

1 INTRODUCTION

'[they] used to bring people in, but they used to help themselves to stuff out the flat and that.' (Interview with Frankie, Home Takeover Project)

'Family has been keeping the noise to a minimum and 'feel like thieves in their own home', creeping around to avoid igniting the neighbours'. (Advocate notes for Adeel and his family, Hate Relationship Project)

The home is a fundamental source of ontological security (Dupuis and Thomas, 1998), which can also be experienced as a site of harm. Characterisation of the home as an 'ambiguously experienced space of belonging' (Blunt and Varley 2004: 3), means that its function as a locus of everyday life and the affective dimensions bound up with it, are also what makes the potentiality of harm so pressing. In this paper with reference to two projects in North East England, we highlight everyday occupations and sieges of home-spaces by neighbours as a means of reinforcing positions of *relative* social advantage and build on feminist and critical geographies of home to develop the concept of *domestic colonisation*: everyday relationships with those who are familiar that exert enduring and proximate harms. We show how these become overwhelming through intrusion of home-spaces and thus the life worlds of already structurally vulnerable(ised) communities. We argue the home is under-considered when it comes to experiences of harm that are neither grand nor familial yet over-fetishised in institutional responses through a lack of appreciation of the relational production of harm. *Domestic colonisation* allows us to think through both the damage done through/to the home and connections 'outside' (Burrell, 2014) that need to be better understood and addressed. The specific harmful relationships we focus on here are (a) 'home-takeovers' (Macdonald et al, 2022) and (b) 'hate relationships' (Clayton et al, 2022a; Donovan et al, 2023). 'Home

takeovers' or 'cuckooing'¹ (Coomber and Moyle, 2018; Spicer et al., 2020; Macdonald et al, 2022) refer to an individual or a group of individuals targeting a person with the intent of taking over their homes. This involves exploitative use, and in some cases occupation, of residential properties. In the UK this is most often discussed in relation to the establishment of new illegal drugs markets as part of 'County Lines' (Coomber and Moyle, 2018) where bases for drug distribution are established beyond large metropolitan areas and organised criminal groups exploit vulnerable individuals' homes as part of this process. However, our work has shown that cuckooing often involves more localised 'befriending' of those seen as 'vulnerable' (usually disabled people and/or those struggling with addiction) before more exploitative behaviour emerges (Macdonald et al, 2022). 'Hate relationships' refer to repeat targeting of individuals and/or families over extended periods of time based on discriminatory assumptions and behaviours through intersections of 'race', religion, disability, transgender and/or sexuality by consistent perpetrators living locally. They involve a range of seemingly more or less violent acts towards people, their children and their property, the cumulative impact of which parallels coercive control exerted by perpetrators of domestic abuse (Donovan et al, 2023).

We firstly address relations between harm and the home within the literature, extending considerations of harm based upon localised, yet structurally produced relationships between those known to each other. This raises the question of how *relative* advantage in contexts of disadvantage may be secured and the role of the home in such processes. We then introduce *domestic colonisation* to highlight under-the-radar practices which transform uses and meanings of the home. 'Colonisation' is used as a way of thinking about the dehumanisation of victim/survivors and the reproduction of contingent social hierarchies through impositions

on the home-lives of those constructed as exploitable and/or not seen to meet dominant criteria of belonging (Nayak, 2017; Hall 2018).

In relation to cuckooing, emergent *occupation* and control by those who re-produce structural vulnerability, re-configures the home as an exploitable resource. Understandings of home *and* social relationships as 'private', combined with complexities of culpability, conceals harm in contexts of diminished social infrastructures and related isolation (Macdonald et al, 2018). Regarding hate relationships, homes are a means of identifying and targeting those who become subjected to a range of hateful acts – producing spaces of *siege* and entrapment that control, immobilise and are difficult to escape. Whilst attention is given to what appear as inter-personal disputes, we situate these within longer term processes, wider relations and institutional responses that (re)produce certain bodies/spaces as vulnerable and/or legitimised objects of domination. Formal interventions by the police, local authorities and/or housing, are often unable to adequately support those victimised through non/misrecognition and tendencies to (re)move those victimised rather than address contexts of victimisation (Clayton et al, 2022a). Lastly, we consider how to address such harms, directing attention towards questions of responsibility, housing justice and community-led responses.

2 GEOGRAPHIES OF THE HOME AND HARM

As a central infrastructure of everyday life, the home is a space through which a range of essential functions are performed and needs met. The home can also be a source of resistance in contexts of powerlessness. For example, bell hooks (1990: 384) reflects on 'homeplaces' as 'spaces of care and nurturance in the face of the brutal harsh reality of racist oppression, of sexual domination.' Translocal memories may also be evoked through materialities of the

home, acting as 'a buffer against exclusive national cultures' (Tolia-Kelly, 2004: 317) and the labour of 'maintaining life' may reveal powerful politics of domesticity (Vasudevan & Smith, 2020). It is perhaps then unsurprising that the home is embraced as 'a refuge, a source of comfort in a world otherwise replete with tension and conflict' (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2021: 93). Whilst home can certainly be 'an anchoring point' (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: ii), we draw attention to the home as a complex 'site of oppression and violence, resistance and subversion' (Nowicki, 2014: 787) which often falls far short of the ideal of a 'primary territory',

'...from which feelings of safety and security are derived; in which the private daily routines of domestic and familial life are played out; and through which one's sense of identity can be formed and expressed.' (Cheshire and ten Have, 2020: 685)

The idea of the home as a private 'haven' (Mallet, 2004) or 'sacred space' (Blunt and Dowling, 2006), insulated from wider forces, has been thoroughly troubled. Within the domestic violence and abuse literature, rather than a space of sanctuary, the home is considered a site of coercive control, harm, and trauma (Warrington, 2001). At the heart of this is recognition that public and private spheres are indistinguishable (Burrell, 2014; Warwick and Lees, 2022); the scales at which harm occurs are multiple and relational (Pain, 2014); and the home, even in less spectacular moments, is an unstable politicised space (Meth, 2003). We situate our research within feminist/critical geographies of home and domestic abuse literature to draw attention to proximate harms perpetrated by neighbours who come to colonise the life worlds of those victimised.

