Depression in the aftermath of eviction

A one-year follow-up study of a disruptive housing life event

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Abstract

Eviction from housing is an institutionalized social process affecting millions in the western world, but very little is understood about its impact on people’s lives. Guided by George Brown and Tirril Harris’s landmark sociological research on disruptive life events, together with evidence that home is an important ‘place’, this study aims to contribute to an understanding of eviction’s fallout by considering depression as a potential outcome. Taking advantage of unique data on all evictions in Sweden and linking to longitudinal registers, this study seeks to determine whether working-age adults facing imminent eviction in 2009 had a greater risk of depression in the following year compared, using penalized maximum likelihood logistic regressions, to a control group randomly drawn from the Swedish population. Results indicate that imminent eviction is significantly associated with subsequent depression, even accounting for a range of social, economic, geographic and behavioral characteristics. Contrary to expectations, the findings are not robust for gender differences. Recent mental illness is the only control variable significantly moderating the association of interest, which remains significant regardless of illness history. The results provide grounds for treating eviction as a disruptive life event in its own right.

Keywords

eviction, depression, life event, housing, home, place, Sweden
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“Not all wanderers are on the move because they prefer being on the move to staying put. Many would perhaps refuse to embark on a life of wandering were they asked, but they had not been asked in the first place. If they are on the move, it is because they have been pushed from behind – having been first uprooted by a force too powerful ... to resist. They see their plight as anything but the manifestation of freedom. Freedom, autonomy, independence – if they appear in their vocabulary at all – invariably come in the future tense. For them, to be free means not to have to wander around. To have a home and to be allowed to stay inside.”

Zygmunt Bauman (1997: 92)
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1. Introduction

Eviction from housing is a governmentally-sanctioned intervention with a long history in the western world, estimated to affect millions yearly (Stenberg et al. 2011); yet, “we know next to nothing about its impact on people’s lives” (Desmond & Kimbro, 2015: 4). On the other hand, major life events in general have been a topic of research for decades, providing a good starting place for exploring the potential implications of being forced to leave one’s home. One area of focus within the life events literature has been the relation between certain types of events and subsequent mental health problems. In particular, research led by sociologist George Brown and social psychologist Tirril Harris indicates that when an incident poses a severe long-term threat, and when it involves some degree of loss, humiliation, defeat or entrapment, it can lead to the onset of depression (Brown & Harris, 1978; Brown, 2002). The impending death of a loved one, the loss of a job, and a partner’s imprisonment, for instance, have all been discussed as disruptive life events in these terms. If the critical event in the process of being evicted, the receipt of a final notice to evict, can be understood to consist of these elements as well, the model put forward by Brown and Harris would suggest that an important consequence of eviction may be depression – a serious condition touching many aspects of a person’s world, from physical health to personal and work life (Gilbert, 1992).

Although one can find in Brown and Harris’s early work implicit concern with eviction as a potentially depressogenic experience, it has not been further explored as such in the life events literature or elsewhere. Nonetheless, another area of research, which describes the home as a ‘place’ of special importance (cf. Easthope, 2004), provides a theoretical basis for the imminent threat of eviction to be understood as a severely threatening event that can entail loss, humiliation and defeat. Through this lens, eviction can be seen as a disruption in place – a disturbance of the important relationship people have with significant locations in the world around them. The literature of home and place provides strong conceptual support for bringing eviction back under the purview of the life events framework to assess whether, as with other disruptive life events, the receipt of a final notice to evict is related to subsequent depression.
Aside from eviction having generally been a “hidden housing problem” (Hartman & Robinson, 2003) with unexplored consequences, the specific lack of research on depression as an outcome of eviction may reflect the persistent notion, in line with the social selection perspective, that mental illness precedes rather than follows social exclusion from housing (cf. Philippot et al. 2007). Prior studies of eviction based on cross-sectional data have not been able to address the question of whether and how the experience of being forced to leave one’s home interacts with and potentially reinforces pre-existing individual conditions (Stenberg et al. 2011), making it hard to assess the extent to which eviction plays an independent role in prompting different outcomes, like depression, rather than just being a residual product of ongoing social marginalization (cf. Rojas & Stenberg, 2016).

