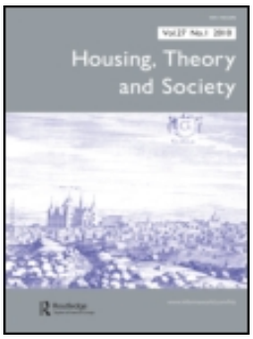

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HSA Special Issue: Housing in "Hard Times": Marginality, Inequality and Class

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ABSTRACT *This paper reasserts the relationship between class and housing through a sociological exploration of working-class place attachment, against the backdrop of a recession and government "disinvestment" in social housing. These are hard times for housing and harder still if you are working class. Interest in working-class lives within sociological research has declined; meanwhile, place attachment is deemed a middle-class proclivity of "elective belonging": a source of place-based identity in response to ontological insecurity. I draw from an ethnographic exploration of Partick, Glasgow to demonstrate how working-class residents express strong "elective belonging" in financially and ontologically insecure times yet, paradoxically, their ability to stay physically "fixed" to place is weakened. I argue that working-class place attachment is broadly characterized by strong "elective belonging" and poor "elective fixity": choice and control over one's ability to stay fixed within their neighbourhood.*

KEY WORDS: Class, Displacement, Gentrification, Elective belonging, Neighbourhoods

Introduction

This paper speaks to the theme of this special issue 'Housing in hard times: marginality, inequality and class' from a sociological perspective. Sociology is a discipline which endeavours to understand the relationship between: macro and micro forces, structure and agency, the economic and the social or as Mills (1959) famously and pithily put it: forge the connection between personal troubles and public issues. In exploring housing in hard times, this paper reasserts the relationship between class and housing through an exploration of working-class residents' place-based attachment. This topic would seem to be familiar territory for Sociology, since studies of housing and class are the bedrock of its enquiry (Dennis, Henriques & Slaughter 1956, Engels 1987; Jackson 1968, Lockwood 1958, Young & Willmott 1957). Yet, such studies have fallen out of fashion and the popular sociological narrative on deindustrialization heralds the end of class and the rise of the individual (Bauman 1998, Beck 1992, Giddens 1991). This was followed by

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what was deemed a crisis in stratification theory and class categorization such as employment aggregate approaches (Anthias 2005, Crompton & Scott 2005). That said, today class is back on the agenda (despite never really going away), as divisions in society are brought to the fore by the recession and ever-deepening government spending cuts. These are hard times for housing and harder still if you are working class. Insufficient material conditions seriously undermine working-class residents' attachment to place, that is, their ability to stay fixed in location within their neighbourhood. They face greater risk of repossession, eviction and displacement. Place attachment may be an important class signifier in this respect. Yet, it is middle-class place-based attachment that receives the most scrutiny (Butler & Robson 2001, 2003, Ley 1996, Rofe 2003, Savage, Bagnall & Longhurst 2001, 2005, 2010). This is conceptualized through the term "elective belonging": an essentially middle-class proclivity towards place-based identity in response to ontological insecurity wrought by late modernity. Middle-class residents are said to express who they are though where they choose to live (Butler & Robson 2001, 2003, Savage, Bagnall & Longhurst 2001, 2005, 2010). Comparative working-class place attachment has been analytically and theoretically neglected and, if considered at all, is often conceived in instrumental terms. This occurs despite the fact that working-class lives may be going through profound and tumultuous changes in both material and cultural terms. Their attachment to place may be *more* meaningful and edifying in these times. Housing acts as a useful domain in which to view class formations in action; foregrounding not only power but also intersections with culture and identity as class is remade in the neighbourhood in the post-industrial context.

This paper examines working-class place attachment in cultural and material terms. The first part of the paper contextualizes this interest in middle-class place attachment over working-class analysis within the social science literature by considering the historical place of housing in class research. It also considers the contemporary trends in stratification which, rather than focusing on place-based attachment, examine a shift towards dis-identification with class (Savage 2000, Skeggs 1997). Despite continued class inequalities, notions and imagery of the working class are said to no longer provide useful and relevant identities (Bauman 1998, Beck 1992, Giddens 1991, Pakulski & Waters (1996), Savage (2000), Skeggs (1997). I argue that existing literature on elective belonging can provide a useful resource for understanding working-class place-based attachment as both an expression of class identity *and* class inequalities in relation to one's fixity to place. I understand class as a structured relationship; materially based but not determined. Neighbourhood study of class sheds light on the relational as well as economic aspects of class. In doing so, it demonstrates how housing studies can help reinvigorate class analysis and how trends in class analysis have much to offer the study of housing. The second part of this paper illustrates this thesis empirically, drawing from an ethnographic exploration of a working-class but gentrifying neighbourhood, Partick, in Glasgow, including 49 locational narratives (Anthias 2005, Savage, Bagnall & Longhurst 2005) from residents. Locational narratives are people's residential biographical stories of how and where they live. They reveal the making of the *social* locations, hierarchies, boundaries and categories and people's actual *physical* location in relation to their material reality. These demonstrates that, in fact, working-class place attachment is broadly characterized by strong "elective belonging" in financially and ontologically insecure times. Residents actively chose to associate their identity through their attachment to place. Place-based attachment to

