turn in theories of identity. Drawing connections with Nayak's theorisations of race, community may be seen as a repetitive attempt at "being", it is an active verb, not a pre-given noun (Nayak, 1997: 22). Thus, community does not imply a stable identity, rather community identity may be conceived as moments of identification: a "process of articulation" (Hall, 1996: 2), never completed, and only ever actualised in the "binding and marking of symbolic boundaries" (1996: 3). As a process of "making through marking" (Skeggs, 2004) community may be understood as "defined against and built upon exclusion via the ongoing discursive construction of a 'constitutive outside'" (Lucey, 2010: 3). These post-structural articulations of community move beyond a relational theorisation, whereby the community defines itself against what it is not, to an understanding

that community only ever comes to form in these moments of "othering". In this conceptualisation, community is not stable, rather, it is an interruption, constituted in moments of disagreement (Rancière, 1999) where it attempts at "being" other to what it is not.

The theorisation of community within this broadly defined post-structural paradigm has clear parallels with theorisations of space and place as always under construction, as a product of their interrelations, constituted through interaction (Massey, 2005: 9). Though, Scourfield et al (2006) question Massey's assumption that "various boundaries of locally-situated life-conditions do indeed add up to place" (Scourfield et al, 2006: 3), Massey asserts that multiplicity and space are co-constitutive, where space is "co-existing heterogeneity" (Massey, 2005: 9). In this way, Massey's conceptualisation of space as "event", a temporary "meeting up of trajectories" (Massey, 2006: 46), ruptures the hegemonic binary of space and time, where space is often conceptualised as "a kind of residual category, as what time is not" (2006: 46). Through the evocation of landscape, Massey argues for space "imbued with time", that "could be imagined as provisionally intertwined simultaneities of ongoing, unfinished, stories" (2006: 46).

This theorisation of space has informed a body of work uncovering the dynamics of identity construction through analysis of "space-time" relations (Burgess, 2010), specifically, the centrality of space and place in representations and formations of classed identities (Skeggs, 2004). Skeggs (2004) highlights the embodied connections between people and place, where place is inscribed onto the bodies of the people who inhabit it, a mark which they carry as a signifier of their "valuelessness", a placing visible on their body beyond the landscape of their place. The interpellation of place is further explored in Featherstone's analysis of the discursive nuance of "being-on" the Bransholme council estate in Hull (Featherstone, 2013). Featherstone highlights the social, moral and often physical dislocation Bransholme from society – those who live there are never really "in" the world, but "on" it, a recognition of their "existential and phenomenological rootedness in time, space and world" (2013: 3).

Featherstone's conceptualisation of a "socially produced psycho-social pathology" (Featherstone, 2013: 16) captures a way to speak of "failure" as a positioning, as a structural consequence that is nevertheless felt as an affective relationship between the self, The Estate and wider society. The affects of being on The Estate felt as a "psycho-social bruise" (Hanley, 2012: ix) is productive of "communal beingness" (Walkerdine, 2010: 5), as both an individual and collective positioning, as a trajectory, a sense of history and a sense of future.

This body of work offers a critique of the "cultural milieu" of The Estate as the consequence of capitalism (Wacquant, 2007), drawing attention to the complex links between structure and agency, highlighting the ways sense of place, shapes self (Massey, 1994; Le Grand, 2010; Robertson et al, 2010). This paper seeks to build upon this work considering the processes by which place and identity are co-constituted through an analysis of contradictions inherent in a structurally located agency and everyday resistances to the stigmatization of community.

3. Being Placed: social positioning on The Estate

The following analysis focuses on moments of negotiation between the material and the discursive in everyday practices on The Estate. This interest in the tension between structure and agency in processes of place making is conceptualised as "being placed". Drawing upon Massey's conceptualisation of space as a process which is "open, porous and the product of other places" (Massey, 1995: 59), I argue identity formation and place making are an intertwined process. The concept of "being placed" captures the ways place shapes the self, the ways in which one becomes the place: a formation of subjectivities. At the same time, I acknowledge this as a structural consequence, that one is placed within relations of power: "being placed" is active, it is the continual positioning of the self in relation to an "Other" (Said, 1978). As a "bifocal" (Weis and Fine, 2012) tool of analysis, "being placed" draws attention to the ways in which individuals are actively engaged with the formation of place and self, whilst contextualising this agency within the material and structural (Bourdieu, 1990; Giddens, 1979). The analytical lens of

"being placed" draws attention to the ways in which individuals actively negotiate their social position, through the weaving together of narratives to which they have access. Therefore, my analysis focuses on the social positions shaping access to discourses and the material positions shaping access to resources (Skeggs, 2004).