Taking advantage of new individual-level longitudinal data on evictions in Sweden made available by the Swedish Enforcement Agency (Kronofogden) and following the framework for studying life events set forth by Brown and Harris, the purpose of this study is to begin to assess whether eviction from housing may in fact play a critical role in provoking depression, one of its many potential outcomes not yet explored. The study seeks to establish whether there is a relationship between imminent eviction and subsequent onset of clinical depression. This is achieved by following all women and men aged 18 to 64 who received a final eviction notice in 2009 in order to determine if their risk of depression in the year after the event is higher than for a randomly drawn control group not exposed to eviction who are followed up for a comparable one-year period; even controlling for a range of background factors including social, economic, and demographic characteristics as well as prior mental illness. Since women have previously been found to be more likely than men to develop depression following a severely threatening life event, particularly when events relate to housing (or children and procreation), this study also checks for potential gender differences in the risk of depression following eviction. The questions that this study seeks to answer, then, are (1) whether people who experience an imminent threat of eviction have a subsequently higher risk of depression; and (2) if and how any risk varies by gender.
2. Theory & prior research

2.1 Sociology and depression

Sociological interest in mental health outcomes, like depression, rests on the notion that while mental illness may have a biological or physiological basis, it may also have its origins in socio-structural conditions (Aneshensel et al. 2013). Efforts to explore the relationship between social factors and individuals’ emotional wellbeing reach back to the late nineteenth century, most notably Durkheim’s classic exploration of suicide (Kessler, 2013). Investigations of this nature reflect the kind of sociological pursuit that C. Wright Mills (2000[1959]) argues to be the discipline’s greatest contribution: reframing, where appropriate, ‘personal problems’ as ‘public issues of social structure’. The essential tool of the ‘sociological imagination’, according to Mills, is to see people as situated in and influenced by their wider social and historical context, such that personal difficulties, which otherwise tend to be attributed to the individual and their immediate social setting, may be understood to originate more fundamentally in broader social conditions. Mental illness is one type of personal trouble often treated (both conceptually and therapeutically) as if it were exclusively the product of an individual’s biology, genetic makeup or behavioral tendencies. Sociologists contribute a different perspective to this field in the manner Mills encourages by exploring the extent to which mental illness has its roots in social structures and institutions encountered in a person’s private sphere, but outside their individual reach.

In a landmark study, *Social Origins of Depression*, George Brown and Tirril Harris (1978) present the case for depression in particular to be studied through a sociological lens. As “a central link between many kinds of problem”, from poor housing to physical illness, depression, they argue, is key to understanding some of society’s pressing issues (Brown & Harris, 1978: 4). Adopting Mills’ approach, they set out to first establish that there is, in fact, a social component to a person’s onset of depression (i.e., that it can be linked to some element of their direct milieu), in order to then be in a position to understand how this relates to social systems and structures beyond their purview (Brown & Harris, 1978: 4). Their

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1 Sociologists tend to account for ‘mental illness’ as the states of mind interpreted and designated in culturally and socially specific ways as ‘abnormal’ or ‘disordered’ in line with the medical model (cf. Aneshensel et al. 2013). It is in this sense that mental health and illness are used here.
orientation was revolutionary in relation to psychological research at the time because it sought explanations for the etiology of depression in social factors rather than individual biological, behavioral or personality traits. Their approach was also distinct from other sociological research on mental health outcomes, which tended to focus on the relationship between emotional wellbeing and wider systems and structures from the start, without seeking insight from individuals’ daily life experiences.

Although there had been some prior attempts to explore the relationship between individuals’ life experiences and health problems (e.g., Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1974; Dohrenwend, 1973; Myers et al. 1971; Brown & Birley, 1968), the innovativeness of Brown and Harris’s methodology set their study apart. Most importantly, in contrast to previous studies based on life event inventories, they attained in-depth narrative reports that captured a broad and open-ended range of experience; this enabled them to conduct a more comprehensive investigation of how people’s daily life experiences relate to the onset and timing of depression. They also introduced a way of accounting for the level of “contextual threat” that different events and circumstances posed, in order to identify, in a more structured way than previously, whether the severity and duration of threats experienced were related in any way to subsequent depression. What they found was perhaps intuitive but nonetheless groundbreaking – most cases of depression were preceded by severely threatening life events.

### 2.2 Life events

Based on these and subsequent results, Brown and Harris put forward a model of depression that places severely threatening life events at the center. The critical link to depression in their model is a life event that poses some sort of long-term severe threat to a person (of at least a week but often much longer). These life events, which they refer to as provoking agents, occur in the context of different background factors: current vulnerability factors (e.g., lack of social supports and resources for coping), which increase a person’s susceptibility to depression following the event; protective factors, which act conversely; and

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2 A team of raters assigned reported experiences different levels of threat. They were blind to subjects’ mental states and emotional responses but informed of their social and demographic characteristics. This measure was found to have high interrater reliability, preferable to inventory-based measures (Tennant et al. 1979).