One way of attending to harms inflicted on the home, is through an understanding of power dynamics under heteronormativity (Gorman-Murray, 2014), ableism (Hall, 2019), patriarchy

(Hopkins, 2020) and racial capitalism (Vasudevan & Smith, 2020) that present an 'ongoing existential threat to practising home' (Nethercote, 2022: 945). Such perspectives allow us to see competing values and versions of an affective, symbolic, and material resource called 'home' and uneven experiences of this. One overt manifestation of dominant relations is the deliberate destruction of the physical infrastructure of home in the interests of capitalist expansion, understood as 'domicide' (Porteous and Smith, 2001). This notion incorporates a range of forms including both extra-legal 'extreme' and legalised 'everyday' destructions, such as land clearances for redevelopment projects (Zhang, 2018), but also gentrification (Pull & Richard, 2021) and displacement through eviction (Paton and Cooper, 2017).

However, domicile (in Porteous and Smith's formulation) has been critiqued for concentrating on explicit and large-scale displacement, to the neglect of how homes are 'unmade' (Brickell, 2014; Baxter and Brickell, 2014) through everyday practices, emotions and bodily orientations (Dorignon & Nethercote, 2020) embedded within prevailing power relations (Nowicki, 2014). Cautioning against the 'apocalyptic tone' and grandiose scale of domicile, Baxter and Brickell (2014: 134) describe 'home unmaking' as: '...the precarious process by which material and/or imaginary components of home are unintentionally or deliberately, temporarily or permanently, divested, damaged or even destroyed.' Examples of house arrest and home detention, for instance, illustrate how state and racialised ideologies/practices, permeate and affect the home yet do not always physically destroy or displace. Rather, the home becomes 'a key site for the operation and deployment of racialised surveillance' (Wadhawan, 2021: 1). Nowicki's (2018) examination of the 'bedroom tax'² in the UK as a class-based 'unmaking of home' that moralises homeliness as a form of citizenship, also reveals the state's role in constructing idea(l)s of home and their use. The home is then

a physical site through which social harms are (re)produced, but also a right that is unevenly distributed.

In addition, the way in which wider relations 'impact' on the home-space has been called into question. Brickell (2012a) demonstrates through her 'geopolitics of home', how war, conflict and resistance *emerge through* everyday practices of home (Brickell, 2012b). Through a relational understanding of multiple violences against women's homes and bodies, Brickell's work on gendered violence in Cambodia, speaks to the centrality of home in a politics of survival (Brickell, 2020). Pain (2015) in her work on 'intimate war', also moves from a uni-directional analysis of the impact of the geopolitical on the intimate, by thinking through parallels, connections and dynamics between domestic abuse in suburban Scotland and international warfare. Domestic violence in peacetime, just as in space-times of recognised conflict, is marked by similar experiences, including psychological 'occupation'. Pain's (2015) attention to these relations (not equivalences) avoids a hierarchisation of the geopolitical and intimate and takes seriously violence in everyday domestic spheres. Attention to domestic settings, also allows us to consider *who* might be implicated in harmful relations. Much feminist literature concerned with home focusses on intimate gendered relationships with partners, co-residents and family members and how gendered relations are drawn upon and re-inscribed through control, coercion and physical violence (Warrington, 2001; Pain, 2014). While Cuomo's (2019) analysis of a 'visitation center', considers how domestic violence might reach beyond those within abusive intimate relationships, there continues to be a relative lack of attention to harmful encounters which draw on neighbourly familiarities.

One example of how such proximities might be considered is offered through Cheshire and ten Have's (2020) account of neighbourhood disputes in Queensland, Australia. They

demonstrate ‘the ways in which haven, autonomy and status [of the home] can be threatened by the unintentional or deliberate actions of neighbours’ (Cheshire and ten Have, 2020: 685). They explore neighbourhood disputes from ‘minor annoyances’ to ‘fully fledged disputes’ all of which have a significant bearing on meanings attached to home. However, their focus is on disputes which are largely dis-connected from relations of power and social difference, something Nowicki (2014) recognises in attempts to broaden considerations of domicile. This marks a distinction between a focus on individualised incidents and what we characterise as *domestic colonisation* that draws upon and reproduce positions of relative social advantage in housing landscapes which already cast some as ‘unworthy or unwelcome’ (Nethercote, 2022: 941).

3 DOMESTIC COLONISATION

Domestic colonisation captures the shape and significance of harms felt by minoritised subjects through interactions with neighbours, the home-space and the neighbourhood, in relation to established intersectional oppressions. Gordon (2008: 28), with reference to ongoing Israeli occupation, identifies the ‘colonisation principle’ as ‘a form of government whereby colonisers *manage* colonised inhabitants while *exploiting* captured territory’s *resources*’. We suggest, through different forms, scales and contexts, that themes of dispossession, exploitation and control, also characterise experiences of those targeted through cuckooing and hate relationships. We thus employ *domestic colonisation* to depict and understand practices of everyday domination perpetrated by those living locally, that exploitatively use and target the home and which are more than atomised disputes. Given the widespread character of heteronormative, ableist, patriarchal, racial and class forces of

oppression, these harms do not *solely* originate from, and are not restricted to, the home-space, but make their overwhelming presence felt there.

We recognise in adopting this terminology there are dangers of appropriating terms which conceptualise ongoing racialised strategies of oppression. We therefore distinguish between *domestic colonisations* as a way thinking about everyday practices which re-produce multiple marginalities in the neighbourhood contexts of our research, from *colonialism* as an ongoing global, capitalist, racialised project of violence. We look to avoid both conflation but also complete disconnection. As Kipfer and Goonewardena (2014: 33) suggest in Lefebvre's consideration of the 'colonial relation': "colonial' spatial forms can be compared directly across scalar divides, thus making it possible to link 'colonisation' in former colonies to segregated areas in metropolitan countries'. Others have drawn connections by thinking through everyday encounters as colonisation. Through 'microcolonisation', Azim and Happel-Parkins (2019) explore how Saudi women in the US experience 're-colonisation' through encounters with white Americans. They suggest '...those on the receiving end of microcolonization are understood by the perpetrators as representing... a presumed deviation' (2019: 12). Other uses of 'colonisation' have centred on neighbourhoods as sites of colonisation by capital and groups that embody those interests, seen in literature on urban change, gentrification, and displacement (Watt, 2008). While 'colonisation' is often employed as a metaphor for displacement, in some contexts, such as settler colonial cities in Canada, gentrification is 'more urgently a manifestation of the continued historical colonization of Indigenous peoples' (Jackson, 2017: 44), demonstrating not only metaphorical parallels but continuities with material practices of colonialism. Whilst our work is set in a different context we acknowledge the broader power relations within which the harms we discuss are situated.