3.1. The everyday production of dominant discourses

When I began my fieldwork, I felt that I had entered The Estate in the culminating moments of years of decline. I was told over and again about the way things were, that today it was just not the same. These sentiments, a shift in the feel of the place, were evidenced through cultural artefact and anecdote, and as such experienced vicariously by those who had not been "there" at that "time". There were traditions upheld within the present of the Community Centre which I was told were never going to be the same as they once were: seasonal celebrations and trips, though repeated year on year, could not re-capture the glow of the past. I was shown photographs, documentaries, music videos created at various points within the Community Centre's history, yet they were merged together as evidence of an imagined time gone by. Soon I noticed the integration of "my time" within this construction of the Community Centre's celebrated history and condemned future. Moments which I had been a part of were retold, woven within the storying of the Community Centre's imagined past. The selective telling of these stories creates an intense and vivid account of the way things were: funny anecdotes, good times, and the extraordinary were told together producing a heightened version of "that time".

I begin with this reflection to foreground how discourse is produced and reproduced in the everyday. Dominant discourses which stigmatize The Estate are mediated and reproduced within The Estate. By emphasising the process through which the personal is connected to the communal and the present is connected to the past, an analysis of dominant discourse may further understandings of how the social position of "being placed" on The Estate is experienced.

When I arrived, Joe told me the Community Centre had been broken into during the night.

They had broken through the window of the living room by forcing it open but had been unable to get in any further because the door was locked. They had tried to get in through the kitchen window too but hadn't been able to. Joe said they'd also tried getting into the football office, they hadn't got in but had forced the door inwards and so it couldn't be opened.

Sharon said she'd got a call at 3 in the morning saying it had been broken into – she had gone there and called the police – they took nearly an hour to get to her. She said she was disgusted that she had been left there on her own for so long. She said it was pitch dark and she couldn't tell if they were still there or not. She said when she phoned to complain she was told she was lucky they turned up at all. She said she wouldn't have even cared if they had phoned her and said the whole thing had burnt down.

At the end of the youth club, Sharon was telling me and the two female volunteers that she doesn't know what will happen to the Community Centre when she can no longer do it. She said there's no one to take over from her and if it's not someone from the community – someone who's respected then the place will get trashed just like the other Community Centre.

Author's field-notes, February 2014

Break in attempts at the Community Centre and minor acts of vandalism were commonplace during my time on The Estate. Though often unnamed, the perpetrators of these attacks were understood to be members of the community: they were young people who attend the youth club at the Community Centre. As such these acts did not produce a state of fear, of an unknown or unpredictable threat; rather this violence was met with acceptance and apathy. The inevitability of attacks on the Community Centre was understood through and in turn fed into dominant discourses of the decline of The Estate.

It is within this storying of decline that the present of The Estate can be understood. The attacks on the Community Centre are conceived as a condition of this time, as the epitome of this moment within The

Estate's history. The narrative of decline draws upon multiple discursive contexts which read "valuelessness" onto the place and the people of The Estate (Skeggs, 2004). Therefore, the young people of The Estate are reified as abject: attacks on the Community Centre are perceived to be the natural preoccupation of The Estate youth. Despite the inadequacy of the narrative of decline to capture the complexity of lived experience, difference and change is subsumed within the dominant discourse. As an act of power, dominant discourses do not simply map onto material inequalities, they actively produce material conditions: as "an imaginary entity, a symbolic representation is performative and becomes institutionalized" (Skeggs, 2014: 9). The cyclical nature of discourse production means that dominant discourses inform how the social world is experienced, by structuring meaning, the dominant discourse of decline forms the present as precarious: it is defined by its possibility of decline.

As a dominant discourse, the narrative of decline does not necessarily represent the social and material condition of The Estate, yet its performative nature constitutes The Estate's decline as an object of belief (Butler, 1988; Lucey, 2010). The structural devaluing of The Estate through wider societal discourses mediate the ways in which these localised discourses are formed and circulate (Slater, 2018). Dominant discourses of The Estate are reproduced within The Estate: they feed into one another, together constituting the conditions of "being placed" on The Estate.