3 *Social Origins of Depression* (1978) is based on two samples of working-age women in London, one drawn from the community and one from a clinically diagnosed population. Later studies had similar designs based on the same model of depression, some looking at men also [e.g., Nazroo et al. 1997; Brown et al. 1995; Brown et al. 1987 and more. Brown (2002) provides a review].
social factors (e.g., social class), which play a more distal role in instigating the event and shaping people’s proneness to depression in its aftermath (see Figure 1). According to their model, however, background factors alone are not enough to explain why someone becomes depressed; it is the experience of a severely threatening life event, almost always within a year and often much more recently, that is the critical factor – the *provoking* agent – in the onset of depression.

Brown and Harris (1978) maintain that severely threatening life events can lead to depression because they affect the way people perceive themselves and the world around them; an idea consistent with the depiction of depression as a condition involving a negative view of self, future, and world (cf. Beck et al. 1979). However, they do not agree with those (mostly psychologists) who stipulate that *distorted* perceptions are always to blame. Instead, they argue that depression can develop from “entirely accurate conceptualization, the ‘fault’ lying in the environment rather than in the person” (Brown & Harris, 1978: 83). Brown and Harris therefore suggest that the nature of provoking agents – what they could be expected to entail to the average person – is crucial to understanding their disruptiveness. Four specific elements are identified as relevant in this regard: loss, humiliation, defeat and entrapment.

**Figure 1. Brown-Harris Model of Depression**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background factors</th>
<th>Cognitive sets</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerability factors</td>
<td>(low self-esteem)</td>
<td>Provoking agents</td>
<td>Avoidance of Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Factors</td>
<td>Protective factors</td>
<td>grief, specific hopelessness</td>
<td>Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(high self-esteem)</td>
<td>loss, humiliation, defeat entrapment</td>
<td>Failure to work through generalization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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4 Adapted from Brown and Harris (1978: 265); regular text indicates the causal model, italicized indicates theoretical interpretations. Humiliation, defeat and entrapment are added as provoking agents here, reflecting later work (see Brown et al. 1995). The original model also included ‘symptom-formation factors’, found in some cases to be linked to the type and severity of depression but since these findings were highly provisional they are not presented here. For a discussion, see Brown & Harris (1978: Chapter IV).
Early life event research indicated that most cases of depression followed events that involved a component of threatened or actual *loss*. This was defined broadly as not only the loss of a person or material possession, but also a role, a life plan, or a cherished idea (Brown, 2002). The more inevitable the threat of loss, the more likely it would be that depression would follow (Brown & Harris, 1978). Brown and Harris suggest that the experience of an event involving loss, or a real threat of loss, affects a person’s emotional wellbeing because it requires a significant change in their “assumptive world” – their life-space and expectations surrounding it, including their own self-conception (1978:85, referencing Murray Parkes, 1971: 103). Loss appears to be especially damaging to self-esteem when people are highly committed to those aspects of their assumptive world (Brown et al. 1987). A failure to work through the grief of loss or a generalized sense of hopelessness following the loss event, can then lead to depression, according to their model (see Figure 1).

In later research, other dimensions of severely threatening life events (often components of loss events) were also found to be important to the etiology of depression: *humiliation*, the sense of being insulted or devalued; *defeat*, having lost in some direct or indirect form of social competition; and *entrapment*, confirmation of one’s inability to escape from an ongoing detrimental situation (Brown et al. 1995). These experiences are consistent with theories from psychological and evolutionary perspectives which suggest, respectively, that the feelings of helplessness and powerlessness (Bibring, 1953; Abramson et al. 1978), and the experience of a reduced “sense of rank, attractiveness and value” (Gilbert, 1992: 443; see also Carvalho et al. 2013) are involved in depression onset. Events encompassing any of these three elements, aside from any loss, are thought to have the potential to provoke feelings of hopelessness that may become generalized and result in depression (Brown et al. 1995).