Everyday dominations take place through the use and targeting of home-spaces, drawing attention both to multiple and shifting meanings of home (Blunt et al, 2021), but also the materiality of the home space. Fanon (2004) emphasises the trauma and dehumanisation of colonisation and connects these outcomes with *alienation* from the land in terms of resources, belonging and self-awareness. The power of domestic colonisation comes from the undermining of the home as a potential space of care, love and safety and an understanding of home as an extension of identities (Latimer, 2009). Through cuckooing, exploitative relationships are re-produced through physical *occupation* of home, and with regard to hate relationships, violence is targeted at 'others' (and their property) that produce homes under *siege*. The language of 'occupation' and 'siege' are more often used to make sense of settler colonialism and militarised conflict (Visweswaran, 2013). Occupation as control is often represented as all-encompassing, state-driven and explicitly violent in ways which are repressive of entire communities, ethnic groups or nations (Chari, 2008). We however highlight the occupation of the home, involving the physical co-presence of everyday occupier(s) in contexts which are not sites of militaristic repression, but neighbourhoods experiencing entrenched socio-economic disadvantage. In trying to unpack the language of 'siege' Winter (2016: 309) suggests: '[sieges] bring about a circumscription, shrinkage, and transformation of space as well as new cartographies of power and territory. [Sieges] rearrange and appropriate space; they measure, regulate, mark, organize, and transform it.' Siege is then a territorial strategy/experience that constrains lives and provides the impetus for the domination and removal of unwanted populations.

We explore experiences that are neither always dramatic nor familial, concentrated in and around the home, but which speak to the 'porosity of domestic space' in relation to local contexts and broader relations (Burrell, 2014). Through an awareness that the home is

already colonised through poverty, housing dynamics, institutional discrimination and intersectional disadvantage, we explore *compounding* experiences from the vantage of victimisation and help-seeking. While these experiences produce resourceful responses (Vasudevan and Smith, 2020), our research presents a picture of overwhelming harm, including the undermining of hope that manifests in debilitating mental and physical health, that requires our critical attention.

In what follows, we explore domestic colonisation as evidenced in two projects based in marginalised neighbourhoods in North East England. Despite demographic complexity this is a relatively ‘white’ region³, with implications for how racialised communities experience racism, community building and forms of resistance (Cassidy, 2020). The region has also been disproportionately impacted by processes of de-industrialisation resulting in legacies of peripheralisation. This has been compounded by ongoing impacts of austerity politics and welfare reform (Clayton et al, 2016), making life for many more challenging, as evidenced in recent data indicating some of the highest child poverty rates in the UK (Stone, 2022).

4 CUKOOING: OCCUPATION OF HOME LIVES

‘Cuckooing’ is a process through which a home becomes used and/or physically occupied through the targeting of vulnerable(ised) individuals. This has been recognised as a key component of expanding ‘County Lines’ drug networks in the UK (Coomber et al., 2018; Spicer et al., 2020)—which establish bases for illegal drug distribution where organised criminal groups are less organised and criminal justice responses less well established (Coomber et al., 2018). However, it is also recognised that cuckooing is complex in form and process. To capture this, Spicer et al. (2020) identify a typology: first ‘parasitic nest invasion’ where ‘vulnerable’, often disabled adults, are befriended for use of their properties; second ‘quasi-

cuckooing' where drug users are identified by those moving into an area and become indebted to perpetrators who access their homes; thirdly 'coupling' where sexual relationships, co-occupation and gendered domestic violence feature. A last type moves away from a focus on 'County Lines', to recognise diverse and localised exploitative relationships. As they and others argue (Søgaard et al., 2021; Macdonald et al, 2022) then, cuckooing is also practiced through *established* neighbourhood relationships with those already known.

Whilst research into this phenomenon in Disability Studies focuses on social relationships and 'mate crime' (Thomas, 2013; Forster and Pearson 2020), we focus on how meanings and uses of the home are taken out of the hands of residents vulnerable(ised) through deprivation, disability and infrastructural decline. We note evidence of relationships that often start as friendly and/or mutually beneficial, but which emerge into something more sinister, exploitative, and harmful. Central to this is the home-space as a privatised exploitable space that becomes a commodified resource (Macdonald et al, 2022). This emerges for multiple reasons including the historical discursive and structural power of eugenics and ableism, prolonged periods of austerity, the impact of poverty on working class communities, social isolation and the (in)actions of institutions.

Through an explorative pilot study, we interviewed 28 participants, including 23 practitioners who have worked with people who have been cuckooed. We aimed to recruit professionals first to ask about their perceptions of cuckooing within their professional practice, including who they thought cuckooing most impacted, and to explore the possibility of practitioners supporting us to recruit participants with lived experience. Participants were recruited through adverts to local health, social care, youth work and criminal justice services that had

an experience of cuckooing/County Lines. Once practitioners were recruited, adverts were sent out through these services to recruit those with lived experience.

Practitioner semi-structured interviews included three social workers, three safeguarding officers, one teacher, one support worker for vulnerable young people, one sexual exploitation worker, five housing officers/workers, three police officers, five community and youth workers and one youth worker specialising in violent crime. In addition, five people with experience of different types of cuckooing identified by Spicer et al., (2020) were also interviewed informed by a biographical approach (Wengraf, 2001; Bertaux, 2003). The age of these five participants ranged from 25 to 50 years. All were identified as disabled (four participants had a learning disability and one a physical impairment), white and more men (n = 3) were interviewed than women (n = 2). Whilst there was not always a high degree of detail accrued, we were able to cross reference these accounts with those of practitioners to construct, through thematic analysis, a picture of key processes and experiences. These participants were no longer at risk of exploitation and were being supported by social services and/or a criminal justice agency when interviews were conducted. Identities and locations have been changed to safeguard participants and ethical approval for this work was gained from Durham University.