3.2. Marking boundaries, making distinction

The above photograph was taken by Bob from his bedroom window. Photographs were taken by the young people before their interview as a way for them to frame the conversation. At the time of the interview Bob was living with his Mum in a flat towards the bottom edge of The Estate, but they were soon to move home into a bungalow located further into The Estate. His reflections focussed on the complexity of this move, which although for him meant material advancement, had connotations of social disadvantage. Bob talked about the material difference between the flat he was in and the bungalow where he would move to; that he would no longer have to share an entrance and that he would have a garden. However, the material advantages of moving to the bungalow were mediated through a social value system which drew lines of distinction between the borders of The Estate where his flat is located and the centre of The Estate where the bungalow is situated. Bob's relative valuing of the flat on the peripheries of The Estate, is formed at the intersection of the social and geographical. Geographically, the flat is less dislocated from local amenities than much of The Estate. It sits on the edges of The Estate, part of a purpose built, low rise block that is surrounded by a diversity of owner occupied and privately rented housing. The bungalow, on the other hand, is positioned within The

Estate, which although is serviced by two small convenience stores, is relatively distanced from other amenities. Thus, the physical location of the flat may be preferable to the bungalow, however, implicit within the account is an indication of the social values attached to the geographical by Bob.

Author: Where you moving to?

Bob: up the road

Author: up towards The Estate?

Bob: in The Estate, in one of the houses in the bungalow things

Author: oh okay. So, at the moment would you say this isn't The Estate?

Bob: no that's East Town that's not The Estate now but they still count it as The Estate but itis East Town

Author: okay so what do you think the differences are?

Bob: different address

Author: any other differences?

Bob: more tidy

Author: more tidy than in The Estate?

Bob: yeah

Author: and what about the people?

Bob: same coz it's so close to The Estate, they're exactly the same

Author: and what's that like?

Bob: well sometimes you can get proper like sossy (meaning to talk back) people, like the people who live below me, well the people who used to, they always caused arguments every Friday night, so there's the police at the doors all Friday night, so that was noisy, that was

noisy…

It is easy to imagine Bob's life on the boundaries, that he lives on the edges of The Estate and thus despite being "*not on The Estate really*", remains on the outskirts of respectability (Skeggs, 1997). Bob forms his place identity through his associations (social, material, cultural) with The Estate and his simultaneous claims of distinction. It is this active positioning of his self as at once with them, but not quite, which forms his place as boundary. It is in this moment of difference that his place is made visible. He distinguishes himself from The Estate, yet he struggles for recognition. Despite his assertion that he lives in East Town, he is aware that "*they still count it as The Estate*". Thus, Bob's position of striving for a superior "location" is a symbolic struggle; it is a process of articulating and re-articulating difference. His boundary identity is remade in its recognition/mis-recognition determined by his position within systems of power. Bob's status as council housed feeds into this positioning.

"Being placed" on The Estate as the result of being housed, of being allocated social housing, has consequences for the potential recognition of Bob's markings of distinction. Understood within the context of symbolic legitimacy attached to home ownership (Crawford and McKee, 2018) as a means to access neoliberal formations of citizenship, being housed distances the individual from contemporary formations of selfhood. As such, dominant discourses which systematically de-value The Estate produce a position of discomfort for those who must reconcile these powerful representations and their own experience of being in the world.

In this way, "being placed" may speak to ongoing debates within analyses of class and value, which question how and why people continue to invest in symbolically de-valued practices (Skeggs and Wood, 2012; Skeggs, 2014). Conceptualising social position as both processual and agentic as well as material and reproductive, captures the ways in which the individual becomes deeply associated with place, that they are formed by and formative of their place. This deep association with place makes visible and felt

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structural shifts which produce and reproduce place. Therefore, moments of change bring to the fore the structures of power shaping the material conditions of place. The location of individuals within these structures of power limits the consequences of their resistances. However, an exploration of the narratives produced through processes of reconciling place-based identity, may make visible the multiple meanings attached to both action and inaction.

4. Resisting place stigmatization

The structural processes which position one within place are not necessarily visible, at least not fully comprehensible, all the time. However, moments of rupture within the everyday bring to the fore formations of inequality. Due to the pervasiveness of representations which systematically de-value The Estate as both place and people (Mckenzie, 2012; Hancock and Mooney, 2013), I argue that estate stigma results in an affective labour (Goffman, 1963; van de Wetering, 2017). As practice (Wetherell, 2012), affect is not only the consequence of inequality, resulting in embodied experiences of shame, it is also performative, as "a mechanism that feeds back into classed relationships, variously shoring up notions of (il)legitimacy by contributing to processes of valuation" (Loveday, 2016: 1151). Therefore, those placed on The Estate must negotiate a positive sense of self within dominant discourses which de-value The Estate.