Severely threatening life events are therefore thought to increase a person’s risk for depression insofar as they comprise some element of either loss (defined broadly), particularly to an area of high commitment; humiliation; defeat; or entrapment (Brown, 2002). All of these aspects of an experience, alone or in combination, implicate some sort of change or anticipated change that serves as a disruption in people’s lives – whether it affects the physical world around them or how they view themselves in it (cf. Brown & Harris, 1978: 85).
2.3 Eviction in focus

Certain kinds of disruptive experiences have been highlighted in the literature linking life events to depression; for example: death or serious illness of someone close; divorce or separation; being made redundant or facing major financial loss; as well as a partner’s imprisonment or a child’s delinquency (Brown, 2002).

While research inspired by Brown and Harris’s model of depression has contributed to bringing to light a wide range of disruptive life events such as these, it has been largely absent a discussion of housing-related events and, in particular, eviction. This is especially of note since one of six major categories of events found to occur prior to depression in their original study is an *enforced or threatened change in residence* – including receipt of a notice to evict (Brown & Harris, 1978: 104).\(^5\) In contrast to other categories, however, changes in residence are only ever mentioned once in their discussion; and this only in a list of examples used to show that loss can occur in many dimensions of life (Brown & Harris, 1978: 244). Although Brown and Harris show implicit concern for the loss of housing in this way, they do not explore specifically how such an experience relates to their theory. What is more, any mention of threats to or changes in residence, including eviction, disappears from the literature entirely in subsequent research. Hence, in a review of his and colleagues’ work, Brown (2002) never references any such event, though he discusses the death of a loved one, relationship breakdown, illness and other crises like job loss or criminal offenses.

That Brown and Harris never pursue the discussion of why an event like the receipt of an eviction notice may be disruptive (as they do with other types of events) is curious at first glance since it is an experience that appears to be more directly linked to social structures and institutions than say, the death of a loved one; and is in this sense perhaps of greater sociological interest, recalling Mills (2000[1959]). On the other hand, it is not altogether surprising that changes in residence would not gain as much interest or traction in the life events literature given the state of housing research at the time, which tended to emphasize the entrapment or segregation of people in ‘objectively’ unattractive neighborhoods. The questions in the housing section of Brown and Harris’s (1978) interview guide, which focus almost exclusively on types of problems like overcrowding, shared facilities, and lack of privacy, reflect similar interest in the implications of poor living conditions. In fact, the single

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\(^5\) The other five events were: Separation or threat; Major negative revelation about someone else; Life-threatening illness to someone close; Material loss or disappointment; and Miscellaneous crises. See Table 2B (Brown & Harris 1978:104).
question on changes in residence\textsuperscript{6} is not even included in the housing section of their guide. It therefore makes sense that the only housing-related experience named more recently as an example of a threatening life event within Brown and Harris’s framework is the inverse situation to losing home – being forced to stay in housing viewed unfavorably (“being turned down for a housing transfer”, in Nazroo et al. 1997: 12).

In fact, entrapment in poor living conditions continued to be the focus of housing studies in general until a recent shift in empirical research, spurred by the financial recession at the end of the last decade. The housing crisis that ensued in many places brought new attention to the possible relationship between eviction and emotional ill health (cf. Bennett et al. 2009) – bringing to light a phenomenon evident in the empirical results of Brown and Harris’s original study, but neglected since. Taken together, the studies inspired by this crisis suggest that there may be an association between eviction and mental illness, but none have discussed this potential relationship under the life events framework.\textsuperscript{7} As a whole, this research faces substantial methodological limitations including small samples, no comparison groups and no controls for prior mental illness, as well as data based on self-reports. Only a few examine depression, specifically, as an outcome: two studies of low-income and single mothers, respectively, find evidence in support of an association between eviction and later depression (Desmond & Kimbro, 2015; Osypuk et al. 2012); while a third finds support only for homeowners (Burgard et al. 2012). These three studies are based on small samples restricted to specific cities in the United States hard-hit by recession, limiting their generalizability.

Applying Brown and Harris’s model to consider eviction as a potentially depressogenic life event is a way to build on these findings, while also providing a theoretical framework for understanding what has until recently been a “hidden housing problem” (Hartman & Robinson, 2003) in need of examination.

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\textsuperscript{6} “What about notice of eviction...?” (Brown & Harris, 1978: 330).