4.1 From 'friendship' to home occupation

Cuckooing often begins through a process of befriending and/or intimate relationship where those engaging in exploitative behaviour look to offer something to those victimised that is absent in their lives. A common theme is a lack of social networks and supporting services. Three of the five participants had lived in foster care because of parental death and another spoke of the death of a primary carer. Alongside this, transient biographies and few

established social connections meant that 'friendships' that led to cuckooing, promised valued opportunities for social contact.

'No family... She had not one relative in [place name]. She was...only had friends. And who were...some of them were alright but most of them used to recreationally take drugs. She became more involved with...with having her house where people used to go and smoke' (Youth and Community Worker)

As discussed in 'mate crime' literature (Thomas, 2013), disabled people who are targeted in this way often see perpetrators as friends, or potential intimate partners, and welcome them into their lives and homes. As one participant, Alison (female, living with learning disability) stated: '...he had nowhere to stay so I said he could stay here but he stayed a lot longer... I like his company but not all the time'. One challenge then is exploitation can often be difficult to identify as well as the fact that friendship and exploitation may co-exist, especially in situations where cuckooing is opportunistic rather than planned.

Contrary to County Lines' discourses, we identified several well-established relationships, where circulating local knowledges (through, in the case below, the street and pub) were drawn upon to identify those known as vulnerable and thus potentially exploitable. These were individuals and homes which were familiar and proximate, as this safeguarding officer identified:

'...we've had more problems with just other people who are known...locally in the area around cuckooing...people who literally would just be the house next door...And it was families who were well-known, families who grew up together, or everyone knew x family who has someone vulnerable, or that man who's

vulnerable. And all the local people in the local pub know that person's vulnerable.

So, the word gets around and people go there'.

As part of this movement towards exploitation by those in position of *relative* advantage, homes are seen as valuable resources, as places to carry out and conceal (sometimes illegal) activities without responsibility for consequences including the eviction of those who call these places home.

4.2 Home as an exploitable resource

'People were coming in me flat, and I haven't got anybody else, just me' (Frankie, male, living with learning disability)

Not all efforts to impose upon the home are successfully completed through the mobilisation of resources to 'push back' (Spicer et al., 2020). However, our own research demonstrates that because of these relationships, homes become transformed into new kinds of spaces over which residents have less control: they are 'un-made' (Brickell and Baxter, 2014). This includes control over what takes place in the home and who makes use of this space, which might be difficult to prevent in the contexts of social isolation Frankie speaks to. In his case, 'friendship' through meeting a woman at 'parties', turned into economic exploitation: 'I think she was after me money really', and then into use and control of his flat where he was subjected to physical violence from her boyfriend. For Frankie home became a site of abuse and a place from which others would steal, as mentioned in the excerpt used at the outset of the paper. We can also see from the Youth and Community Worker in the previous section such transformations include turning homes into recreational spaces, where for example, 'friends' would spend time to 'go and smoke'. In some cases, money, food and other items

would go missing and as one practitioner commented, 'by that time...it's kind of too late', implying control over the home begins to seep away.

It is important to stress such situations are occurring in contexts of deprivation, often involving as one practitioner referred to it 'layers of vulnerability', where an absence of economic alternatives creates an environment in which these kinds of practices can take hold. As Spicer et al. (2020: 317) point out, these practices can become 'an instinctive solution for income generation'. Through such alternative economies, homes become re-constituted as a commodity – but one which compounds social harm. We might draw parallels with Fanon's work (2004), where colonised territory has been conceptualised as 'terra nullus' or 'empty land' ripe for extraction. This does not mean there is nothing there, but there is a deep negation of pre-existing relations between those who are colonised and their land/homes. In terms of cuckooing, this is a process of de-humanisation in which the home is constituted through a different value system. Whilst residents are not always driven out (someone often needs to maintain the property and continue to provide access) it *can* result in a situation where residents have nowhere to live, pushing them into even more severe positions of marginalisation, including homelessness:

'...slowly over time it would get to the point where that person no longer managed their own tenancy, it wasn't theirs, they had no control over who was coming and going and what was going on in that tenancy and in one case the person actually abandoned the tenancy...they just left and actually what they done is they, they returned to the streets'. (Youth worker specialising in violent crime)

As this excerpt makes clear – cuckooing can be a drawn-out process, experienced through contexts of disposability and slow structural violence (Pain and Cahill, 2021). There are then evolving signs that perpetrators are taking over. As is noted below there may be a shift between invitations to ‘have a drink at mine’ to ‘coming and going as they feel’.

‘...it just maybe starts off through, like, oh, we’ll just have a drink in mine, and then next thing you know they’re staying a couple of nights and then before you know it, they’re getting their post redirected there, or they’ve got bags there. One now that we’re working with people are just coming and going in his flat as they feel.’. (Community Housing Worker)

For those cuckooed the result is often loss of control over their homes but also a loss of personal liberty (Butera, 2013). The home is permeated in harmful ways that alter, constrain and manipulate everyday lives. Yet the relatively concealed nature of this space and the sometimes complex character of relationships where complicity is often attached to those being cuckooed, can mean attention and intervention may be avoided or deferred.

4.3 Private lives and responsabilisation

‘I told her “I’m not being horrible erm I just want you to leave” but sometimes she gave me excuses to stay “If I leave, I will have nowhere to go” and then sometimes I feel sorry for her but then after that I told her “Okay you can stay here a bit longer”’ (Alison, female, living with learning disability)

Mis-readings of exploitative relationships and associations with the home as a ‘private’ space means domestic colonisation is not always recognised and, in some cases, residents themselves were blamed. Because perpetrators might be initially invited, and in some cases,

such as with Alison, relationships are long standing and not always explicitly violent, responsibility is seen to lie with residents and their choices. In the case of Alison, this experience needs to be seen in the context of a series of relationships through which her home was opened to others before the situation became problematic. This is further exacerbated through associations with illegal activities that stigmatise those victimised and complicate pictures of an 'ideal victim' (Duggan, 2018). As we can see in the somewhat hesitant excerpt below where the Housing Officer discusses another case – whilst the complexities of complicity make it 'hard' to intervene, the conclusion is 'she'd allowed it'.

