Persistent poverty in the Netherlands

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5. Sympathizing, fear and loathing in the neighborhood

5.1. Introduction: The neighborhood as a productive field

There is a common concern that in some kind of way deprived neighborhoods aggravate the lives of people in poverty. Therefore, this chapter’s central concern is how the neighborhood might influence the lives of people in poverty, and whether the neighborhood is a fruitful social environment. This can be pivotal for particular reasons, for example, that people in poverty may receive information from their neighbors concerning job opportunities. This information enables them to get a job and, consequentially end their impoverished position. With the help of neighborhood ties, people in poverty can convert their cultural capital into economic capital in the labor market. The neighborhood and its social bonds can muster productive social ties, which offer an escape out of poverty. Then, the neighborhood becomes a springboard, from which people jump to other fields. But if – for people in poverty – the neighborhood is not a field that offers resources, it consequentially diminishes opportunities to get ahead. Therefore, it becomes worthy to analyze how people in poverty are subjected to their neighborhood. To understand how people in poverty perceive their neighborhood and, thus, if they might have access to resources, I analyze how they deal with the neighborhood’s reputation – or stigma. Understanding how they deal with this stigma enables us to grasp the internal differentiation and underneath the neighborhood’s significance.

5.2. The foundations of the neighborhood: its stigma

One of the key features of deprived urban areas is its negative image. This image is often durable, difficult to change, and fortified by the manner in which the neighborhood is discussed. In deprived urban areas, the media stigmatize neighborhoods, so that as a consequence their inhabitants are looked down upon and discriminated against (Forrest & Kearns, 1999; Lupton, 2003). People in poverty of course are themselves consumers of the media. They see and hear the
stigmatizing images and language (Goffman, 1963; Soss, 1999; in Lister, 2004). Such a stigma is felt keenly by many and is often bitterly resented (Corden, 1996; Wood & Vamplew 1999). Studies of deprived estates reveal how the attached stigma “impoverishes all areas of residents’ lives” (Dean & Hastings, 2000). The result might be ecological contamination: all persons in “bad” neighborhoods are viewed as possessing the moral liability of the neighborhood itself (Sampson & Raudenbush, 2004; p. 321). Area stigma can be lasting, even in the face of large-scale renewal (Hastings & Dean, 2003). The Amsterdam high-rise area Bijlmermeer, one of the research sites, is probably the most stigmatized area in the Netherlands (Wassenberg, 2004; p. 275; Helleman & Wassenberg, 2004). The reputation is the bedrock of the neighborhood. How might people in poverty react to this infamy? Analyzing how people in poverty respond to this stigmatized reputation enables us to understand the internal differentiation (or social fabric) of the neighborhood.

5.3. The internal differentiation of neighborhoods

Noteworthy is that people react in various ways to neighborhood stigma, which enables us to understand the social fabric of the neighborhood. According to Rogers-Dillon (1995), although not all will react in the same way and its effects can depend on the situation, the impact of stigma can be intense. People in poverty, like Goffman’s stigmatized people, “are faced with a choice to control the circulation of discrediting information about themselves with the help of various concealment techniques, or by trying to pass in the community by acting in a ‘normal’ way, or opt for disclosure” (Misztal, 1996; p. 137; Miller & Kaiser, 2001; Shih, 2004). After Goffman’s seminal work on stigma (1963), several scholars elaborated on his ideas. One response is to accept the stigma (cf. Waxman 1977, p. 91), but other studies showed a vast range of strategies. Kusow (2004) asked how Somali immigrants in Toronto react to dominant color-based stigma. He shows that through reverse stigmatization, counter devaluation, and rejection of discrimination, Somalis reveal the problematic of stigma establishment. He raises the question of who is stigmatizing whom. Roschelle and Kaufman (2004) studied stigma management strategies among homeless kids and illustrated strategies of exclusion. There are aggressive and nonconciliatory attempts to gain social acceptance, including verbal denigration and physical and sexual posturing. These strategies had the unintended effect of reinforcing their spoiled identities (ibid., 2004; p. 23). However, these studies hardly incorporated
“place” or neighborhood in their analysis. Others did. Elias and Scotson’s (1994, org. 1965) seminal work on neighborhood stigma is a good example.

Concisely, the Elias neighborhood study demonstrates how “established neighbors attempted to impose their definitions of situations on newcomers. The newcomers developed a negative self-image of their group and reinforced social inequality between the groups” (Blokland, 2003b; p. 10). In this process, “exclusion and stigmatization of the outsiders by the established group were thus powerful weapons used by the latter to maintain their identity, to assert their superiority, keeping others firmly in their place” (Elias & Scotson, 1994; p. xviii). Stigmatization can have a paralyzing effect on groups with a lower power ratio (ibid. p. xxiv). The outsiders more or less accepted their inferior position. Via this trajectory, the areas in which the outsiders lived more or less shaped their future possibilities. Moreover, there is a strong relationship between place, people, stigma, and the reproduction of inequality. Loïc Wacquant uses a similar line of reasoning. According to him, to deal with neighborhood stigma, individuals develop distinction strategies (Wacquant, 1993; Wacquant, 1999b; p. 131). Strategies of distancing (I am not one of them) further undermine local solidarities and confirm deprecatory perceptions of the neighborhood (Wacquant, 1999a; p. 1644). Urban dwellers “overstress their moral worth as individuals and join in the dominant discourse of denunciation of those who undeservingly ‘profit’ from social assistance programs, faux pauvres and ‘welfare cheats’. It is as if they could gain value only by devaluing their neighborhood and their neighbors” (Wacquant, 1993; p. 374). Additionally, Wacquant distinguishes between several of these distinction strategies: mutual avoidance, reconstitution and elaboration of “infra-differences” or micro hierarchies, and the diversion of public opprobrium onto scapegoating such as notorious “problem families,” foreigners, drug dealers, and single mothers (ibid.). In the 1980s, Engbersen (1990; p. 106), heavily influenced by Robert Merton, used his reference group theory (1957) to show three mechanisms of internal differentiation in the neighborhood; 1) competition between native Dutch and migrants, 2) references on the basis of life-style, and 3) scapegoating. Blokland (2003b) analyzed an empirically complex picture of how native Dutch residents develop relationships with migrant neighbors. A case study of a Rotterdam neighborhood was used to show that four routes to discriminatory vocabulary could be distinguished: indifference, an antiracist discourse, conflicts, and again scapegoating. Many of these scholars use space – not as a residual phenomenon in which social action occurs – but as “a constitutive dimension of so-
cial life that shapes life experiences and action” (Gotham & Brumley, 2002; p. 267). Thus, analyzing how people in poverty respond to the neighborhood stigma enables us to assess whether the neighborhood is a fruitful environment for its inhabitants. Accordingly, neighborhood stigma causes individuals to react to this with internal differentiation and strategies of distancing, which consequentially annihilate potential social ties.