their neighbourhood offered residents an important way of expressing their working-class identity and position without explicitly naming class. Place attachment was a meaningful proxy for class. Yet, paradoxically, working-class residents' ability to stay physically "fixed" in their neighbourhood is weakened at a time when it seems most important. I argue that the term "elective fixity" usefully describes the choice and control over one's ability to stay fixed within their neighbourhood. In this way, it appears that working-class place attachment is more politically and theoretically significant than currently conceived and, as such, should be a critical research focus in these hard times. To this end, the study of housing can help reinvigorate class analysis by offering novel conceptual resources for how class is experienced in the neighbourhood in relation to identity, belonging, power, choice and control. Concurrently, contemporary class analysis has much to offer the study of housing since it foregrounds the central role of housing in urban restructuring processes, contemporary class formation and reproduction of inequalities around the role and meaning of place attachment which have the potential to be harnessed to inform housing policy.

The Place of Housing in Class Research

The study of class and urban working-class communities form the bedrock of sociological analysis (Engels 1987, Tonnies 1955, Young & Willmott 1957). This was borne out of an interest in the formation of social relations within the shift from rural, traditional ways of life (gemeinschaft and mechanical society) to urban modern city-based communities (gesellschaft and organic society). Indeed, the community studies canon came to characterize what has been called the "golden years" of stratification research from the 1940s to the 1970s (Savage 2000). Writers such as Dennis, Henriques & Slaughter (1956), Jackson (1968), Young & Willmott (1957) and Lockwood (1958) captured the lived experiences of the boom period of industrial production through their focus on neighbourhoods centred on coalmines, shipyards and factories. Class was interpreted using a base-superstructure model of S-C-A (Pahl 1989). In this model, consciousness of class position is an intermediary between structure and action which develops a "class in itself" to a "class for itself". It follows then, that position in the structure generates consciousness. Phenomenological understandings of class related to distinct social positions, for example, new towns or shipbuilding communities. Despite noting the differentiation in images of society, values were still reduced to social structures in these studies and this position has been rejected by later writers "cultural class theorists" (Savage 2000, Skeggs 1997) who take the rejection of working-class identity as the starting point for their studies. These "golden years" of research were undermined by changes in the economic landscape. Deindustrialization from 1970s onwards is said to have destabilized the reason d'être of working-class communities. Pakulski & Waters (1996) subsequently claim that industrial communities, neighbourhoods and cultures have been eroded and fragmented. The inability to adequately theorize changes initiated by deindustrialization was deemed a crisis in class analysis: existing class categories were seemingly flawed (Anthias 2005, Roberts 2007). Working-class community studies fell out of favour. Some commentators on stratification declared the "death of class", perceiving that it has lost its irrelevance as a meaningful social category.

This position has been compounded by the work of Giddens (1991), Beck (1992) and Bauman (1998) who hold that class has lost its material and ontological relevance in late modernity characterized by cultural fragmentation linked to a trend towards individualization. In this reading, deindustrialization has dis-embedded traditional class identities, values and practices leading to ontological insecurity: a lack in confidence of individuals in the continuity of their self-identity and the constancy of their social and material environment (Giddens 1991). Instead, individuals are re-embedded as reflexive authors who can create a new sense of security by constructing their own biographies and have the control to do so on the basis of individual choice. Clear-cut class identities, distinct communities and cultures have been outmoded:

> As a result in the shifts in the standards of living, subcultural class identities have dissipated, class distinctions based on status have lost their traditional support, and processes for this "diversification" and individualisation of lifestyles and ways of life have been set in motion. As a result the hierarchical model of social classes and stratification has increasingly been subverted. (Beck 1992:92–3)

This denotes a shift away from the *material* aspects of class towards an interest in culture, consumption and identity which have predominated over the past 20 years. It expresses the impacts of the cultural turn and destabilization of the S-C-A model of the "golden years" of stratification research, where structure informed consciousness and action. This focus is most evident in studies of the middle class vis-à-vis housing consumption. Arguably, traditional community studies have been hijacked by the middle class. In recent times, neighbourhood attachment and housing consumption has been conceived as a middle-class reaction to ontological insecurity which rejects the previous S-C-A formula (Pahl 1989). This reading is commonly offered as a cultural explanation of gentrification: driven by post-war consumerism and affluence, as well as, rejection of suburbia and its norms in favour of urban city living. Writers such as Butler & Robson (2001, 2003) and Savage, Bagnall & Longhurst (2001, 2005, 2010) suggest middle-class incomers choose to move to neighbourhoods which articulate and stabilize their social identity by expressing their self through where they live:

> If only because it remains rare to have multiple residencies, residence plays an increasingly important role vis-à-vis other fields in defining one's own sense of social location. In addition, residential space is crucial also in allowing people to access other fields, such as that of education, employment and various cultural fields. One's residence is a crucial, possibly *the* crucial identifier of who you are. (Savage, Bagnall & Longhurst 2005:207)

The term "elective belonging" is used by such authors to define the unique place-based attachment of middle-class residents who express their social identity through their chosen residential location or put simply: who they are in a class-based sense is expressed through where they live. This reading has not been extended to studies of the working class. This is despite the fact that industrial working-class communities have faced greater ontological insecurity through changes wrought by deindus-

trialization; more likely to be "learning to serve" (McDowell 2000) or "schooling for the dole" (Bates 1984) rather than "learning to labour" (Willis 1977). Research, as well as contemporary media and policy discourses, offer little in the way of contemporary representations of working-class culture and identity. If presented, at all, it is often done so in a homogenized, denigrated and vilified form: synonymous with council estates, single parenthood, fecklessness and, in all, the cause of social malaise of Broken Britain (rather than the outcome).

The work of a group of sociologists, referred to as the "cultural class theorists" (Reay 1998, 2005, Savage 2000, 2001, Skeggs 1997, 2004) is a reaction to this dearth in enquiry and the destabilization of class by individualization theorists. They assert that the seeming lack of class identity does not indicate the declining meaning of class. Rather, they believe that the rejection of this identity is an inherently class-based process which, instead, suggests that class prevails. Contemporary studies demonstrate how those objectively delineated as working class reject this identification. Savage, Bagnall & Longhurst (2001) found respondents in their study often sought to establish their own "ordinariness" rather than recognizing class. This is echoed in the work of Skeggs (1997) who demonstrates how women sought to position themselves as "respectable" rather than assuming the denigrated identity of the working-class female. Class dis-identification foregrounds the paradox of class, whereby the structural significance of class is not actually recognized by those most affected by it. Yet, working-class dis-identification reveals that people do have a sense of the classed place they occupy. This cultural hierarchy reflects the pathologization of working-class culture by middle-class groups, whereby middle class is the standard and working class is the point zero (Skeggs 1997). Rather, the difficulty is often in the dissonance between people's class position and the older forms of class identity which are available and those which are presented negatively and culturally disrespected. It is important to make sense of this tension.

Further, the decline of the industrial working-class neighbourhood has meant working-class place attachment is often erroneously simplified. Unlike their middle-class counterparts, who express who they are through where they live, working-class attachment is relegated to nostalgia: where people remember life in their neighbourhood in a selective, positive way (Blokland 2001). Yet, simultaneously, being a "local" in a working-class neighbourhood is regarded as a negative position. This is often related to how they are perceived to occupy that space: circumstantially, an historical fact or through lack of choice. Their connection is said to lack agency, suggesting that they are trapped in a degraded locality (Bauman 1998) which are often depicted as "problem places", council housing and "sink" estates (Damer 1989). These housing locations do not suggest that choice is involved or a conscious expression of identity. Bauman (1998) conceives them as being trapped in place as flawed consumers. This point is explored more fully by Flint's (2003) work on how contemporary housing policy reflect changes in technologies for governing the conduct of social housing tenants as "active" and "responsible" consumers. Charlesworth's (2000) depiction of the working-class population in Rotherham does focus on the material realities of people's place attachment in relation to deindustrialization, but at the expense of working-class residents' choice and agency, portraying, instead, the punitive aspects of their place attachment. Allen (2008) also goes some way in seeking to make sense of working-class place attachment within the "elective belonging" debate. He is critical of the valorization of middle-class place identity which is central to this concept. He asserts that working-class attachment to their

neighbourhood is characterized by a "bricks and mortar" philosophy. In doing so, Allen contends that place attachment is therefore, a middle-class conceit to express identity through where they live. Again, this is a rather instrumental understanding of working-class relationship to housing, whereby their connection is underpinned by practical and rational rather than cultural aspects of home. Like Bauman and Charlesworth, Allen's reading also forecloses the idea that the working class might have a meaningful attachment to the neighbourhoods in which they live: they might elect to live there and they might garner a strong sense of self, identity and belonging from doing so. For the most part, this remains under researched.