\textsuperscript{7} A study from the UK found that subjective wellbeing decreased after mortgage repossession and took several years to recover (Searle, 2012). Another UK-based study found that common mental illness among homeowners, but not renters, who experienced repossession was higher in the subsequent year compared to other homeowners (Pevalin, 2009). Similarly, losing one’s home was found to be associated with a greater risk for depression among homeowners but not renting tenants in a Michigan sample (Burgard et al. 2012). In other studies, eviction of renting tenants is associated with subsequent declines in emotional wellbeing as well. Low-income urban mothers in Milwaukee were found to have a higher risk of depression in the year after eviction compared to matched peers (Desmond & Kimbro, 2015) as were single new mothers who recently experienced mortgage foreclosures (Osypuk et al. 2012). In Sweden, exposure to eviction was associated with higher rates of suicide in the following year (Rojas & Stenberg, 2016).
2.4 The event of losing home

To articulate eviction as a severely threatening life event in line with the Brown-Harris model of depression, it is important to consider what may be at stake for occupants. In other words, it is necessary to take up the discussion that Brown and Harris glanced over in their original study, concerning the significance of the residence and forced or threatened changes to it.

In legal and policy settings, housing is usually considered in terms of its objective “bricks and mortar” properties and its market value (cf. Fox, 2006). But, across a range of academic disciplines, it has been argued that housing’s significance to its occupants cannot be reduced to physical or easily measurable attributes. In synthesizing this cross-disciplinary body of research, Fox (2006) sees home as consisting simultaneously of immaterial, as well as material, dimensions: in addition to providing basic shelter and, for some, a means of financial investment, it is also a foundation for a sense of security and belonging, a component of personal and social identity, and an important social and cultural unit. In order to appreciate the value that people can derive from home, or the cost of losing home, she argues, its multidimensional nature needs to be taken into account; specifically, then, to assess the significance of facing eviction, other aspects of home, in addition to its physical or monetary properties, must be considered. The literature of ‘place’, which draws attention to the unique relationship that forms between people and important locations in the world around them, provides a conceptual framework in this endeavor (cf. Easthope, 2004).

2.4.1 Home as a place

A place is a geographic center of personal and social activity that emerges from a person’s patterned movement through space and becomes invested with meaning: it is a “functional node in space” and a “unique and complex ensemble” (Tuan, 1979: 388,411). The irreducible ‘ensemble’ of a place consists of three dimensions: its geographic location in the universe; its material form and belongings; and its meaningfulness to the people whose activities converge there (Gieryn, 2000). Places are in this sense “doubly constructed: most are built or in some way physically carved out but they are also interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood, and imagined” (Gieryn, 2000: 465). Although law and policy tend to emphasize the built components of a place while the socio-philosophical literature focuses mostly on its interpretive elements, efforts to apply the concept of place more broadly (e.g., Easthope, 2004 to housing; Gieryn, 2000 to sociology) encourage places to be seen as combinations of the two, inextricably woven together.
Across the literature of place, ‘home’ is treated as a special and significant type of place – even as a prime example of the concept of place (Easthope, 2004). The dwelling is a central ‘functional node’: it is where people tend to commit a large portion of their time and energy; where they may interact with close family and friends; and where they likely perform routine activities engrained in their daily lives. Because it features regularly in a person’s life, home can be seen to be a place that, in line with Gieryn’s definition and consistent with Fox’s (2006) analysis, has: a location in space (symbolically, the street address), material form (structure, furniture, décor etc.), and meaningfulness to its inhabitants. It is in this sense a ‘complex ensemble’, irreducible to its physical properties alone. The notion of home as a place should not be confused with many common uses of the term ‘home’ that reduce it to an abstract, mostly positive, idea or experience. Home, as place of ongoing residence, is location, form and meaning – all at once.

2.4.2 Disruption in place

In the section above, it is argued that home is a place. If home is a place, then eviction can be seen as a disruption of a person’s relationship to a place, in all its dimensions. People often respond poorly to disruptions in place, particularly when they are unwanted or unexpected (Brown & Perkins, 1992). Research within the literature of place highlights three social psychological processes that may be upset by a significant change to or loss of place: familiarity, the intimate, ‘taken-for-granted’ sense of a place; attachment, the strong emotional bonds to a place; and identity, the aspects of a place that make a person who they are (Fullilove, 1996). Exploring the nature of these disturbances as they may apply to eviction while also taking into account the multidimensional nature of home as a place, highlights the potential disruptiveness of this event in terms of Brown and Harris’s model.