'...she didn't present herself, but she did have multiple vulnerabilities which made her more susceptible to maybe being manipulated by her friends. Being yeah, taken advantage of. She was also, kind of, a heavy drug user. So it was...the cuckooing involved, kind of, drug, you know, drug use and using, like, the property for, kind of, distributing drugs. So, in that sense it was kind of, someone saw an opportunity. A friend of hers, unfortunately, and she felt like it wasn't, it was hard because it was, it was kind of, like *she'd allowed it* [our emphasis]'. (Housing Officer)

For Connie, serving a custodial sentence, her experiences aligned more with a County Lines model. She acknowledged being part of organised criminal activity, finding herself reliant upon drugs supplied as a 'reward' for assistance in a situation where she could no longer say no to the groups' demands. Here we can see the intersectional nature of vulnerability and exploitation through drug addiction, disability and isolation. The group would use Connie's home to store drugs and use her as a driver for distribution as she 'had a good car...and a blue badge'⁴ due to a physical impairment. When she refused to drive, the group stole her car and

'smashed it up'. Connie is constructed by the criminal justice system as an offender, but her participation is underpinned by exploitative relations facilitated through the occupation of her home.

Responsibilisation is also expressed through interpretations of victims' experiences with regards to lack of recognition of their own exploitation. As is well documented in domestic violence literature, entrapment within coercive and controlling relationships (Stark 2007) and a perception of victim/survivors' complicity in abusive relationships may mean they are not always identified as problematic. As Donovan and Hester (2015) argue in their work on domestic abuse in same sex relationships, practices of love can obfuscate violence, resulting in victim/survivors constructing themselves as stronger than perpetrators who need care.

'...she picked them up [from the train station] and the rest is history...He went into the house, he was there, she was having the cocaine. In the end she ended up serving for him, cooking the drugs and a lot of stuff, and it was a proper County Lines thing. However, she got pregnant with him, had a baby. And what I will say is, even to this day she will not see herself as being cuckooed'. (Youth and Community Worker)

Additionally, because the relationship emerges in and around the home, these relationships are not so visible. Whilst there might be a local awareness of cuckooing, the hollowing out of local services, fear of reprisals for concerned neighbours and consideration of how housing tenure might influence degrees of oversight all conceal cuckooing. There was a recognition by practitioners that those living in privately rented accommodation in more deprived neighbourhoods, unable to access social housing, are most at risk. This is due to the greater tendency for checks in social housing and powers to 'issue proceedings' contrasted to the

private rental sector. In supported housing, visits from social workers were also identified as significant, therefore those moved from supported housing into independent accommodation were particularly vulnerable.

‘So, they might have been known to ‘Homes for You⁵, they might have got themselves into some difficulties whether or not it’s behavioural, whether or not it’s been drugs and alcohol or even rent arrears so they’re not able to get that sort of housing anymore. And the last-ditch resort is some really grotty privately rented properties and they’re the sort of properties that are not gonna be checked on as often’. (Sexual Exploitation Worker)

The lack of visibility comes from both an absence of public services in areas of high deprivation – a hollowing out exacerbated by austerity (Clayton et al, 2016) – and the burden on those living locally to raise concerns. Even if there is sufficient evidence to recognise harmful activity, when these events are considered either private and/or criminal in nature it is unsurprising people are reticent in coming forward.

‘...the biggest risk I think is where you don’t have the services in to spot it. So, we don’t know the extent cos unless it comes to our attention – by ‘us’ I mean services like police or housing or council – unless it comes to your attention, how do you know it’s happening? So, the public would need to raise concerns potentially to the police or if it was a council property, for example, housing might notice if they’re doing inspections and things like that’. (Safeguarding Officer)

Where an institutional response is more forthcoming, a similar theme emerged in the cuckooing data as was found in our hate relationship project below - practitioners and victim/survivors discussed displacement as the primary intervention. For many practitioners’

relocation seemed an obvious response. Once the home had been commandeered and services became involved then adult safeguarding protocols were put in place to move the victim/survivor out of danger.

Some victims of cuckooing were relocated from their neighbourhoods into new areas. However, this intervention often further exacerbated a lack of social connectivity, and thus may itself be viewed as a form of violent 'un-homing' (Elliot-Cooper et al, 2020). Not all practitioners agreed with relocation as a solution. One police officer discussed problems with this approach arguing that a highly 'organised crime group' will quite easily be able to use their resources and locate the victim in their new neighbourhood. There was also evidence of this in narratives of participants. Four of those with lived experience of cuckooing described multiple incidents where they were moved from one property to another, usually into another neighbourhood, only to be exploited by a new group of perpetrators.

In this section we have spoken to explicit experiences of domestic colonisation, where those looking to exploit structurally vulnerable individuals in their locality, occupy and transform the home-space in harmful ways for a variety of purposes. Informed by wider societal values and conditions of disadvantage, those seen as less valuable and possessing an inferior capacity to resist, are subjected to dehumanisation through occupation of the home. We next develop the idea of domestic colonisation through an allied piece of work which speaks to less overt forms.

5 HATE RELATIONSHIPS: HOMES AND LIVES UNDER SIEGE

In this section we draw upon work with an advocacy organisation in North East England exploring repeat reporting of hate incidents/crimes. In making sense of repeat experiences of hate, we have elsewhere developed the concept of 'hate relationships' (Donovan et al, 2023).

This idea captures repeat experiences of hate concentrated in, around and enroute to the home. These relationships endure over long periods of time; are perpetrated by those living locally; and result in experiences of entrapment, surveillance and negative health consequences akin to experiences of domestic abuse. While there are connections with experiences framed as ‘anti-social behaviour’ (Duggan and Heap, 2013) the distinction here is targeting based on discrimination towards intersectionally marginalised communities deemed ‘unworthy or unwelcome’ (Nethercote, 2022: 941).