By showing responses to territorial stigma, I can illuminate how the social environment affects the life chances of people in poverty. I have already argued that stigmatized groups are not simply victims or passive recipients of stereotyping but rather, actively attempt to construct a buffering life space (Oyserman & Swim, 2001; p. 1). Moreover, since stigmatized individuals manipulate their interpretations of their social environment to protect their sense of self-worth (cf. Blokland, 2007), they make selective social comparisons. The effect is that individuals create status hierarchies within the neighborhood. They place themselves in the hierarchy, and the neighborhood becomes an elementary point of reference. In line with Durkheim, the socio-spatial organization of groups becomes the model for the mental organization of ideas (Gotham, 2003; p.725). These primordial reference points (the neighborhood) are mirrored in the mental structures of people in poverty, finally affecting their practices and life chances. Beliefs and practices could not be facetiously explained as a complete fantasy, corresponding to nothing in reality (ibid.). If people in poverty have an aversion to other urban dwellers, perceive them as good-for-nothings or as unproductive resources, the social environment is not exceptionally productive. Urban dwellers are reference groups. Individuals construct their definition of the situation relationally; either in opposition, or in conformity to others. They create this internal differentiation. By comparing different groups within different areas, I am able to illustrate whether the place in which they live is a productive field.

5.4. The boundary work approach and stigma management

Boundary work offers a compelling tool that enables us to grasp individuals’ stigma management and strategies of distancing (cf. Lamont, 1992; Lamont & Fournier, 1992; Lamont et al., 1996; Lamont, 2000; Lamont & Molnár, 2002). Boundary-work is a perspective by which sociologists examine relationships between individuals or groups not by studying their inherent characteristics but by analyzing the boundaries they draw between and among one another, such as
when the working poor define themselves in opposition to the poor who do not work” (Small & Newman, 2001; p. 38). People interpret their position in relation to others. Moreover, after analyzing how people in poverty define a morally worthy person in the neighborhood, knowledge is produced whether and how urban dwellers cooperate with each other, and whether they have fruitful social ties in the neighborhood. Boundary work is a prism through which the internal differentiation of an organization, status group or in this case a neighborhood can be analyzed. People everywhere organize a significant part of their social interaction around the formation of social boundaries “us-them boundaries matter” (Tilly, 2004; p. 213).

Two strategies exist for demarcating boundaries: “realist” and “nominalist.” The realist strategy takes the point of view of the actors involved, treating a group “as a social fact only in that it is consciously experienced as such by the actors composing it.” The nominalist strategy proceeds from the concepts and purposes of the social-scientific observer instead, taking the correspondence between “the investigator’s analytically drawn boundaries and the subjective awareness of these boundaries by participants (as) an empirical question rather than an assumption” (Laumann et al., 1983; p. 20-1, in Emirbayer, 1997; p. 303-4). I use the realist strategy for demarcating boundaries, which involves an inductive technique used to illuminate alternative social stratifications. I do not start from fixed categories such as “black” and “white,” native, or immigrants – only to structure the text. In the course of transcription interpretation, I analyzed whom the respondents define as a morally worthy and unworthy person in the neighborhood. By doing this, I demonstrate how urban dwellers create moral boundaries between and among one another and, consequentially, disentangle practices of internal social differentiation and distancing. To complement the boundary work perspective, I use Gramling and Forsyth’s (1987) taxonomy on stigma management. Gramling and Forsyth (1987) explored the use of stigma exploitation in the exchange process. They identified seven strategies: 1) eliciting special consideration, 2) evoking selected aspects of a stereotype, 3) avoiding a more serious stigma, 4) avoiding interaction, 5) using submissive manipulation, 6) avoiding membership, and 7) gaining membership.
5.5. Findings

Before turning to the qualitative analysis, I will show some numbers on what the respondents think of their neighborhood. Table 5.1 Opinions on the neighborhood shows that the majority of the respondents is positive about their neighborhood. In this, differences between the neighborhoods hardly exist. But this contradicts the opinions on neighborhood transition: the majority of respondents declared the neighborhood to be changed negatively. Again, the majority feel safe in their neighborhood, half of whom is in contact with their neighbors: the same number of people wants to move out. Noteworthy, many respondents feel at ease in their neighborhood. However, because there are no stark contrasts, these numbers express little. We still do not know what they precisely really think of their neighborhood. As we shall see, some are positive on their neighborhood, but at the same time, distance themselves from others. Further, based on these numbers, we hardly can say anything about the differences between the neighborhoods and how place shapes the lives of people in poverty. By looking at these numbers, I have to go in depth to search for the neighborhood’s internal differentiation and the consequences of neighborhood stigma. I will start with a brief description of the neighborhood – Amsterdam-Noord.
Table 5.1 Opinions on the neighborhood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>Noord</th>
<th>Delfshaven</th>
<th>Bijlmermeer</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of neighborhood</td>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not nice</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Depends</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>79</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood change</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>69.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No change</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other answer</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling safe</td>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>69.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsafe</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Depends</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact with neighbors</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>46.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanting to move out</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>56.8</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>64</td>
<td>44</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5.6. Amsterdam-Noord

After the construction of the North sea-canal in 1876, Amsterdam needed space for its industries (cf. Ypeij et al., 2002). After the First World War Fokker established its first factory on the north side of Amsterdam. During the 20th century, Noord developed as an important industrial area within Amsterdam. Heavy, petrochemical, and shipbuilding industries flourished. Amsterdam-Noord obtained its original shape in 1921 after the Amsterdam municipality confiscated the northern rural parts. That year, the municipalities Buiksloot, Nieuwendam and Ransdorp, and partly Oostzaan were absorbed in Amsterdam. “Tuindorpen,” referring to city districts with a rural character, aiming at neutralizing the blue collar inner city houses’ deterioration, are Amsterdam-Noord’s marked feature. Built from the 1920’s on, the absence of inner city pleasures, combined with the single-family housing, Tuindorpen were aimed to foster the development of decent individuals. Single-family houses with gardens and green surroundings characterize Tuindorpen, like Nieuwendam, Buiksloot, and Oostzaan. Still a large part of the
district exists as a rural area with small villages. The district of Amsterdam-Noord includes some of Holland’s poorest neighborhoods. Many inhabitants worked in the aforementioned industries, which had to compete with low-wage Asian companies and eventually went bankrupt. The 1980s failure of these industries caused massive unemployment. Immigrants gradually replaced the native working class.

5.6.1. The stigma of Amsterdam-Noord

On the one hand, the Amsterdam-Noord respondents are proud of their neighborhood. On the other hand, they feel stigmatized. They believe that the image of the area is not always positive. Some time ago, the local television network made a documentary on the neighborhood and its poverty. One woman says: “the bizarre Amsterdam Television broadcasting on poverty gave the neighborhood a bad reputation. Amsterdam Noord, a place where the down and out live. I think that is nonsense.” This comes on top of the widespread idea that their neighborhood is peculiar, as one man says, “We believe that they picture Amsterdam-Noord as a backward neighborhood. That is out of line.” Some respondents constantly experience confirmations of this stigma, especially in the labor and housing market; “I go to the employment agency many times. If I find a job opening, I write an application letter. Employers do not respond, because they do not want somebody from Amsterdam-Noord.” This man feels stigmatized and discriminated against. Some note other images, for example, in the newspaper; “people who look for a house do not want to live in Amsterdam-Noord. I noticed the ads.” This means that individuals, who search for a house in Amsterdam, do not want to live in the northern part. All these confrontations contribute to the impression that this area bears a bad reputation. Moreover, to deal with this, many act in response.