The familiarity of a place has benefits to a person’s emotional wellbeing that often go unrecognized. Familiar locations, though not inherently safe, can offer a sense of security in that they are well-understood, compared to unfamiliar spots where one needs to be constantly on alert and attentive to details (Fullilove, 1996). Familiarity with a place arises not only from being acquainted with its physical or spatial layout, but also from being aware of its social and cultural blueprints. Understanding how to navigate within the different dimensions of a place makes it in a sense more emotionally, cognitively and physically efficient, though perhaps less exciting, to be there than someplace unfamiliar. Home places are inherently familiar. People become intimately acquainted with, and are also to a large extent in control.
of, the physical and social ‘lay of the land’ at home – furnishing and decorating it as they wish and establishing the nature of its use (Karjalainen, 1993). The familiar home, as a source of constancy and a setting in which to fulfill day-to-day routines, provides a basis for a sense of “ontological security”, in line with Giddens (1991; cf. Easthope, 2004; Fox, 2006).

When a person loses the taken-for-granted familiarity of a place, like home, disorientation and emotional distress can result. This has particularly been studied in relation to the loss of houses or whole neighborhoods to natural disaster, after which people often experience a period of paralysis, having lost their “cognitive map” of how to move through their world (Fullilove, 1996). Disruptive events do not necessarily have to affect the physical form of a place to render it unfamiliar, nor do they need to entail overwhelming material loss; they can also change the way people interpret a place. Even the physical transgression of a burglar into a residence, for instance, can all of the sudden make a home seem strange and unfamiliar – no longer safe, secure or private, no longer in one’s control (Brown & Perkins, 1992). Similarly, the receipt of a final notice to evict may challenge a person’s notion of home as a reliable and constant feature of their lives, as a place of “their own” – even before they have to move.

As an event that disrupts the familiarity of home in its many dimensions, the imminent threat of eviction can be seen to involve a mixture of immaterial and material loss. In Brown and Harris’s (1978) terms, it can entail a ‘loss of a cherished idea’ about one’s home, for instance, as a safe, secure, private or reliable place. But it also most often involves the actual ‘material loss’ of the familiar physicality and spatiality of home – and the well-understood social roles and relations situated within it. Disruption in the familiarity of the home can be a devastating blow to a person’s sense of ontological security, which rests on the meaning derived from daily routines (Giddens, 1991). These losses cannot be resolved immediately by being rehoused since familiarity takes some time to be established (cf. Gieryn, 2000).

The formation of strong positive bonds to place, referred to as ‘place attachment’ [in reference to Bowlby’s (1958) theory of social attachment in early life] is another social psychological process thought to be affected by disruptions in place. In somewhat the same way as young children have been found to benefit from a strong and stable attachment with a parent, people have also been found to benefit from a positive attachment to place. Place attachment can provide a feeling of security; contribute to one’s self-esteem; and be the basis for a sense of belonging (Brown & Perkins, 1992). Attachments to home are the core form of place attachment, in part because home is usually the first place to which people attach. It is thought that children carry with them into adulthood that sense of the importance of home, as
“a place of origin, a place of belonging, a place to which to return” (Bowlby et al. 1997: 344). Moreover, since social attachments are formed and nurtured in place, particularly in places of importance like the home, the two forms of attachment – to person and to place – can be interrelated and mutually reinforcing (Fullilove, 1996).

A disruption in place disturbs the immaterial attachments people form with and within a place. Accordingly, events affecting a person’s place in the world, particularly their home, may prompt feelings of loss and longing. In a classic study, Fried (1963) documented the experiences of a group of people who were forced to move from a neighborhood in Boston due to urban renewal. The subjects expressed grief and nostalgia for their lost homes and neighborhood and the social networks they had built there. Many appeared to meet criteria for depression. Thus, by affecting people’s social and place attachments, an event like being evicted from housing, even when rehoused elsewhere, can invoke the same emotions that Brown and Harris describe in people undergoing other loss events, like a loved one’s death.

A final mechanism through which place disruptions are thought to lead to emotional distress is via the disturbance of a person or group’s identity as it is oriented to and integrated in a place. Fried (1963) identified the loss of a “sense of spatial identity” as also contributing to people’s negative experiences of being evicted; a finding in line with the notion that when people are committed to a place – when they are held in its “ambiance” over time, through mind and body – that place can become, in a sense, a part of who they are and who they plan to become (Casey, 2001: 404). Home, in particular, can be a part of a person’s identity (and their identity, a part of their home) since it is typically such a central feature of their lives.