It is imperative that we do research and seek to understand working-class place attachment especially given the changes in UK housing over the past 30 years. In this time, there has been increasing state disinvestment in housing, as well as, wider cuts into related neighbourhood services, welfare and benefits and, instead, increased marketization and public–private partnerships (Cole & Furbey 1994, Ravetz 1999). Social landlord's stock levels have been decreasing each year since the 1980s hitting a 50-year low in Scotland (Shelter 2009). Its role and institutional form has changed through the shift from public to social housing precipitated by the Right to Buy and the 1988 Housing Acts and compounded by housing stock transfer (McKee & Phillips 2012, Pawson & Mullins 2010). This has seen a subtle shift in their functions from a grassroots community orientated focus to more corporate characteristics. This is reflected in the shift in discourse from "tenants" to "customers". This change is reflected in the use of the terminology "consumer citizenship" whereby "[t]he rights conferred by citizenship are increasingly predicated on being a consumer-citizen of private and government services" (Atkinson 2003:1834). Further still, gentrification and social mixing have been used as a strategy of regeneration in working-class neighbourhoods (Bailey, Haworth, Manzi, Parangamage & Robert 2007, Kearns 2003). This is underpinned by the idea that middle-class residents and private investment offer greater value or greater returns and are the only way to "rescue" neighbourhoods which have deemed to have declined. This, all connected to broader neoliberal shifts, has massive implications for working-class place attachment and the power and choice to stay rooted in one's neighbourhood. The very premise of consumer citizenship is based upon notions of choice. Neoliberalism, projected through this privatization of housing, ostensibly extends choice which infers that there is individual freedom to select between a number of options. In reality, these choices are constrained for many working-class people. This is compounded by negative discourses underpinning this neoliberal project. Traditional, industrial, working-class culture is vilified within cultural, media and policy discourses. One manifestation of this is that social housing is depicted as the "tenure of last resort" (Gurney 1999, Saunders 1990). Meanwhile, policy-led gentrification, social mixing and the like explicitly support middle-class consumption through homeownership. This working-class vilification/middle-class valorization is a class project which contributes to the tendency of the working class to disassociate with this identity (Savage 2000, Skeggs 1997). This, I argue, may make place-based attachment of the working class yet more meaningful, as it offers a way of expressing class identity and belonging, but without naming class explicitly. To understand this, we need to direct the application of the concept of elective belonging away from middle-class group's experiences and instead focus on the working class. Indeed, returning to housing-based studies, which were so fundamental to the antecedents of the sociology of stratification, allows us to see the materiality of class, observing hierarchies in action, as well as, relational processes of inequality.

Researching class-based attachment to and experiences of housing is revelatory and edifying for stratification research more generally. The following sections of this paper will lay out empirically the argument presented so far by exploring working-class place attachment in relation to the concept of elective belonging. While seen as the preserve of the middle class, it can be successfully reworked to examine working-class people's physical and ontological attachment to place.

Methodology

This research is based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out from 2005 to 2009 in Partick, Glasgow, exploring the impacts and experiences of gentrification. Glasgow is a former industrial city, with a history of class politics and public housing (see, e.g. Damer 1989). Yet in more recent years, it has been depicted as a place of obsolescence, home to many of the most deprived wards in the UK. Gentrification has been pitched as a solution to these ills and is one which Glasgow City Council (GCC) has embraced eagerly (GCC 2003a, 2003b). This is evident in the successful rebranding campaigns and investments: Glasgow Smiles Better; the Garden Festival; European City of Culture; the Merchant City redevelopment and the forthcoming 2014 Commonwealth Games (Mooney & Gray 2011, Paton 2010, Paton *et al.* 2012). In 2003, Partick was at the receiving end of much feted regeneration programme, Glasgow Harbour development, which transformed the site next to the river Clyde once home to grain mills and shipyards into luxury housing. This was a prime development opportunity not simply because it was brownfield land, but also due its proximity to the salubrious West End and University of Glasgow. The research investigated the impacts of this form of gentrification and also the changes occurring within the local social housing provider, Partick Housing Association. This was significant as social housing is thought to provide a crucial buffer which mitigates the effects of gentrification and displacement by providing secure tenancies and regulated rent.

This involved interviews with 49 participants selected on the criteria that they were or had been until recently Partick residents (i.e. incorporating those who have been displaced). All except three were working class based on the National Statistic Socio-economic Classification (NS-SeC) definition of class.[1] This was used in the study, despite its shortcomings, so corresponding census data, from which NS-SeC data is developed, could be used. Most importantly, this study was interested in how class was being remade and expressed at the neighbourhood level. The neighbourhood level reveals the materiality of class, hierarchies in action, as well as, relational processes of inequality. The definition of class used in this study was dialectically informed by the research itself: as a structured relationship; materially based but not determined. While class analysis is a broad church, it is largely concerned with how capitalism creates a system of structured inequality. This concern, by extension, can award epistemic privilege to the standpoint and experience of a class position. Understanding experience reveals economic and political issues that help construct everyday life in a material and historical way. Sometimes, the standpoint can expose a rejection of a traditional subjective position thought to reflect one's material position, like being working-class. Capitalist restructuring unsettles social formations and can result in ontological insecurity (Giddens 1991), which leads to struggles over new standpoints. Given the impacts of deindustrialization are so profoundly spatially

articulated, place-based research focusing on housing can be an extremely productive pursuit for class analysis. The case study approach used sheds light on the relational as well as economic aspects of class. Willis (2004) suggests that the enduring features that delimit who is working-class can be seen through the positions of agents and their relationship to each other in systematic groups; they are separated by power and/or capital. This has resonance with the experience of neighbourhood life and the power people have over being able to stay in their neighbourhood or move out. The neighbourhood is a crucial site for observing the interrelationship between social and physical space and therefore, understanding class. To explore this, I gathered people's "locational narratives" (Anthias 2005, Savage, Bagnall & Longhurst 2005) as accounts that bring together social, economic and physical space. Housing acts as a useful domain in which to view class formations in action; foregrounding not only power but also intersections with culture and identity as class is remade in the neighbourhood in the post-industrial context.