5.6.2. Classifying the undeserving poor: Natives’ viewpoints

First, I give several examples of how the native Dutch deal with their territorial stigma. The initial observed pattern was that the native Dutch classify others as the undeserving poor. For example, Amanda [118] witnessed the neighborhood’s deterioration. From her viewpoint, people are more rebellious and unsanitary and she thinks that all the Turks and Moroccans in the neighborhood engage in growing cannabis. Because she sees “others” effortlessly securing state benefits, she, like many other native Dutch, feels socially and economically deprived: “Nobody supports us, but migrant neighbors are supported. The government saved so much money. The government should think about us [single mothers]. I think that
Christopher [124] points at migrants in the neighborhood who possess a Mercedes. These status symbols mirror the migrants’ ostensible prosperity. Living in poverty, he pursues recognition for his impoverishment, feels relatively underprivileged since migrants receive more from the government. He is astonished that the migrants are real moneybags. Migrants are seen as a foreshadowing; because they produce more children, they can take over the Netherlands. He is in favor of retrenchments on child support subsidies: “Maybe they will say that I am discriminating. What I would like is that the government cuts off the child benefit. We always had to take care of our children. And if they want to raise more than two children, they have to pay for it. Let me tell you, the Turks and the Moroccans have many children, and they are going on holiday to Turkey or Morocco for six weeks. They buy many houses, and I can point at them in the neighborhood, they drive a Mercedes! That is awful. They [the government] will save billions [if they retrench child support for migrants].”

Brittany [108], a former homeless woman, feels dishonored by the state. While she was homeless, she never received governmental help. Again, migrants do receive support from the government. She refers to the Moroccan cafeteria owner in the street who – in her opinion – never has to pay any taxes. “He’s in the lap of luxury, they’re more privileged. It seems that we are discriminated against.” She continues: “While I was homeless, where was my refugee camp? They [the government] do not make a special effort for us, but only for those coming from far away lands. They migrate, and why do they migrate? Look at the cafeteria in this street, a Moroccan owns it. That is his business. But he is dodging taxes! All the migrants dodge taxes. Do you understand? I think, that’s terrible.”

Amanda drew a boundary between, on the one hand, those who are willing to work, conforming to society, and, on the other hand, refugees and migrants who do not conform. Christopher dissociates himself from the migrants by drawing a boundary between those who undeservingly “profit” from social assistance programs, and his sort: abandoned by the state and living in despair. He endeavors to
protect his acquired privileges. However, he does not blame migrants for his misery, but rather the government’s allocation of goods. [It seems that not only the neighborhood reputation is considerable]. Hence, many of the native Dutch think that they do not receive as much as others receive. For that reason, they feel economically deprived, underprivileged with reference to others (cf. De Swaan, 1990; p. 181). To deal with both stigma and this deprivation, they distance themselves from others in the neighborhood, who, from their viewpoint, gain more from the state. They see themselves as the deserving poor, and refer to others as the undeserving poor. All three respondents drew a boundary between the deserving and the undeserving poor. They cannot escape their neighborhood, because they lack the means. However, they hold often the state responsible for their misery, not so much the newcomers.

5.6.3. Neighborhood devaluation: Natives’ viewpoints

The second manner in how the residents deal with neighborhood stigma is to distance themselves from those who deteriorate their neighborhood. They make distinctions on the basis of life-style, and not on class or economic position. For example, Melissa [150], a 58 years-old woman, experienced the neighborhood’s deterioration. “Interviewer: what do you think of the neighborhood? Melissa: tolerable. The quality is declining. Antisocial people came to this neighborhood. And I do not mean colored people. Because above me live some people from Eritrea, and the next-door neighbors are Turkish. I do not care. In general, more antisocial people. Interviewer: what do you mean by antisocial people? Melissa: at the time, I lived in the Jordaan [an Amsterdam neighborhood], I met the same kind of people...calling names, cursing, not talking in a normal kind of voice. Color is not a concern. Because I only know two kind of people, kind, and unkind people.”

Furthermore, Kayla [166], a 38 years-old woman likes her own part of the neighborhood. Interviewer: “Are you satisfied with the neighborhood? Kayla: well, this part of the neighborhood is good. That is because of the many elderly. But the other part of the neighborhood is a real mess. That is because of the many alcoholics, and some people who are not normal, odd people. They booze it up every weekend. The rest of the neighborhood, it is a chaos. Walk down the street and look what a mess. They throw everything on the street.” From her viewpoint, others’ behavior coincides with a geographical location.
Accordingly, Melissa distances herself from people who are untidy, noisy, and undisciplined but draws a boundary between sympathetic and unsympathetic people. Kayla drew a boundary between purity and impurity, and behavior and place are firmly related. This manner of dealing with neighborhood stigma is to differentiate on the basis of life-style. The native Dutch draw moral boundaries, because they see others devaluing their neighborhood. They make distinctions contingent on others’ behavior, independently of color. By pointing at odd behavior, they avoid being stigmatized as a person who deteriorates the neighborhood.

5.6.4. Classifying the undeserving poor: The migrants’ viewpoints

Whereas the native Dutch classify the migrants as the undeserving poor, the interviewed migrants classify the native Dutch as the undeserving poor. Samir [116], a 37 years-old Moroccan experiences the neighborhood deterioration, dislikes his house, and thinks he has to pay too much rent. He distinguishes between the native Dutch who easily obtain comfortable houses, and “his sort,” who has to live in decayed houses. “If I request for a decent residence, I will not get it. They say, it is too expensive for you. You cannot afford it. But they give these houses to the Dutch in the neighborhood. Suppose we both apply for a residence, you will get it and I do not. That is awful. I won’t get it, always this moldy old house.”

A Surinamese woman [148] feels underprivileged with reference to Moroccans and Turks. She marvels about her neighbors’ plentitude and she speaks about “stepping down, so they can receive favors.” She compares herself with individuals in her surroundings, and feels as if her social position shifts downwardly. “Looking at these Turkish families, they are constantly moving from house to house. I wonder, how can they accomplish this, while I can’t? For example, the downstairs neighbors, I do not know where they are coming from, a kind of Tamil family. They get a house, floor covering, a fridge, and everything. The man of the house drives a Mercedes. Their grandmother is dropped off by taxi everyday. I do not get any favors. And we? We take a step down, and they rank prior to us. There are so many others looking for a house. Refugees always get the houses.”