‘Client says that she feels like a prisoner in her home. She feels degraded, exhausted and very hurt. It is taking her life over. She says sometimes she stops in bed for a week because she can’t face getting up. She has been to the doctors and takes lots of medications. She has panic attacks and said she fears for her life’ (Fatima: female, Other ethnic group, living with mental and physical health conditions)

Fatima suffered 36 racist incidents between 2010-2018, whilst also living with health conditions that can, in part, be attributed to this hate relationship. These notes emphasise how those victimised are subjected to domestic carcerality (Moran et al, 2018) that put them, their families and homes under siege by those living in close proximity. These often-enduring conditions reproduce power relations that are not confined to, but are experienced through, neighbourhood-based encounters (Clayton et al, 2022a). Through harassment, verbal abuse and physical violence in and around the home as well as the overwhelming *prospect* of harm, chiming with bell hook’s (1990) memories of the ‘terrifying whiteness’ of empty porches on the journey to her grandmother’s house, lives are constrained. Those subjected to ongoing low-level harassment and abuse in this way become *prisoners* (fear of leaving home) but also,

as the opening excerpt of the article references, *thieves* in their own home for fear of setting off unwanted attention. This domination over the home as a material, affective and symbolic space involves expansion of territorial control by perpetrators who de-legitimise claims to belong and treat those they victimise as bodies out of place (Puwar, 2004). Experiences of home for those such as Fatima are thus defined as sites of exhaustion, unsafety, ill health and immobilisation. Those victimised are also forced to adapt to these conditions and change behaviour in relation to the actuality and possibility of being targeted. So, while the home is not explicitly and overtly occupied (as is the case for cuckooing), the ways in which those victimised relate to and use their home is significantly affected.

Data employed here is drawn from the advocacy organisations' hate crime advocacy service which covers all protected characteristics (under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and Criminal Justice Act 2003) of 'race', religion, disability, transgender identity, and sexual orientation. In so doing, this work brought together our distinct, yet connected, interests as researchers in specific yet intersectional aspects of hate (Macdonald et al, 2023). Ethics approval was given by Durham University to analyse case notes from advocates' meetings with clients between 2017-2019. The case notes vary in the levels of detail recorded, but include records of key episodes, meetings, and interventions. The case notes are informed interpretations of events by advocates, but in some cases include quotes from clients.

During this period, 149 clients were referred to the advocacy service, with 148 accepted for support. To identify those cases which exhibited characteristics of 'hate relationships', we filtered the notes to 50 cases using criteria of repeat incidents by the same perpetrators who lived in close proximity, with impacts akin to coercive control in domestic abuse. The majority of the 50 filtered cases in this period (68%, n=34) were recorded as either partly or wholly

'race' based incidents. Of these, 10 were recorded as based on both 'race and religion'. 8 incidents (16%) referenced sexuality and 9 (18%) disability as the basis for the case. However, we recognise recording can hide the intersectional experiences of victimisation, especially in relation to disability (Macdonald et al, 2023). Gender was evenly balanced between men and women, 62% (n=31) were identified as non 'white British' and there was an over-concentration in areas of high deprivation. We conducted a thematic analysis of these case notes using NVivo qualitative data analysis software to organise our findings, through which the role of the home emerged as key.

5.1 Targeting of the home-space

Central to hate relationships is the ways in which *both* bodies and material home-space (including physical buildings, cars, windows, paths and surrounding environments), are targeted as a means of negatively affecting individuals and their families over an extended period of time. As we write elsewhere: 'hate can be directed not just at individuals but at landscapes and collectives fixed through those landscapes' (Clayton et al, 2022b: 101). This includes spitting, graffiti, throwing of objects, dog faeces left on lawns, obstructions to doors and paths, more permanent damage to homes and vehicles and home incursions as well as less explicitly violent acts. As Jan, who has been subjected to racist and xenophobic incidents, makes clear, poor living conditions, caused both by vandalism to his home and slow responses of authorities, are deeply de-humanising. The targeting of his home has an emanating negative force that extends across different aspects of his life, highlighting an impact that is relational and conditioned by his position as a father.

'I am now hearing "fucking [East European] cunt" almost every day. This gives me a low mood and makes me feel negative about every aspect of my life. It is really

difficult to have a positive attitude about anything. Again, this impacts on my relationship with my daughter and my behaviour at work. Seeing my home and my environment vandalised with repairs or action quite slow makes me feel like I don't really count as a human being.' (Jan: male, white Other ethnic group)

Indeed, it was apparent from our discussions with police that homes (sometimes regardless of individuals living there) can become the primary target – where properties are seen to stand in for stigmatised difference. This is particularly apparent in those cases where the home has been adjusted for those with impairments, but is also evident in other cases. For Aras this was based on 'race' and faith (or the racialisation of religion), where a pattern emerged of successive residents consistently targeted by the same neighbour who had been forced to move out.

'Client informed [Housing Officer] that he is so scared of his male neighbour next door and wants to move out as soon as possible to prevent further attacks...Client is third occupant from the same address, who is being attacked by the same male ... which resulted in three occupants' being forced to leave their homes during the last year.' (Aras: male, Other ethnic group)

Beyond physical attacks, harm-through-siege comes via repeated less explicitly violent actions including intimidating, humiliating, harassing, congregating, incurring into/onto, driving past, watching and/or blocking of access to homes, yards, gardens, doorways and parking spaces. This is illustrated in the following case notes in which Steve's gay identity is most explicitly targeted as out of place. Here there is expressed a sense of territorial control over the neighbourhood (Nayak, 2010) which 'spills' (Burrell, 2014) into the home through

combinations of physical, verbal and intimidatory presence that looms on the physical boundaries (including windows and fences).

‘From then on they have spat on the house, tried to get in, called them ‘poofs’, intimidated them, shouted, stared through their windows. Client showed pictures of spit on the windows, Neighbour standing on something so he can look over the fence into their living room (4 times in one evening), and of him trying to get into the house.’ (Steve: male, white-British, gay, living with physical disability and mental health condition)

The sense of menace and territoriality is often understood by advocacy clients in terms of a clear desire of perpetrators to expel, to purge them from the neighbourhood. In Chantelle’s case below this is most often articulated as racist harassment and charged through its intersectional gendered form. Home is disrupted, and an ability to make home prevented, not just in relation to attachments to the physical infrastructure, but in the ability to make a home in this neighbourhood, locality and, as Nayak (2017) suggests, nation.