Working-Class Place Attachment and Elective Belonging

The analytical categories "local" and "incomer" have traditionally been applied to describe the relationship to place in community studies. The binary of working-class "local" and middle-class "incomer" common in contemporary community studies is problematic. "Local" identity was complex. Many residents had elected to live in Partick, but the majority were outsiders, i.e. not born and bred there. Thirty percentage of those residents interviewed were local but they had lived elsewhere, including overseas, so they were not "local" in a pure sense; it is an unstable referent. "Born and bred" residents experienced fractured and varied locational movement *outside* of the neighbourhood. "Incomers" were those residents who were not born in the area but moved there. They were not generally gentrifiers; most were working class and social renters who negotiated the move into the neighbourhood through Partick Housing Association. Whether born there or having moved there later in life, Partick residents had a strong neighbourhood attachment. As "incomer" Angie explains:

> Angie: It's a feeling. I feel like I've stayed here for longer. This feels like home. Why Partick? It was a better class of living I thought, better for my mother. More shops, more going on. I wanted life to be better for her. Partick has a magnetic pull for people.

The lure of Partick was echoed by other residents. Gary, Sonny and David all referred to the neighbourhood as a "Mecca". Most agreed that there was a strong sense of community:

> Betty: It's quite a close knit community. Everybody knows everybody. I don't know what that's like for the young ones.

This was, in fact, something enjoyed by the younger residents:

> Gordon, 24: See, Partick they're very friendly. It's just got a real good strong community, a big sense of it. People always know everyone and there's no hassle. I go to work and I'm just saying hello to everyone. It's just dead vibrant.

> Rhonda: One thing I've noticed though is people from Partick tend to stay in Partick. They're not trying to get out. I see the same faces all the time.

This cohesion was seen in redistributive activities and the solidarity of residents. This also provided material benefits. Family and kinship support offered important ways of "getting by". A community group for women over 50 years of age at one of the local churches ran on the miniscule submission fees from members, rather than receiving any public funding. Bea organized a weekly bingo activity, where the prize was food items. They also ran a free raffle every meeting which distributed tinned goods. Elderly women there spoke often of how they relied on the group and each other. Notably, all local residents interviewed, except Kathleen, had family members living in the neighbourhood and had weekly contact with them – this varied from socializing to carrying out caring roles. Steve rarely even left the area. He had been unemployed for a few years, drifting in and out of casual labour that he picked up from people he met at his local pub. He relied on his parents, who helped look after his son as well as him. He visited them three or four nights a week for dinner:

> Steve: [laughs] I borrow. And sometimes I steal [laughs] you've got to […] I make sure I pay my bills and have enough to treat the wean [*sic* – child]. I have some for messages but I'm spoiled and go to my mum's for dinner so I don't need to buy messages,[2] *that saves me*. You do what you've got to do. I'm skint this week and next week. Feck it … *I could be trapped in my house for a couple of days*. (My emphasis)

Similar to Bauman's (1998) interpretation, Steve is firmly fixed in place; he relies on local support but sometimes it confines him and he is rendered immobile. But it was more beneficial for him to live in Partick than other neighbourhoods. Such collectivities and solidarity in the neighbourhood was a lifeline for some.

Rather than using the binaries of "incomers" and "local", residents invoked the motifs of "being in the same boat" and the "haves" and "have nots" to demarcate differences and similarities amongst fellow residents. Residents recognized the importance of having solidarity in relation to socio-economic inequality which was being undermined by incoming middle-class residents:

> Bea: […] neighbourly spirit has gone because we are not all *in the same boat*. You have to be in the same boat. They're not going to discuss it [hardships] because they are not in the same boat.

Janey too noted that the problem lay in the fact that there were increasingly more "haves" in the neighbourhood than "have nots", who are threatened with displacement, which she too has experienced, now living in a town outside Glasgow:

> […] and that is the biggest difference between the "haves" and the "have nots", the people who have grown up there all their lives and they can't afford to stay there.