According to Samir, the institutions offer the native Dutch more prerogatives. He draws a boundary between the haves and the haves-not, assigning himself to the latter. The Surinamese woman feels increasingly underprivileged. She draws a boundary between people in the neighborhood who obtain state benefits and she, who is underprivileged. These cases made clear that migrants also classify others
as the undeserving poor. They, as well, distance themselves from others who gain more from the state. In short, drawing boundaries between the deserving and undeserving poor is not particularly restricted to specific ethnic groups.

5.6.5. Neighborhood devaluation: The migrants’ viewpoints

Not only have the native Dutch pointed at those individuals who contribute to the negative neighborhood image. For example, 58 years-old Turk [159] negatively refers to other migrant fractions. From his viewpoint, not the native Dutch are impure, but Moroccans: Interviewer: “what do you think of the neighborhood? He: It is unclean, because more migrants came to this neighborhood. Many Moroccans, Moroccan children. Moroccan children are dirty. They get together until midnight. They do not think, ‘Let’s go to school’. They walk through the city, and do not do anything.” He dissociates from other migrants, and makes a clear distinction between purity and impurity.

5.6.6. Conclusion: Noord

So far, two patterns to deal with neighborhood stigma are distinguished. First, boundaries are based on fairness/justice/rightness. Both native Dutch and migrants feel underprivileged: “others” rank prior to them, have additional privileges, and are more prosperous. They feel left to their fate and abandoned by the state. They refer to a bias in the distribution of scarce resources. Both native Dutch and migrants classify themselves as members of the deserving poor. The second pattern of stigma management consists of drawing boundaries between disorderly and orderly behavior. Again, both the native and the migrants dissociate from the “neighborhood scum.” The most remarkable characteristic of Amsterdam-Noord is that there are no real differences between the native Dutch and the migrants (concerning their reactions to the territorial stigma).

5.7. Rotterdam Delfshaven

Delfshaven is situated in the west of Rotterdam. From 1860, entrepreneurs started to build low-priced houses to accommodate Southwestern Dutch migrants. The contemporary physical structure was established between 1870 and 1920. The neighborhood did not suffer from the 1940 German bombardments on Rotterdam (some neighborhoods did suffer from collateral damage from US bombs). The 20th century district, by contrast, has wide, stylish avenues with large mansions interspersed by small alleys with densely packed houses. Since its founding, it
attracted Dutch migrants to work in the Rotterdam harbor economy. These in-
habitants were partly replaced by foreign newcomers who started to work in the
late 1960’s in the related economy, as cleaners, retail entrepreneurs, and factory
workers. The “native” inhabitants left the district, and the newcomers changed its
social fabric. The consequences are lucid: different languages could be heard,
retailers modified their merchandise or were replaced by migrant entrepreneurs,
and many natives moved to the city outskirts. One distinctive feature is the vast
residential mobility. Inhabitants continuously move on as relatives from Turkey
or Cape Verde can settle in the neighborhood (cf. Staring, 2001; Staring et al.,
2002; p. 16). Two third of the inhabitants are from non-Dutch descent. The ethni-
cally heterogeneous Delfshaven accommodates many traditional migrants (e.g.
people from Suriname, Turkey, Cape Verde and Morocco). Accordingly, many
migrant organizations, churches, mosques arose in the district. The average edu-
cational level and income is low, the number of people on welfare high, and un-
employment severe (ibid; p. 20).

5.7.1. The stigma of Delfshaven
Similar to Amsterdam-Noord, the inhabitants of Delfshaven suffer from the
neighborhood reputation. Though some like living in the neighborhood, they are
also aware that their neighborhood has a reputation. One man: “My neighborhood
is not a bad neighborhood; they gave it a bad name.” Family and friends outside
the neighborhood reaffirm the neighborhood reputation. As one woman says: “If I
tell people where I live, they respond very surprisingly.” Moreover, another
woman said: “Poor people always lived in this street, and this street always had
a reputation of hardship. I became aware of the status via my family. They ask:
why did you decide to live there?”

5.7.2. Neighborhood devaluation: Natives’ viewpoints
The remaining native Dutch declare that they live as the only few whites among
many migrants. Although some display their resentment, they have hardly any
other option than to accept the situation and make the best of it. Some native
Dutch refer to those who try to devalue their neighborhood. Both Amy and Ken-
neth, the next two illustrations, suffer from territorial stigmatization, but try to
throw off their stigma.

Amy [228], a 31 years-old woman lives, “in spite of everything” in the west of
Rotterdam. Her sister is anxious to visit her, and her father often asks, “When do
you leave that shitty neighborhood?” Although some parts are unsafe, she does not complain about the neighborhood. She does complain about the downstairs café and, several times, she telephoned the police to complain about the nuisance. The café owner does not care. Except for the café nuisance, Amy does not have any social contacts with her neighbors. She does not have any difficulties with the people in the street. Noting that she lives as the only white among many migrants: “I notice, all the foreigners are so close to each other. It is hard to make friends with them. Sometimes I say hello, then they look stoical.” The social distance is severe and she cannot communicate with her Turkish neighbors adequately. “Well, it would be nice to chat occasionally: you do not have to visit them twenty-four-seven.” Amy makes a distinction between orderly and disorderly people: “Before the Turkish neighbors, I had some very rough neighbors. They threw everything in the lobby, chairs, bicycles. If I complained about it, they freaked out, calling names, disorderly people.”

Kenneth [233] lives in Spangen, a neighborhood with a bad reputation in his words; “They gave Spangen a bad name. Ten years ago, before the renewal, it used to be a nice cozy neighborhood. But not anymore. There used to be many small shops, a grocery-shop, a butcher. Now, the post office is gone, and I am forced to go to the big super markets.” The urban renewal, from his viewpoint, turned out unpleasant. Many old residents did not came back to the old neighborhood and, for that reason, he feels estranged. “After the renewal, I got many new neighbors. The old ones left the neighborhood.” He dislikes his own neighborhood: “It is becoming a second-rate neighborhood. The neighborhood is for people who are out of place. They are often migrants, they have a criminal record, or they live on welfare. The Dutch in this neighborhood do not enjoy the neighborhood any longer. They leave the neighborhood one by one. I saw it happening the past twenty years. People left because of the mess in the streets. I can give you a tour through Spangen and easily point at those who live up to the rules of the game and those who do not. Interviewer: rules of the game? Kenneth: well, we are all raised with several norms. There is no reason to throw garbage in the street! These inhabitants are not raised in a normal kind of way.”

Although Amy accepts newcomers, she dissociates from those who have a low moral standard. She does not make ethnic distinctions. Accordingly, Kenneth’s definition of a good neighbor is “a dead neighbor.” Decency in the neighborhood is gone, and he hardly makes distinctions between individuals; they all are im-
moral, and criminal. The boundary he draws is between him – a morally decent person – and the “rest of the neighborhood.” This is how he dissociates between those who live up to the social norms and those who do not.