> *Author: …when you were growing up here, did you feel like people thought certain things about you because you lived here?*
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> *Joe: They still do to this day, The Estate is a place where people automatically, if they don't live here, just give it a bad name, basically, you get someone from Up Town mention where you're from and it's just straight up turn their nose up at ya, you know you got to try somehow, this estate needs its name changed a little bit because it's not nice for little kids you know maybe when they go to Secondary School and stuff and people say where you from, that they say The Estate and people are like ugh and it's not nice but that's the mentality the ways it's always been since I've been living here you know past 15 or 18 years it's sort of always the way it's*

been and I think it will take a lot to change it. Things like The Estate festival and different community projects and stuff that go on down here, obviously, it does help and makes The Estate look, puts The Estate in a different light, and uh but it's just uh it's got that stigma on The Estate which hasn't changed for years

Interview with Joe, Youth Worker male

In this interview extract, Joe exposes the affective strain of negotiating the de-valued identity attached to The Estate with a positive sense of self. Using the example of children entering Secondary School, Joe highlights the ways in which estate "stigma" shapes interactions, linking this to affective consequences: "*it's not nice for little kids*". It is in these moments of difference that the "stigma" of The Estate is made visible and attached to the self through processes of othering (Goffman, 1963). For Joe, this moment captures a recognition of difference, the moment the "stigma" of The Estate becomes the "stigmatization" of the kids (Tyler, 2015). In this way, Joe maintains The Estate as a safe place, a place where the kids may be free from the negative attitudes of outside others. However, his desire for The Estate to change its name appears located within the responsiblizing discourses of the right-wing shift within British politics. In his discussion, Joe argues The Estate festival and community projects may begin to breakdown the de-valued image of The Estate, yet he locates responsibility within The Estate; it is The Estate that "*needs its name changed*". Therefore, although Joe articulates the felt consequences of the stigma attached to The Estate, these dominant discourses are not understood as formed by and formative of structural inequalities.

One possible account of this disconnect is that, inherent in the pursuit of a positive sense of self, is the making and marking of distinction. Thus, the very discourses which position one in place are often those one has limited access to. Therefore, to carve out spaces of distinction, dominant discourses of The Estate circulate, being formed and reformed, within The Estate as a resource through which value may be produced. In the following extract, Joe carves out a space of value through relocating estate problems beyond his place:

Author: What do you think that they're imagining when they think of The Estate?

Joe: Well they assume people get mugged up here, things get robbed constantly, there's burglaries, there's fights, there's this there's that, none of that happens, literally none of that ever happens, you can walk through this estate at any time and personally I feel safe when I walk through this estate doesn't matter what time of day it is I feel safe, maybe because I've lived here for so long, but even if I didn't I would probably still feel safe, I feel safe anyway in this community and I would like to think that the majority do

Author: So, what do you think it is that makes people think that that stuff happens here?

Joe: Um I don't know, a fair few years ago The Estate was a bit different it was a bit more hectic and stuff, a lot more young people about causing trouble, but that was the past and even then it wasn't a bad place, wasn't exactly a bad place, it was fine, alright there was young people running about, but where don't they do that, they do that on every estate up and down the country, there's no knife or gun crime or anything around here, it's so so rare that you ever hear of a mugging or anything, do you know what I mean, you know and we get classed in the same bracket as some of the worst estates probably in this country, we're like a little Beirut or whatever, they think it's like World War Three in this estate, but it's not, there's no gangs, no knife gun crime, like I said, you know there's nothing

Interview with Joe, Youth Worker male

Joe locates The Estate's history of problems within broader contexts of estate problems; these are problems affecting "*every estate up and down the country*". Yet he also draws lines of distinction, the problems of his Estate are not the problems of the imagined estate, where gangs, knife and gun crime are rife. Thus, Joe does not deny the existence of estate problems, he re-locates them. This re-articulation of identity highlights the ways in which agency operates within structural constraints (Rogaly and Taylor, 2009). Joe struggles to negotiate a positive sense of self, pushing against representations of The Estate as dangerous, nevertheless his agency is bounded, his conceptualisation of The Estate does not move beyond dominant discourses of estates. Therefore, Joe's identity is

embedded within discourses of estates as dangerous; he is limited only to define himself against this discourse. It is Joe's location within systems of power which bound his articulation of self within discourses of estates: his struggles for distinction necessarily reify estate problems further as he must locate these problems outside his self and his Estate to demonstrate difference.