In this way, "social mix" in the neighbourhood could compound the experience of inequalities. Middle-class residents, or "haves", are unlikely to participate in elabo-

rate, quotidian networks of support or empathize with the experience of inequality. This is not to imply that proximity and, ergo, place attachment was only a functional or financial imperative. Respondents also expressed their class identity through their chosen location identity and this correlates to their rejection of traditional working-class identities. Place-based attachment allowed residents to express class collectivity, solidarity and their place in the world in unclassed terms. That is, while less than half of the residents interviewed identified with being working class, even though they occupied this position according to the NS SeC measurement, most residents said that they affiliated with Partick. The subtle ways of delineating class categories via the "have nots", "same boat" language was clearly mapped onto a sense who belonged to Partick. This experience was expressed through place attachment, as the next section will try to show. Partick was used by many residents to express their working-class identity. The neighbourhood was a chosen location that expressed working-class identity. This elective belonging was not just the proclivity of incoming groups, "locals" experienced it too, the commonality being that they were all working class.

Place as a Proxy for Class

Like "locals", "incomers" most commonly shared an attachment to the area because they viewed it as being traditionally working-class. Place attachment was a proxy for class expressed through the phrase "I belong tae Partick"[3]. More than half of the residents interviewed used this expression. It was a historical reference, judging by its frequent use amongst older residents. It is likely to relate to the fact that Partick used to be a village and later, an independent burgh from Glasgow until it was annexed into the city in 1912. This local attachment seemed to offer self-affirmation in relation to class that provided ontological security. It could help people express who they were by referring to the place. Gordon, 24, used the phrase. Although not identifying with being working-class directly, he claimed to always be a "Partick boy", and he took comfort from that, saying "it's like a pair of old slippers".

With Leona, there was a sense of dissatisfaction in the way she identified with the neighbourhood:

> … everywhere I go I feel that someone knows me, I'm old Partick. I guess that's working-class, I go to work and socialise in Partick. Partick's my life.

Janey expressed belonging to Partick with a strong sense of pride. She originated from Chicago, but had lived in Partick for 15 years:

> I belong to Partick. I like it because its regular, its not toffy, its not up itself, … because *I am regular*, I don't think I'm all that, I have confidence in myself but I'm not interested in blowing my own horn or being super rich. That doesn't appeal to me. (Author's emphasis)

Alison, too, equates place and class to describe the class dislocations that were occurring in the landscape as well as with traditional class identity:

> I mean it [living in Partick] was quite important to me with the whole kind of class make up kind of thing […] It wasn't homogenous in that sense. It seems to be a place that's almost fighting to keep its identity. Kind of holding on to Dumbarton Road.

Here, place is used synonymously with class identity and position. The neighbourhood and working class were often conflated in this way. Interestingly, "locals" had a bit more ambivalence to place belonging if they had not demonstrated that that had or could move away from the neighbourhood. By extension, physical mobility became a referent of social mobility. This is illustrated by Gordon who dreamt of moving to Australia, where his current job as barman is better paid and given a superior status, bolstered by credentials and on-the-job training. Gordon conceived mobility through migration as a means of altering his class position. However, his ability to be mobile in Glasgow was restricted, let alone abroad. He moved back to Partick to live with his sister in privately rented accommodation when he could not afford his rented flat in the Southside of the city. Gordon and his sister were evicted from that property in a classic process of displacement when the landlady refurbished it and increased the rent by £200 to compete in the growing rental market. Leona, 37, *had* moved to Australia because she wanted "to do something with her life", but it was short lived: money and work dried up, she had to return to Partick and to her old job which she hated. Both Leona and Gordon ricochet back to Partick and their family home. They cannot permanently refix themselves in another location.

Physical mobility was then often equated with social mobility. Being able to move was a socio-spatial distinction that operated inside the neighbourhood. Dumbarton Road, which is the main road or high street in Partick, forms the barrier. Those below are on the "poorer side" – a historical hangover from being the home to Irish unskilled migrant labour. "Up the hill" in Partick was, and is, affluent, originally home to shipyard owners and managers. Some residents in Partick focused their residential career on being able to move "up the hill", with the dream of owning property there. Bea lived in Partick her whole life but had steadily moved up the hill:

> You learned that one side in Partick was well-off, the other side was poor. Once you crossed Dumbarton Road and Partick Cross it was poor, you won't do anything with your life. So that's why my granny then made a decision that we would move to the other side to Hyndland Street.

Elective Fixity

Given the strong place attachment and fondness of the area, almost all residents interviewed wished to remain in Partick. Despite displaying elective belonging, many residents had difficulty remaining "fixed" in the neighbourhood. Working-class fixity to place, in terms of their ability to secure their residential location, is embattled. "Elective fixity" better expresses the difference between working and middle-class groups' relationship to place. The degree to which someone has control over where they live is a valuable distinction and indicator of class position. This precarity manifests through limited housing choices, insecure housing

situations, as well as evictions; all borne out of urban restructuring and state-led gentrification. As a result, the average house price in Partick had risen sharply between 1997 and 2007 and largely exceeded affordability (see Table 1).