5.7.3. Neighborhood devaluation: The migrants’ viewpoints

In Delfshaven, many Turks are interviewed. Achmed [271] is one of them: “everybody knows, this is not a good neighborhood.” He does not see many Dutch in the streets anymore. He estimates that about five native Dutch live in his street. There used to be more Dutch, but they all left the inner city: “it is better to live among the Dutch. They have a better income, but they all left the neighborhood.” If he had more money, he would leave too. He suffers from the drug-related nuisance. He is often asked to give money to drug-users, whom he passes apathetically: “Dutch people, the more the merrier. More Dutch means less criminality. Everybody knows that. Also, here, the Middellandstraat, there used to be many Dutch shops. But not any more. It is unsafe, so they all left. If I had more money, I would go away.”

Yuksel [274] dislikes his house, the neighborhood, and his disorderly neighbors. He does not bother anybody. However, his neighbors are a nuisance to him. In his apartment building, many lamps are molested and bicycles are stolen. In his opinion, two Dutch brothers are responsible. These two brothers are alcoholics and his downstairs Cape Verdian neighbor is a prostitute: “I want another house in another neighborhood, but I do not have the money to move out.” His neighbors are disorderly and he makes distinctions within his own ethnic environment. “The inhabitants are disorderly. They all have a different culture and they come from small villages and rural areas. They do not know how to live in such a neighborhood. In the mountains, where they come from, it is normal to put the garbage in the street. They still do it here in the Netherlands. You are not in Turkey, this is Holland. The respectable people leave, and who stays? The alcoholics and people like us, who do not have any money.” Furthermore, he wants his children to grow up well, in a neighborhood with a good reputation.

According to Yusuf [262], too many migrants live in his neighborhood: “the Dutch left, and many foreigners arrived, Surinamese, Moroccans. Because the Dutch left the neighborhood, the quality of the neighborhood declined. One time, somebody broke into my house. I know who did it: it is a Moroccan.” The neighborhood is significant for his children. He refers to the junkies, who in his
opinion create a hostile environment. About the migrants: “in the schools in this neighborhood, there are not many Dutch kids. Therefore, many of the children don’t do as well as they should academically. The migrant children learn to curse, use dirty words, calling names. I do not like that. I want my children to grow up well.”

Yeter [255] makes clear that many Pakistanis, Turks, and Moroccans live in his neighborhood, though not many native Dutch. His upstairs neighbors are Surinamese. He does not have any social contacts with his neighbors, nor do they visit each other. A good neighbor is somebody who does not bother other people: “The Surinamese make a lot of noise. They turn the music on very loud. We Turks do not. If our children are noisy, we correct them. We do not like making noise.”

Kelsey [212] used to have contacts with her neighbors, but not any longer. She, a Cape Verdian woman, witnessed the neighborhood alteration, and she is worried about whether the neighborhood is a good environment for her children. “It used to be a nice neighborhood, living with some Dutch and a few Turks. It used to be better. However, it is getting worse. Many junkies reside in the neighborhood. I am afraid to let my children play in the streets. The backdoor used to be wide open. Many Turks and Moroccans live in the neighborhood. The Dutch left.”

Achmed feels safe in the neighborhood, but he worries about the safety of his children. He makes a distinction between criminal and non-criminal behavior, and he distances himself from the junkies and associates himself with the native Dutch. Yusuf makes a distinction between decent and indecent people. Child rearing values are central to this distinction. Yeter dissociates himself from other migrants and their life style by clearly drawing a boundary between individuals who are able and unable to discipline their children. Kelsey associates the rise of criminality with the arrival of Turks and Moroccans. She dissociates herself from these groups by referring to their deviant behavior. In this way, many migrants resent the absence of the native Dutch, and refer to disorderly behavior. They try to distance themselves from other migrants. They make social distinctions to avoid a more serious stigma.

5.7.4. Classifying the undeserving poor: The migrants’ viewpoints

Yener [261], a working poor, works, but receives less money than people who work on the side. He draws a boundary between those who practice immoral be-
behavior and moral behavior. He can point at the undeserving poor in the street, those who deliberately offend the rules. His feelings of destitution are intensified since these fraudulent urban dwellers earn more but do less: “Looking at this street, I can point at many people engaging in the informal economy. Not only Turks, but also Moroccans and Dutch. They also divorce, so they receive both an (welfare) income. I know these people. I think it is unfair. I can go to the welfare office and tell them that I divorced my wife. Then I quit my job, and take up two welfare benefits. I can save money, so I can go on holiday with my children, underhand. All these people in this neighborhood drive a nice car. I cannot.” He distinguishes between the deserving and the undeserving poor, and situates himself among the former. From his viewpoint, the undeserving poor are immoral.

5.7.5. Conclusion: Delfshaven

The native Dutch live amidst many migrants; they barely have any other option then to accept the multi-cultural society. Some feel estranged and draw a boundary between morally superior and inferior behavior. On the other hand, many Turks draw boundaries on immoral, criminal, and disorderly behavior, child-rearing values, referring to other migrant fractions who display “odd” behavior and “unusual” lifestyles. Two patterns of resisting the neighborhood stigma are identified. First, both native and migrants point at those who devalue their neighborhood. By doing so, they avoid the stigma of being a person who deteriorates his own neighborhood. The second pattern: some dissociate from the unworthy underprivileged. By practicing strategies of distancing, they avoid being stigmatized as the undeserving poor. The most distinctive characteristic of Delfshaven is similar to that of Amsterdam-Noord; all practice more or less the same strategies of distancing. However, many migrants also make distinctions with reference to their own population.

5.8. Amsterdam South-East, Bijlmermeer

Situated in the southeast of Amsterdam and constructed from the 1960’s on, the Bijlmer springs from Le Corbusier’s architectural thoughts (cf. Ypeij & Snel, 2002). His ‘Functionalism’ prescribed that life’s’ purposes (working, living, recreating, and shopping) have to be spatially separated. This ‘Form Follows Function’ principle resulted in large ten story apartment buildings amidst the green parks, well connected with Amsterdam’s’ center via subway. The middle classes could live quietly in the outskirts of Amsterdam, while working in high-skilled
industries. It turned out differently. The Amsterdam middle class did not choose the Bijlmer; facilities developed slowly during the construction, the modern apartments had to compete with conventional houses in the province, and the parking garages differed from the original planning (causing dark spots). Many apartments were vacant. Marginalized groups concentrated in the neighborhood, among whom are many former Dutch colonial migrants (Suriname became independent in 1975). The Bijlmer has one of the largest Surinamese communities of the Netherlands. One third of the Bijlmer inhabitants are Surinamese, one third native Dutch and one third from non-western countries. Several social problems are present. First, the Bijlmer suffers from a spatial mismatch between supply and demand of labor. Many banks and insurance companies are close to the Bijlmer, offering high-qualified jobs. These jobs cannot be fulfilled with the relatively lowly educated Bijlmer immigrants. Second, the Bijlmer has an unsafe reputation. The crime rate is far above the Amsterdam average. The many dark spots are an excellent place for drug dealing. With its many escape routes, the Bijlmer offers a hide out for drug runners. In the 1990s, urban renewal began. Many high apartment buildings were bulldozed and replaced by smaller houses and the remaining has been fully renovated. The urban renewal claimed to have a more blended composition as a result. But despite these good intentions, the Bijlmer’s reputation did not change.