‘She is living in a [Housing Association] property and she has been suffering harassment from neighbours for 4 years...She currently lives in fear of being attacked by these neighbours who continue to make threats about wanting to harm her and to *get her out of her house.*’ (Chantelle: female, Other ethnic group, living with mental health condition)

The sense of being denied presence and actively purged also worryingly chimes with formal institutional responses in our data that prioritise moving those being victimised discussed further below.

5.2 Entrapment and immobilisation

Meanings of home under hostile conditions become shaped in damaging ways. Forms of siege through surveillance, control and harassment result in a variety of health consequences including anxiety, fear and enforced adjustments to everyday mobilities. Hate relationships can therefore be viewed as colonisations of localities, physical infrastructure, but also of body/mind (Fanon, 2004). The actuality of events and their prospect combine to form an affective atmosphere (Anderson, 2009) of home which is defined by vigilance, being on edge and made to feel as if one does not belong. The following notes document the experiences of Nura and her family who have fled conflict and sought refuge in the UK. Nura's account speaks to the recognition of 'the enduring presence of the past in the fabric of the urban landscape and in the lives and stories of those who inhabit it' (Blunt et al, 2021: 150). These entangled meanings of home generated through such experiences of mobility are complex, yet the desire for a sense of security becomes even more pressing for those escaping conflict and arriving into state sanctioned suffering (Darling, 2022), 'where eviction, movement or inspection threatens subjects every moment' (Nethercote, 2022: 948). This is further exacerbated by the fact that they have already been moved from one property in the city due to racist abuse, only to experience renewed harassment. Despite some sense the children are beginning to carve out valued local attachments (Stobbart, 2022), it seems nowhere feels truly safe.

'...they are still facing incidents from her new neighbours, e.g. throwing eggs and glass into her garden, at her laundry and at her windows this has happened more than 7 or 8 times...The client is very scared that the people responsible (they live behind her and have their friends opposite her) might start up again with

something else. She thinks they are waiting and plotting something and feels very unsafe. She feels tired and exhausted by it all...They came from [country] for safety, and the kids were starting to settle, but they are not safe' (Nura: female, Other ethnic group, living with mental health condition)

Feelings of entrapment dominate many accounts. This clearly results in a sense of powerlessness and immobilisation – trapping those targeted within their homes but also restricting movement to and from the home. The confidence of advocacy clients to move around their homes, neighbourhoods and cities are all adversely affected. On some occasions this reduced mobility is the consequence of a direct threat as is seen below for Tendai (experiencing racist hate) and in other cases incarceration comes from a general fear of what is to come as for Rebekah and her wife (experiencing homophobic hate, but also living with a disability that is also subject to targeting).

'...client was coming out of his house and the offender pointed at him and told him in a threatening manner to go back inside. Client feels very threatened and unsafe. He feels unable to let his children play out, and feels trapped in his home' (Tendai: male, Black British-African)

'They feel like prisoners in their own home. From 4.30pm onwards they draw their curtains and watch the CCTV, waiting for trouble'. (Rebekah: female, white-British, lesbian, living with physical disability)

The home is a target, but also becomes a means to escape hate relationships and to protect oneself from harm. However, there are negative consequences to this reduced mobility. For example, this prevented one woman from attending breastfeeding classes and another client had started using the back rather than front door as 'she was worried that if anything

happened, she would be seen as 'provoking' to neighbour'. In addition, tactics of avoiding unwanted encounters does not necessarily stop hate penetrating the home. Neither does it stop the emotional and material toll on everyday life because of constant vigilance. The combination of feeling unsafe within the home and not wanting to leave creates an often-unbearable tension, particularly given the emotional intensities of caring responsibilities Faiza speaks of

'She is very stressed and won't leave the house apart from to take her daughter to school ... She doesn't feel safe even in her own front room in case a stone comes through the window and hurts the baby'. (Faiza: female, Other ethnic group, living with mental health condition)

5.3 Resolution through displacement

Home is not only central to experiences of hate relationships; it is at the heart of responses. As hinted at previously the response from institutions (local council, police and housing providers) in taking seriously cumulative impacts and power dynamics of hate relationships is vital to understanding how these relationships continue. One of the main ways in which hate relationships (although often not recognised as such) are approached is through (eventually in some cases) moving the victimised away from their home. As Gibas (2019) suggests, there is a contradiction between home as potentially rooted, stable and secure, but also temporary and transplantable. The terms under which home is made temporary is here not controlled by those seeking home, and for those with few economic resources, living with disabilities and/or within the asylum system, housing choices can be limited or non-existent. The formal response is to place the onus for mobility and change on those targeted.

There are examples where such moves are desired and seen to have more successful outcomes (as in Claire's case). Moving home can provide a sense of a more optimistic future. However, for some this appears to be a last resort as Jane makes clear below. As they also hint, even if being moved is eventually desired, proving vulnerability to homelessness through 'priority need' with local authorities can be a challenge when 'hate relationships' are widely un/mis-recognised:

'She and her daughter are much happier and more settled in their new home. They both look forward to going home when they're out, they sleep better, and her daughter is doing much better at home.' (Claire: female, white-British, daughter is living with a learning disability)

'...if I can't get Housing on board (and they seem very reluctant to act further), then I guess I will have to consider giving up my home and move away from these terrible people. I am loathe to do that but see little choice.' (Jane: transgender female, white-British, living with physical disability and mental health condition)

For many advocacy clients a move away is not desired for several reasons and is illustrative of the fluidity of meanings of home that is not fixed as repressive (Nowicki, 2014; Baxter and Brickell, 2014). These include the value of social networks and local attachments formed (Vickers et al., 2019), recognition that the problem is not the neighbourhood but specific neighbours, and costly modifications already made that suit specific needs. A sense of injustice is also expressed here by Jo, that they are the ones having to adjust because of their victimisation and inadequate institutional responses.