Since identity is wrapped up in the home and perhaps also in the ‘doing of home’ (cf. Bowlby et al. 1997), eviction is likely to be particularly scarring as a loss of an important part of oneself. On top of loss, facing imminent eviction may also involve humiliation (being devalued in one’s own or others’ eyes) due to the self-blame of failing to meet the obligations of the rental contract, or the stigma that accompanies public signs of eviction or being ‘downgraded’ in housing status (cf. Ford et al. 2001). As an affront to a person’s identity as it is situated in place, eviction may also be experienced as a social defeat, since “the soundness of individual place identity rests on having a place and on knowing that one’s place is held in esteem by others” (Fullilove, 1996: 1520). When one’s place is not acknowledged as such or when it is not considered valuable, alienation results. Recalling a man’s description of his descent into homelessness Fullilove notes, the “first stage of alienation” that he experienced was “the appropriation of his apartment” (1996: 1520) – a denial of his identity as it was
situated in his home. As has been conjectured in terms of other forms of defeat in the life events literature, eviction may be disruptive for what it symbolizes about a person’s life; particularly, confirmation of being “marginal and unwanted” (Brown et al. 1995: 19).

By conceiving of eviction as a disruption in place and exploring it in terms of the social psychological processes affected, it becomes clear that loss, humiliation and defeat – three of the components that Brown and Harris identify as important to the disruptiveness of an event – may be implicated. As a form of rejection and a denial of a person’s identity as it is situated in place, facing eviction can be seen to involve humiliation and defeat; this, in addition to presenting a threat to or loss of a source of familiarity, attachment and identity. There is therefore reason to believe that, as with other disruptive life events found with these elements, facing imminent eviction may in fact be associated with subsequent depression.

2.5 Gender differences

Before further exploring imminent eviction as a disruptive life event, it is important to note that in studies of other threatening life events, women have consistently been found to be more vulnerable than men to subsequent depression. The existence of gender differences in how women and men respond to severely threatening life events is generally agreed upon, though reasons for why this may be the case are somewhat more disputed (Kessler & McLeod, 1984; Thoits, 1991). Some research indicates that women may be more susceptible to depression after certain types of life events, in particular those involving children, procreation and housing; based on this research, Brown (2002) attributes women’s greater risk of depression after disruptive events to their specific vulnerability to events affecting the household. Although the study on which these conclusions are largely based (Nazroo et al. 1997) has some limitations, including not distinguishing between different types of housing events, its findings do suggest that events touching the domestic environment may affect women (in terms of depression) to a greater degree than men.

Since empirical results within the life events framework indicate gender differences in susceptibility to depression following severely threatening life events, perhaps particularly when it comes to events affecting home, and because this framework is used here to enhance our understanding of eviction, it seems relevant for this study to also include an examination of possible differences in women and men’s relative risks of developing depression after facing an imminent threat of eviction.
3. Aim and problem formulation

Following Brown and Harris and the literature of place, this study sets out to assess whether there is an association between imminent eviction and subsequent onset of depression.

First and most fundamentally, the study seeks to determine if people who face imminent eviction have a higher risk of becoming depressed shortly after. In light of evidence that home is a place and that a disruption in place can have implications for how people view themselves and the world around them, it is expected that exposure to eviction will be associated with a higher risk of depression in the following year, even controlling for relevant background factors, as has been shown for other severely threatening life events.

Relatedly, given the emphasized finding in the life events literature that women more often than men become depressed in the aftermath of severely threatening life events, particularly events affecting the household environment, this study also checks for plausible gender differences. Considering prior research, it is predicted that women who face imminent eviction will have a greater risk of depression than men in the same situation.

3.1 Studying eviction in Sweden

Procedures for being evicted in Sweden, as elsewhere in the western world, are regulated to protect tenants’ rights of residency. Tenants’ rights in Sweden are relatively strong, especially compared to in Anglo-Saxon countries. For instance, tenants in Sweden cannot be evicted when the building they reside in is sold to a new owner, where they can be elsewhere. In general, landlords must have legal grounds for eviction (most commonly, on the basis of rent arrears, but also due to disruptive or criminal behavior). This is determined through a set of formalized procedures (Stenberg et al. 2011; Flyghed, 2000).

The eviction process in Sweden consists of several general steps, which are reviewed briefly to inform and motivate the event of interest in this study. When creditors (most often landlords) seek to pursue eviction after giving initial notice to quit, they first apply for an enforcement order to evict. At this point, the threat of eviction is relatively distant. Often by

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paying back rent arrears within a regaining period or by arranging another solution with the creditor, the situation can be mediated (cf. Stenberg et al. 2011). Even when an enforcement order (execution title) is issued, occupants can appeal (Kronofogden, 2016a), prolonging if not preventing eviction.