5.8.1. The stigma of the Bijlmermeer

The Bijlmermeer is one of the most stigmatized areas of the Netherlands. Despite the 1990s urban renewal, it is hard to get rid of its negative reputation. Some of the respondents, a man, experience the urban renewal as discriminating. “The neighborhood renewal. I disagree. The motivation is negative. Poverty has to leave the neighborhood. To do this, they built classy houses. That is discriminatin g. They do it to doctor up the respectability of the neighborhood.” From his viewpoint, the renewal is a symbol that he is part of a public issue, while his personal troubles have not been addressed. Others confirm this idea, expressing their discontent towards the media; “How they talk about the neighborhood. It seems that only bad people live in the Bijlmer.” The neighborhood image has effects; “outsiders are frightened to go to the Bijlmer. I noticed. Because the streets are so grubby, I feel embarrassed to invite coworkers for dinner.” Because the neighborhood is stigmatized, they are reluctant to invite people over, showing a latent relationship between social networks and the neighborhood.
5.8.2. Neighborhood devaluation: Natives’ viewpoints

Contrasts are vivid in the Bijlmer. The inhabitants experience the poor living conditions in the Bijlmer; its green environment is juxtaposed to a drug-related nuisance. Through the eyes of the native Dutch, this nuisance is paralleled to the existence of the Surinamese inhabitants. Many native Dutch equate drug-related nuisance with blackness. William, [306] a Dutch man, witnessed the neighborhood’s moral decay and speaks about deterioration of norms, and ties this to the migrants’ arrival: “The riff-raff from abroad arrived in the Bijlmer. They have different standards than the native Dutch. Ghanaian, Surinamese, or Turks, it does not matter what skin color. They have different norms than we have. ‘We’ means the average Dutch. And Amsterdam Southeast becomes a garbage can. You see the quality of the neighborhood declining. More nuisance and criminality in the neighborhood. It is part of a ‘bad’ process. It is not only my opinion.” He makes distinctions between individuals in the neighborhood: “I used to have some well-mannered neighbors. They were decent, but they left the neighborhood. They were replaced by something less comfy. In my nature, I am not a person who easily discriminates. I judge people on their behavior. That is the problem! I observed the behavior of these people, and based on their behavior, I drew my conclusion. Do you understand that I do not live comfortable in this neighborhood?”

Many Dutch Bijlmer inhabitants do not use words like “migrants” or “foreigners” to describe their next-door neighbors. They use less ambiguous terms to describe others, such as blacks, as does Whitney, a 53 years-old Dutch woman [316]. They – the blacks – display immoral behavior: “Yes, the neighborhood is deteriorated. The Dutch used to live in this neighborhood, but they are gone now. That makes a big difference. I do not have anything against blacks, but some of them are a real goof-off. They are probably used to different standards in the bush. If you walk down the porch, you see how dirty everything is. I think, that is so disorderly. They throw everything out in the street. It is becoming a ghetto; the housing association puts the riff-raff in these houses! If my grandson comes over, he is disdainful towards my neighborhood!”

Kristen [309] dislikes living in the Bijlmermeer and she blames the Surinamese for her misery: “When I came to this neighborhood, a labeled myself as a non-racist. But after so many negative experiences, I am avoiding the Negro-
Surinamese. I mean, the Hindustani women are OK, but these men treat you shitty. If have two kinds of experiences. I have to be slammed in the face, or I have to be fucked, and that kind of behavior starts at age ten. None of them ever apologized.”

William drew a clear boundary between “them” who have low moral standards and “us” the average native Dutch. Whitney did not blame the migrants, but the housing association. The housing association distributes ‘social problems’ fallaciously. As a consequence, she has to deal with immoral behavior. Kristen emphasized the black/white dichotomy, but also makes distinctions within the Surinamese community. She insists that she hardly discriminated before she moved to the Bijlmer, but her worldview changed. It seems that the neighborhood influences individuals’ viewpoints. Accordingly, the native Dutch do not want to be held responsible for the neighborhood deterioration. Moreover, to avert their neighborhood stigma, they point at the black community, which, from their viewpoint, deteriorates their neighborhood.

5.8.3. Classifying the undeserving poor: Natives’ viewpoints

In the Bijlmermeer distinctions are made on the basis of social positions. Caitlin [319], a 49 years-old Dutch woman is not a Bijlmermeer enthusiast: “What I extremely dislike about the Bijlmer is that so much is organized for the black community. Not for whites. I feel discriminated in my own country. Go to the market, accidentally bump into someone, I guarantee you, it is black and it does not say sorry. I do not want to discriminate. But this is out of line. Damn, I live in my own country, it doesn’t say sorry.”

Travis, a 36 years-old Dutch man [352] has been living in the Bijlmermeer for twelve years. He witnessed the rise of the drug economy, and the exit of the affluent individuals. From his viewpoint, he thinks he has to accommodate to the newcomers: “As a Westerner, you are a kind of ‘allochtoon’ [a minority member]. To keep it livable, I think, they have to adjust to Dutch norms. Why should I adapt to others in the neighborhood. To whom do I have to adapt? To my Antillean neighbors, or the Ghanaian over there? I should adapt to all kind of different groups in all directions. That is unrealistic.” Travis declares: “what’s coming to the neighborhood are people who do not have any money and no future prospects. They do not speak Dutch or even English. The last couple of years, many have-nots came to the neighborhood. That is affecting the neighborhood. Nobody
As a result, the boundary Caitlin draws is based upon righteousness; “they” receive more and therefore she feels underprivileged. She draws secondly a boundary based on behavior. Travis makes a clear distinction between civilized and uncivilized people, stressing the idea that all inhabitants have to get along, and that all social problems are accumulated in the neighborhood. He draws a boundary on moral behavior. Nevertheless, what appears is a third pattern of dealing with neighborhood stigma, by expressing sympathy for others’ positions and social problems. Although he is not personally involved, Travis understood others’ problems well.

5.8.4. Classifying, distancing and sympathizing in the Surinamese community

As a logical consequence of being the largest ethnic group in the Bijlmer, the Surinamese feel accustomed to the neighborhood. They experience a sense of belonging and are pleased about the Surinamese festivals: [323] “Yes, I feel at ease in the Bijlmer. The neighborhood includes many nationalities. It is like living in Suriname. I affiliate with these people.” [331] “Many activities are organized, for example a Surinamese dancing.” [341] “I live comfortable in this neighborhood. I enjoy the multi-cultural society.” Additionally, although intolerance is clearly present, the Bijlmer offers a safeguard against race prejudice. The third manner to deal with neighborhood stigma – sympathizing – is best illuminated at some Surinamese accounts. Leslie [367], a Surinamese woman, explains; “Since I moved to the neighborhood, I think it is wonderful. You see many foreigners, just like me. Thinking about discrimination, I feel secure. But the last couple of months the neighborhood starts to deteriorate, it is becoming dirty.”