4.1. Place destruction as resistance

In this final analysis, I want to consider what a conceptualisation of "being placed" may add to understandings of acts which transform landscape through the material destruction of place. Throughout this paper the concept of "being placed" has been developed to make sense of structure and agency in place making. In this reading of place, the materiality of The Estate is mediated through symbolic value systems; the experience of being on The Estate is transformed through the discursive construction of The Estate as a stigmatized place. The analyses in this paper have so far illustrated the centrality of agency in the reproduction of place-based identities. Nevertheless, the materiality of place appears to maintain an essential quality within this reading, though the material is given meaning through social practice and cultural valuing, the physicality of place holds onto a sense of continuity. It is therefore important to revisit Massey's discussion of the conceptual tension between theorisations of space as process and the encountering of space as entity. As Massey asserts, "there is on occasion harmony and balance; there are (temporary) stabilizations; there are territories and borders" (Massey, 2006: 40), and therefore there is material change and on occasions a sense of loss. Importantly, Massey questions the "natural" character of place, claiming the material to be political, requiring attention to power, equality and ethics: "the stake is not change itself (the denial of it in the past or the refusal of it in the future), for change of some sort is inevitable; rather it is the character and the terms of that change" (2006: 40).

> As I walked towards the Community Centre I felt as though the building had changed, as I neared I soon realised it was my view of it that was new. The path leading towards the entrance is usually shaded by the overhanging low branches of a tree, but today the trunk stood bare, stripped of its arms. Sharon was outside enjoying the afternoon sunshine; I called over asking

why the council is removing the trees. "It wasn't the council", she replied, "some kids cut them down last night".

Author's field-notes, September 2014

This field-note captures a transformation of landscape, a change in the materiality of place. Further conversations with young people at the Community Centre made clear that the branches were removed to clear the path of a popular bike and motorbike run, which utilised the steep valley walls which surround the Community Centre, for high speed races. This ethnographic example brings together the themes of place making drawn out in this paper around the mediation of place through everyday social practice. More than this, it illustrates the processes by which the re-definition of the use of space transforms not only the social valuing of place but its material formation: the browning of the land from the repeated runs of tire tracks; the creation of new routes through the space made possible by the removal of the tree branches. This act of destruction which removed the tree from this place may be read not simply as a loss of the "natural" character of The Estate, but rather as a reclaiming of place. If we think of the material and cultural transformation of this place, through the bifocality implicit in the concept of "being placed", then the destruction of the tree may be understood as an act of resistance to everyday positionings on The Estate. "Being placed" on The Estate as a process of co-constitution of people and place enables a questioning of acts such as this which may move beyond discourses of deviance. Massey's (2006) challenge to the assumed natural state of things provides a way to ask questions about material change that hold open dichotomies of good and bad landscapes, providing a way to speak of this act as production rather than destruction. Through an account of the everyday use of space and the social meanings attached to it, agency in place making may be foregrounded. The act of cutting down the tree produces new materialities and socialities of place. A conceptualisation of "being placed" contextualises this agency within structured access to resources and discourses. When located within contemporary representations of selfhood, where being housed on The Estate is systematically devalued (Hanley, 2007), this act may be understood as a reclamation of autonomy and value. In this way it is an act of resistance, a refusal to be defined by the materiality of place and an active carving of space for alternative ways of being on The Estate.

5. Conclusion

This paper has explored the everyday lived experience of being on The Estate as located within social and political contexts. Through the conceptualisation of "being placed" the tension between structure and agency has been foregrounded in an analysis of place-based identity formation. Drawing upon ethnographic data of "livable lives" (Butler, 2014; Back, 2015) on The Estate, this paper has explored the everyday negotiations that occur in the formation of place and self. I have argued that affective labour (Goffman, 1963; van de Wetering, 2017) is required to reconcile place-based stigmatization, which nevertheless utilise stigmatizing dominant discourses as a resource (Skeggs, 2004) to relocate representations of The Estate as "Other". I suggest that an attention to Massey's account of the conceptual tension between theorisations of space as process and the encountering of space as entity (Massey, 2006) may helpfully draw out underlying assumptions shaping the reading of "natural" landscapes. I argue acts of destruction, which remove or dismantle materiality, also produce new materialities and socialities of place. This paper furthers sociological accounts of council housing, where classifications of "working-class" and "community" can become conflated, providing an analysis of community as a process of class formation. Bringing together post-structural theorisations of community and space in the conceptualisation of "being placed", contextualises agency within structured access to resources and discourses enabling representations of everyday resistances in the production of "communal beingness" as an affective consequence of being on The Estate.

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