Added to this, the change in the role and institutional form of social housing providers also affected residents' fixity. Registered Social Landlord's stock levels have been decreasing each year since the 1980s.

This has an adverse affects upon families ability to stay fixed in the neighbourhood. Despite being reliant on proximity of family members and social networks, living in socially rented accommodation, Janey faced a dilemma as her family size increased:

> Janey: Space; we needed more space. We put in for a bigger flat and it was like how long is a piece of string? Nice people get bigger flats and they don't move out.

The limited social housing coupled with gentrification in the neighbourhood meant that Janey was forced to move outside Partick when her family size increased in order to afford a large enough home. This was a perennial problem for the families I interviewed (see Table 2).

That said, those who are single are often more vulnerable to displacement and have weaker fixity to place. Gordon, having being forced to return to live at home with his parents, felt he was stuck there, unable to afford to buy, or rent privately in Partick. He also did not qualify for many points on the social housing waiting list:

Table 1. House sales median prices 1997–2007 by intermediate geography

Intermediate geography	Median price 1997	Median price 2007
Glasgow Harbour and Partick South	£36,000	£172,495
Partick	£47,850	£125,000
Whiteinch	£34,950	£91,500
Partickhill and Hyndland	£70,000	£187,777

Source: Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics (2009).

Table 2. Components of new housing supply in Scotland.[a]

	Private new build	Housing association new build	Local authority new build	Refurbishment	Conversion	New housing supply
1996–1997	17,491	2963	241	984	1244	**22,923**
2003–2004	20,086	3368	–	410	1409	**25,273**
2007–2008	21,618	4097	28	389	1417	**27,549**

Source: Housing Statistics for Scotland (2009).

[a]New house building: houses completed by or for housing associations, local authorities or private developers for below market rent or low cost home ownership; houses completed for market sale by private developers. Refurbishment: houses acquired by housing associations and refurbished either for rent or low cost home ownership. Refurbishment of private dwellings funded wholly or partly through the Affordable Housing Investment Programme. Conversion: new dwellings created by conversion from non-housing to housing use.

> Gordon: If you get on the waiting list and wait seven years, you might get one but I wouldn't bank on it. I've put my name down every year. It just bothers me because you know I can't get anywhere to stay around where I live now. I can't afford it and that's something that annoys me because the prices are so expensive.

This was a common experience for those single and young people who found that they could not stay fixed in the neighbourhood, or any other location. Gary had already lost this house through debt and had been through the homelessness system before renting a property in Kelvindale. He was unhappy with this:

> Gary: (slowly to emphasise) *I would love to stay in Partick*. I looked at the Homestake in Partick Housing Association scheme with Communities Scotland and it was only opened to Partick residents, Housing Association residents. You take on 70 percent they take on 30 percent but the prices started at £180,000, so how is that affordable housing? Especially working-class residents, on an average income.

Darren was in this situation too. Returning to Partick from London, he wanted to buy a house in the area, but could not afford to do so. He did not qualify for social housing and he found rent there too expensive so he moved back in with his parents. Like many young people trying to negotiate an increasingly marketized system, Darren's housing transitions are precarious; characterized by an inability to successfully secure housing "fixity". This often results in young people "boomeranging" back to their parents' home (Heath 2008, Heath & Cleaver 2003).

Fi, 63, whose son had a similar experience to Gordon, Darren and Gary, echoed this:

> It's a big issue. I can't get my son a house but other people do. A whole generation of people can't get a house, you can't buy. They are with their mothers.

Sean, 25, worked two jobs, one in a fish factory and the other audio typing and transcribing. As a young person, he had been through the homelessness system but had eventually moved to Partick, where he had been settled for the past few years although he had amassed some debts.

> Sean: I'm just worried about my rent arrears. Partick Housing have threatened to take me to court a few times. I've got all my furniture in that flat, if I was to lose that flat I would have nowhere to put that stuff.

Steve, a single unemployed man suffered from depression and had debt problems. Steve found himself threatened with eviction by Partick Housing Association for rent arrears.

> […] They do this traffic light thing; three strikes and you're out. I'm on amber. But surely you're entitled to a couple of hundred pounds [arrears]? … I mean it's not the greatest of wee flats I've got but it's a roof over my head and I need it.

Significantly, it was not just the lack of affordability and housing pressure initiated by gentrification in the neighbourhood that was constraining the housing choices of residents. Many residents felt that the housing associations were limiting the choices of local people. The number of "Notice of Proceedings" given to Partick Housing Association residents in the 2005–2007 period doubled[4] (Scottish Housing Regulator 2009). Thus, housing evictions were increasing concurrently with gentrification in the neighbourhood: limiting housing choices when, ostensibly, housing choices via the private market seem to be proliferating.

A number of residents felt that Partick Housing Association was treating tenants punitively for rent arrears, not providing adequate opportunity to make repayments:

> Steve: Someone was really wanting me out [at Partick Housing Association] 'cause they weren't backing down on it, they were trying to evict me.