Obviously, the Surinamese experience the neighborhoods’ deterioration. Some Surinamese distinguish between those who can adhere to conventional norms and those who cannot. An internal segmentation occurs and many express differences within the “black” community: [339] “Surinamese and Antilleans from Curacao, do not get along. And people from Aruba, they go along with the Surinamese. And Antilleans from Curacao are different. A lot of discrimination occurs.” Marissa [322] says she is living comfortably. However, she also experiences the other negative side of the neighborhood. “They throw everything from the balconies. A couch, Christmas trees, diapers, and the elevator is very filthy. Some people can-
not fit in. I can fully understand it, they come from a different society in which everybody lives in the open-air. They have to adapt, facing difficulties to do so. And I think that this vandalism is the result of financial troubles. They do not know how to cope with limited sources.”

“I’m a white Surinamese”, says Shannon [321], a 42 years-old Surinamese woman. She feels underprivileged because she can hardly get access to the institutions, although others can: “the government takes care of refugees. They quickly build new shelters for them, and money comes in very fast. However, if I want something, because I am ill, I have to go to the healthcare services twenty times. They have to verify everything, and this and that. Always the little suffer for the great.” She is “whiter” than the average Surinamese and she experienced discrimination in the neighborhood and in Suriname. “Everything is thrown on the street. Interviewer: who is doing that? Shannon: well, I think, in this neighborhood, most of the people are foreigners. Therefore, these people seem to deteriorate the neighborhood. Interviewer: what do you think of the neighborhood? Shannon: I like the surrounding, but not the people. That is the difference. I do not like these fellows. My own people. I have been beaten thrice because I am white. I do not like that. Because they think, I am Dutch, so you can beat me up. I have the same experience in Suriname. Therefore I am caught between a rock and a hard place. I do not know where I should live.”

In short, Leslie did not make firm distinctions, but by taking up positive connotations, she neutralizes the neighborhood stigma. Rather than practicing strategies of distancing, some sympathize with others. But also within the group, distinctions are made. Shannon disconnects herself from the Surinamese community. She dissociates from the undeserving poor and she points at the foreigners who deteriorate her neighborhood. She employs both strategies to shift off the neighborhood stigma.

5.8.5. Conclusion: Bijlmer

Native Dutch draw boundaries on disorderly versus orderly, moral versus immoral behavior, civilized versus uncivilized, sexually honorable versus disgraceful behavior, and they feel underprivileged with reference to the “blacks.” On the other hand, many Surinamese draw moral boundaries on purity and impurity. However, these boundaries are less dramatized, because Surinamese enjoy living in the Bijlmer. All groups equally experience nuisance. This misery is drug-
related, and linked with the deteriorated built environment. In the Bijlmer, none of the inhabitants wants to be blamed for the neighborhood deterioration. All groups, native and migrants, point at those who are devaluing the neighborhood in order to avoid and to lessen the neighborhood stigma. Both the native Dutch and the Surinamese feel underprivileged. They want to show that they are part of the deserving poor. At last, to deal with neighborhood stigma, some sympathize with others’ impoverished social positions, and show their consideration.

5.9. The incidence of the strategies of distancing

Particularly interested on how the stigmatized areas were related to the internal differentiation of the neighborhood, this chapter identified three stigma management techniques. Using one or more of these management techniques, people in poverty are able to avoid, lessen, counter, cope, or otherwise manage their stigma (Gramling & Forsyth, 1987; p. 402). The respondents made three distinctions between other urban dwellers based on: 1) behavior, 2) deservingness, and 3) neutralizing the discrediting mark. In the first technique: people in poverty express their moral worth by disqualifying “others” who are impure, immoral, or disorderly. By pointing at bad behavior in the neighborhood, those who throw out the garbage in the street, use much alcohol, and bring up their children in the wrong kind of manner, they try to avoid a more serious stigma: “in this strategy the actor displays a mark in order to conceal, mask, draw attention away from, excuse, or negate a more serious stigma” (Gramling & Forsyth, 1987; p. 408). In the second technique: people in poverty make social distinctions between the undeserving and deserving poor, and assign themselves to the latter. They point at others who seem to secure state benefits effortlessly, while from their perspective, these “frauds” do not deserve social assistance. The respondents feel underprivileged, abandoned by the state and therefore point at welfare beneficiaries driving a Mercedes. The distinctions they make are based on assumed economic prosperity and privileges; people in poverty avoid being a member of the undeserving poor (and they evade group membership): “the essence of this strategy is that the marked individual wishes to avoid membership in a group or association, or obtain non-member status in a group or association of which s/he is currently probably a member” (Gramling & Forsyth, 1987; p. 410). In the third pattern, people in poverty express sympathy for others position. They understand others’ behavior in the neighborhood and embrace positive connotations of the neighborhood and its dwellers. Consequentially, they try to neutralize a discrediting mark. Rather than pointing at others’ behavior negatively, they display their considera-
tions for others’ position, which is not based on bad behavior or economic privileges, but on humanistic grounds. The three techniques are not mutually exclusive. Some dissociate from others, while simultaneously expressing their sympathy (cf. Bourdieu, 1999; p. 4).

Ninety-five respondents made distinctions based on life-style, twenty-five on deservingness, and forty-five respondents expressed their sympathy for others’ position (see Table 5.2 Relationship strategies of distancing and the neighbourhood). Commonly, the respondents made distinctions on the basis of life style, and secondly they oftentimes express their consideration for others. Looking at Table 5.2, there are differences between the neighborhoods. How can I explain these differences?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.2 Relationship strategies of distancing and the neighbourhood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Noord</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deservingness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive connotations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (P&lt;0.05)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In three neighborhoods, the common manner to deal with the neighborhood stigma is to make distinctions based on life style. However, the Amsterdam Noord dwellers often feel underprivileged with reference to others. But this manner to deal with the neighborhood is not often practiced in Delfshaven and the Bijlmermeer. Even so, taking up positive connotations is repeatedly practiced in both Delfshaven and the Bijlmermeer. So there are differences between the neighborhoods, but is this due to the social environment, or are other factors involved? How can I explain these differences? Maybe I can explain the differences by focusing on their ethnic background.
Looking at Table 5.3, which shows the ethnic composition of the neighborhood in general, we see quite a few differences between the neighborhoods. First of all, native Dutch are the majority in Amsterdam-Noord; there is not a majority in Delfshaven, and a lot of Surinamese reside in the Bijlmermeer. The “Landscapes of Poverty”-project consists of interviews with various people from different ethnic backgrounds, and the ethnic composition of the neighborhoods mirrors the ethnic composition of the research group. So, in Amsterdam-Noord, sixty native Dutch, in Delfshaven twenty-nine Turks and twenty Cape Verdians, and in the Bijlmermeer twenty-three Surinamese are interviewed. It seems that there is a relationship between neighborhood and the manner in which people distance themselves from others, but these differences may be traced back to the respondents’ ethnicity.