'[Jo's son] feels that the [anti-social behaviour] team, in conjunction with the police, are deliberately trying to get him out of the house. He is very stressed. They

do not want to move because this is the only home son has known and he is not good with change.’ (Jo: female, white-British)

As we have already noted in the case of Rania, moving home does not ensure harm will not be experienced elsewhere, or as is discussed in relation to domestic abuse, that victimisation does not continue to weigh heavy in new places (Warrington, 2001). For those suffering racist harassment in an area which is not racially diverse and where social isolation (Nelson et al., 2021) can exacerbate a sense of marginalisation, this seemed especially apparent.

‘The council...have offered them a property which they are going to see today. However, they are wary of jumping from frying pan into fire, so are very cautious...They would like to be in a certain area, where they feel that there will be more Black people.’ (Gloria: female, Black British-African and Amari: male, Black British-African)

Rather than facilitating the establishment of home – homes are expected to be uprooted, unmade and re-established elsewhere with few guarantees. We might view this as a privatised, rather than a social response founded on expectations of home life as a matter of choice rather than a right to be free from harm.

6 SECURING THE HOME

Despite the subversive value of the homeplace (bell hooks, 1990), we extend established feminist and critical work on harm within domestic settings to emphasise how these values are undermined or denied, not just through explicit or grand events, or intimate violence perpetrated by family members, but through other kinds of familiar relationships. These neighbourhood relationships, set within contexts of ongoing marginalisation, generate

‘disorientating’ emotional relations with home (Dorignon & Nethercote, 2020) which undermine the ability to find a place to belong, but also a physical space free from harm. We have drawn attention to two such forms; *cuckooing* and *hate relationships*, that problematise, target and exploit on the basis of intersectional Othered identities. By conceptualising these as forms of *domestic colonisation*, we have explored how they speak to the centrality of ‘the home’ in perpetuating established power relations through experiences of *occupation* and *siege*.

Our concept of *domestic colonisation* contributes to the literature on domestic abuse (Warrington, 2001; Pain, 2014; Cuomo 2019) and the un-making of home (Baxter and Brickell, 2014; Nowicki, 2014; Nethercote, 2022) by highlighting under-the-radar practices which transform uses and meanings of the home. ‘Colonisation’ is used as a way of thinking about the dehumanisation of victim/survivors and the reproduction of contingent social hierarchies through impositions on the home-lives of those constructed as exploitable and/or not seen to meet dominant criteria of belonging (Nayak, 2017; Hall 2018). This allows us to see the home as a relational space subjected to occupation and siege by forces that harmfully intrude and oppress including exploitative use of the home and hateful acts by neighbours. We have explored the ways in which these occupations and sieges draw upon, sit within and reproduce wider structures of intersectional oppressions in ways which become overwhelming.

Cuckooing reveals the centrality of the home in the shift from seemingly mutually beneficial to exploitative relationships through targeting of those dehumanised in relation to ideas of value and capacity. The home is also re-framed as an exploitable commodity, where the needs and desires of those occupying the home take precedent over those of the resident(s), even when not consciously understood or deemed problematic by those victimised. We also

consider matters of privacy which provides both a motivation for exploitative relationships (as a concealing mechanism) but, in combination with assumptions around close social relationships, may also conceal harms from those who might be able to support residents. Our focus on *hate relationships* shows how the home becomes targeted and associated with othered identities where intersections of 'race', faith, disability, sexuality and transgender feature in ways that speak to the connected nature of struggles against these harms. Through a range of acts perpetrated over time, this results in a siege like experience, evoking feelings of entrapment and immobilisation that become difficult to escape and are often not adequately recognised by those in positions of authority.

Whilst the home is vital to experiences of both cuckooing and hate relationships, it also becomes central to responses through re-location and displacement. Whilst re-location might be a desired quick-fix for those who yearn for an end through distance from perpetrators, the absence of supporting infrastructures, shortages of decent housing, poor practices of identification, lack of belief in victims' accounts, and inadequate understandings of the connected nature of incidents and their impacts, means even this can take years to implement. Beyond practicalities of moving those victimised, there are other concerns expressed by those subjected to domestic colonisation including established attachments to local areas, recognition that not all neighbours are hostile and/or exploitative, the reality that further harms are experienced in new locations, and a recognition that *they are not the problem*. We thus concur with Elliot-Copper et al (2020: 503) that 'the 'right to stay put' should be fundamental to any imagining (or operationalisation) of the 'right to the city' and housing justice.

In line with our understanding of the home as a relational space, we suggest more thought needs to be given to how the home might be reconfigured in sustainable ways in relation to local communities, places and wider social relations, rather than dismantled with the hope of being re-built elsewhere. Formal paths to resolution seem to individualise problems and reduce our collective capacity to think through what the home *could be* as part of communities that do not accept the normalisation of these kinds of practices. Immediate actions to cut short harmful experiences including early identification needs to be situated within broader commitments to and investments in the life of communities which address conditions under which domestic colonisation takes root. While not just found in more deprived areas in North East England, there is a concentration in both sets of research in marginalised urban neighbourhoods and residualised housing tenures. Stigmatised neighbourhoods create symbolic and material challenges for all, although our research speaks to enduring intersectional power relations in terms of relative positions of marginality (Pinkster et al, 2020), whereby assumptions around disability, 'race', class, sexuality, transgender and other structural vulnerabilities create dangerous distinctions and uneven burdens.

We therefore locate responsibility across those networks and relations (both proximate and distant) (Massey, 2004) which includes perpetrators, public institutions, hegemonic discourses, material conditions and spatial arrangements which provide fertile ground for these compounding harms. Resolutions then need to be more ambitious, with a clearer orientation towards civic and community-led solutions, recognising those committing these acts are in the minority. These need to be appropriately resourced, with bolder commitments to securing (not securitising) decent homes in neighbourhoods with thriving publicly funded

infrastructure and economic viability that addresses poverty and challenges both the undermining of the public sphere and a politics of division.

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¹ Cuckooing employs the symbolism of the cuckoo bird that commandeers the nest of other birds within its local habitat.

² The so-called bedroom tax results from reductions in welfare benefits (universal credit or housing benefit) that accrue with one or more spare bedroom.

³ According to the 2021 census, 90.6% of the population identify as White British. This is the joint highest figure along with Wales.

⁴ Blue badges are permits given to those with impairments in the UK to allow for use of accessible parking.

⁵ Anonymised local authority social housing organisation.