This raises the question as to whether housing associations are increasingly policing residents, especially those who are flawed consumers, in favour of championing aspirational residents in the neighbourhood (Atkinson 2003, Flint 2003). This would put tenants/customers in social housing, which was renowned for offsetting displacement through the provision of secure rather than market-based tenancies, at risk from eviction if they are not successful consumer-citizens.

Conclusion

In some respects there is not anything surprizing about the findings – the working class have poor material attachment to place – yet this statement must be emphasized. There are clear paradoxes at play. First, it is evident from the empirical evidence put forward that contemporary working-class place attachment may be more socially and materially meaningful than is currently accounted for (or unaccounted for as the case may be) in contemporary class literature. Working-class residents in Partick exhibited high levels of elective belonging and yet their place attachment was more tenuous. The key differential, then, between working and middle-class attachment is not the strength of place-based social identity but the degree of control that they hold. Working-class residents have less control over their ability to stay firmly fixed in their neighbourhood and, therefore, less choice. For this reason, if not more, it is imperative to focus a research agenda on this area. Sociological insight via class analysis reveals the different meaning given to place through residents' locational narratives. In these insecure times place-based attachment becomes vital for working-class residents. It is an important expression of class identity at a time where it is unappealing to proclaim to be working-class. It is not only a response to ontological insecurity but also a means of getting by via the proximity of forms of social reproduction such as family support and childcare. Simultaneous to these processes, we can see the impact of neoliberalization of housing, including social housing reform, which can leave those with tenuous fixity in even weaker positions.

Studying housing through the prism of class also invokes conceptual language and theory in relation to power. This manifests no more clearly than in the concepts of choice and control. Choice is an important concept within this neoliberal era, denoting the promotion of individual freedom in forms of citizenship in relation to a marketized system. So while choice is ostensibly extended in housing, it is also

limited for those who lack the material means to consume. And while the working-class have their choices constrained, they are also encouraged to be better consumer citizens. This paradox ought to foregrounded: working-class residents are encouraged to act individually, be entrepreneurial, be better consumer citizens or face vilification, but they are materially constrained from doing so. The accentuation of difference between the working class and the middle class is essential to the ratification of the neoliberal project; it drives the aspiration to consume in order not to be "Othered". Control over fixity to place is a key conceptual resource for understanding class in a way that brings together the issues of capital alongside property and culture. The term elective fixity is used to capture the degree of control people had over their residential location. It expresses the difference between working- and middle-class groups' relationship to place and highlights the interrelationship between social and physical space. The power to control this fix is a key class indicator, and one which is more enlightening than purely looking at the veracity of identity-based belonging which has long been the focus of housing-based studies of class. Invigorating class analysis in a way that makes clear how the experience of housing, neighbourhoods and community have a meaningful role in class formation, we also offer a productive contribution to housing studies. Housing is an inherently class-based process; borne of an unequal system which can compound class-based inequalities further. While sociological evidence, like that presented here, is conceptual in style, it offers important insights into the standpoints, via locational narratives, of those occupying classed positions in neighbourhoods undergoing regeneration, which can be harnessed to inform housing policy whilst keeping notions of power and inequality at the forefront. It also reveals the different meanings that place attachment has and how this attachment is highly stratified. In this sense, working-class communities can become a topic and resource for the social sciences and housing and class could form the bedrock of social scientific enquiry once again.

Notes

1. The NS-SEC is the primary social classification in the UK since 2001, for use in all official statistics and surveys including the census. The NS-SEC was developed from a sociological classification, known as the Goldthorpe Schema. It is constructed to measure the employment relations and conditions of occupations based on the family/household as the unit of analysis. The eight category version was used, as follows: (1) higher managerial and professional occupations; (2) lower managerial and professional occupations; (3) intermediate occupations; (4) small employers and own account workers; (5) lower supervisory and technical occupations; (6) semi-routine occupations; (7) routine occupations and (8) never worked and long-term unemployed. Those in categories 8–3 are conceived to be working-class. In my sample category 4 refers to a middle-class respondent, while categories 1 and 2 represent middle-class groups. Those who were retired or unemployed were classified by their previous employment.
2. "Messages" is a Scots word for shopping/groceries.
3. I received a hand-written letter from a former local resident. She wrote seven pages on her life in Partick and why she loved the neighbourhood. She signed off "I belong to Perdic, a Perdic girl I will always be" – "Perdic" the old Gaelic form of Partick.
4. The process is as follows: first, a "notice of proceedings" is sent, followed by legal proceedings and tenants will be sent a summons telling them when their case will be heard at court. When the case goes to courts the Sheriff can grant a decree for eviction. Sheriff Officers will be sent to remove tenants from the property. They are entitled to use reasonable force to enter the home and remove tenants and their possessions.

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