Table 5.4 shows the relationship between the respondents’ ethnic background, and their strategies of distancing. The data shows that the three techniques are not exclusively restricted to particular ethnic groups. Both native Dutch and migrants feel underprivileged, display their moral worth, sympathize with, and dissociate from others. Differences are not very clear, although the native Dutch relatively often refer to the undeserving poor, quite a few Surinamese embrace positive connotations of the neighborhood, and the majority of the Turks makes distinctions based on life-style. Why?
Table 5.4 Relationship ethnicity and strategies of distancing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lifestyle</th>
<th>Dutch (55%)</th>
<th>Moroccan (20%)</th>
<th>Surinamese (43%)</th>
<th>Turkish (75%)</th>
<th>Cape Verdian (54%)</th>
<th>Antilliaan (14%)</th>
<th>Other (100%)</th>
<th>Total (100%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deservingness</td>
<td>18 (21%)</td>
<td>2 (40%)</td>
<td>3 (13%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
<td>25 (15%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>20 (24%)</td>
<td>2 (40%)</td>
<td>10 (43%)</td>
<td>6 (21%)</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
<td>45 (27%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>84 (100%)</td>
<td>23 (100%)</td>
<td>28 (100%)</td>
<td>13 (100%)</td>
<td>7 (100%)</td>
<td>5 (100%)</td>
<td>165 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The native Dutch feel often abandoned by the state, and witnessed the arrival of new groups in the Netherlands. According to the Dutch, migrants seem to acquire more privileges. For that reason, the native Dutch probably make often distinctions on deservingness. Because so many Surinamese feel responsible for others’ behavior in their neighborhood, they persistently take up positive connotations. After all, they are the largest group in the Bijlmermeer. However, these distinction strategies cannot be entirely related to a person’s ethnic background. Almost all ethnic groups practice one of the three strategies of distancing. Nevertheless, because there are more similarities than differences between the various groups, it is difficult to explain their distinction strategies. Though, it seems that a common pattern emerges; a pattern that is not particularly restricted to ethnic groups, but is common for people in poverty and their impoverished position: a moral code that distinguishes between deserving and undeserving, pure and impure, and kind and unkind persons. Making distinctions, drawing moral boundaries and creating status hierarchies appears to be a common activity. Nonetheless, the low-income positions produce these distinction strategies: they want to maintain their self-worth, do not want to be reminded of their poor status, avoid responsibility for the neighborhood deterioration and, therefore, somebody has to suffer.

5.10. Conclusion: Distant bonds in the neighborhood

The manner in which urban dwellers deal with each other has an unintended effect. To know, the strategies of distancing reaffirm the negative neighborhood image: an image of community absence, struggles between urban dwellers and a bad livability. It seems that the neighborhood is trapped in a vicious circle: poor livability and a bad reputation result in stigma management techniques. These techniques tend to widen the social distance between people and, consequentially, people become even more dissociated with their local communities, which undermines local solidarities (Wacquant, 1999a; p. 1644), cultivates differences (cf.
Lamont & Fournier, 1992) and all this eventuates in few productive ties to get ahead.

In this chapter, I tried to grasp as to whether the neighborhood influences the life chances of people in poverty. First of all, in such disintegrated areas, the chance of escaping poverty via neighborhood resources is minimal. In the neighborhood, people in poverty seem to lack productive social ties for social leverage. Second, the neighborhood, I think, only has a modest effect; the neighborhood influences the lives of people in poverty in such way that it merely fortifies feelings of destitution. Whether the neighborhood contributes to the perpetuation of poverty is undecided, but it will hardly contribute to upward mobility.
Notes

Oftentimes, scholars use the notion of collective efficacy, referring to the capacity of a neighborhood to intervene when a problem arises, and in which trust, social ties, and reciprocated exchange exist among neighbors (Browning & Cagney, 2002; Duncan et al., 2003; Skrabski et al., 2004; Cancino, 2005).

Stigmatization often works as a double-sided process. The established attribute to themselves a special group charisma that confirms their virtue and superiority, while at the same time imputing to the outsiders a special group disgrace which proves their anomie and inferiority (May 2004, p. 2162). Simply, the quintessence is: “give a group a bad name and it is likely they live up to it” (Elias & Scotson 1994 [1965], p.xxvii).

Wimmer (2004) provided an empirical contribution to the debate on multiculturalism and racialization by looking at patterns of group formation on the level of social categories and personal networks in the immigrant neighborhoods of Basel, Bern and Zurich. He found that ethno-national categories are secondary principles of classification.

In The Elementary Forms of the Religious life (1965), Emile Durkheim developed a theory of knowledge premised on the assumption that the socio-spatial organization of groups is the model for the mental organization of ideas. He maintained that the first collective framework for understanding the world and classifying knowledge was the model of spatial relationships. In particular, individuals constitute themselves as groups based on their collective comprehension and expression of concepts of direction, distance and center (Gotham, 2003; p.725).

The concept of “the habitus” may help.

A reference group becomes any collectivity, real or imagined, envied or despised, whose perspective is assumed by the actor (Shibutani, 1955; p. 563).

Thomas pointed out many years ago that what a man does depends largely upon his definition of the situation. One may add that the manner in which one consistently defines a succession of situation depends upon his organized perspective. A perspective is an ordered view of one’s world – what is taken for granted about the attributes of various objects, events and human nature. It is an order of things remembered and expected as well as things actually perceived, an organized conception of what is plausible and what is possible; it constitutes the matrix through which one perceives his environment (Shibutani, 1955; p. 563-4).

The link between boundary work and stigma was mentioned earlier, “Erving Goffman has best shown that social life is a form of theatricalization with a front stage and a back stage masks and makeup. His telling descriptions reveal that the distance or boundaries that separate individuals are never, even in total institutions, purely physical. They are symbolic representations that often take the form of stigma” (Lamont & Fournier, 1992; p. 3).

However, first of all, “much research remains to be done to determine whether and how this boundary work has lasting effects on the perpetuation of urban poverty” (Small & Newman, 2001; p. 38). Secondly, since many scholars operate within this no-Durkheimian perspective (cf. Lauderdale, 1976; Davies, 1982; Epstein, 1992; Philips, 1996; Rock, 1998; Bourdieu et al., 1999; Southerton, 2002; Rajah, 2006), it can be questioned if this boundary work is a thoroughly novel attempt.

According to Andreas Wimmer, in many cases, there is bitterness precisely about not having to share what has been achieved with the others, who gave nothing in return for these privileges. According to this moral economy of reciprocity, refugees and immigrants are not only a source of disorder, non-decency violence and uncleanness, but also profi-
teers of a welfare system to whose erection the old-established contributed hard work and high taxes (Wimmer, 2004; p. 12).

Lamont (2000) social class-focused research strategy shows that despite all differences between the views of white and black Americans, French and immigrants from the Magherb, a common pattern emerges: a moral code that distinguishes between disciplined and lazy, responsible and irresponsible, straightforward and devious, and caring versus uncaring persons (cited in Wimmer, 2004; p. 3).