If the execution title has been issued and occupants have not moved, their creditor may choose to continue to pursue a formal eviction by submitting an application for an execution of eviction (writ of execution) with the Swedish Enforcement Agency (Kronofogden, 2016a; Stenberg et al. 2011). This second stage of the process poses an imminent threat to occupants as creditors are actively seeking immediate eviction. If the Enforcement Agency decides that there are legal grounds for eviction, execution papers (notice of expulsion) are served to the occupant and the third and final step, the execution of eviction, occurs soon thereafter (Kronofogden, 2016a). In this last stage, if the occupant or their items remain on the property, officials from the Enforcement Agency enforce their physical removal (Eriksson et al. 2010). People who move out completely between the second and third stages described here (thought to be a quite common response) are not considered to have experienced an executed eviction in the Enforcement Agency’s records; though these are not formal evictions (i.e. they are not officially documented as reaching the final stage of eviction), they can be considered “formally forced moves” (Stenberg & Kjellbom, 2013), with essentially the same outcome as for those who are physically removed – the loss of housing.

Given the purpose of this study, which is to explore the consequences of losing home, as a place with both material and interpretive dimensions, this study defines the event of interest as the experience of an eviction threat that is so serious and immediate that it results in either losing access to one’s residence altogether or altering one’s relationship with it ‘for good’. This event is deemed to occur at the second stage of the eviction process as described here. The creditors’ application for an execution of eviction is the most appropriate measure to assess the point at which occupants lose their home, if not their housing. While a minority may be able to stay in their homes after this point, the vast majority will move or be removed. Even for those who are able to maintain their home even after reaching this stage, receiving the final eviction notice still alters their relationship with their dwelling. Since landlords may set conditions for them to be able to stay and can pursue eviction again at any time, likely with fewer barriers, their homes are generally less secure (cf. Stenberg et al. 2011). Thus, regardless of its outcome, imminent eviction is the critical eviction event of interest here.
3.2 Depression and clinical standards

Across their studies, Brown and Harris, with colleagues, identify whether or not subjects meet criteria for depression based on either medical records among hospitalized patients or interviews among people in the community. Their stated intent with measuring depression, across both inpatient- and community-drawn samples, is to align their criteria with clinical standards (Brown & Harris, 1978). Accordingly, versions of the Present State Examination (PSE), the clinical interview schedule used to assess depression in much of their community samples, and its successor, Schedules for Clinical Assessment in Neuropsychiatry (SCAN), reflect contemporary clinical psychiatric diagnostic criteria of their time (Bech et al. 2001).

To ensure that the measure of depression used in this study is as consistent with Brown and Harris’s operationalization as possible given available data, it is helpful to consider the comparability of their measures to contemporary clinical diagnoses of depression. It has been found that individuals categorized in the 10th Version of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) as having moderate and severe cases of depression, as well as some with mild cases, are also defined as having depression in SCAN (Bech et al. 2001); this suggests that it is reasonable to compare diagnoses of mild, moderate and severe cases of depression in ICD-10 with caseness of depression in previous life event studies.

If this is the case, then restricting the measure of depression to diagnoses received during a hospital admission constrains the number of people identified as being depressed compared to community-based research but does not significantly alter diagnostic criteria compared to other research following Brown and Harris’s theoretical model. The outcome for this study, depression, is therefore measured based on primary diagnoses of mild, moderate and severe depressive episodes made in inpatient hospital settings (as specified in the next section). Assessing depression based on diagnostic medical records has the further advantage of high specificity, since diagnoses are based on a standardized system of classification, reducing problems of false positives (Thielen et al. 2009). In Sweden, inpatient register data (based on all hospital admissions) in particular has the additional benefit of near complete coverage: a primary diagnosis is listed in 99 percent of all inpatient discharges generally, and in nearly 97 percent of psychiatric inpatient care discharges (Ludvigsson et al. 2011).

9 Issues of specificity with patient records are not of major concern in Sweden, where errors of translation (mismatch between diagnosis in chart and electronic records) and coding (mismatch between code and diagnosis) occur in less than one and six percent of inpatient entries, respectively (Ludvigsson et al. 2011).
4. Methodology & data

4.1 Data

This study takes advantage of individual-level, longitudinal data made available from various registers in Sweden. Information on eviction proceedings in Sweden occurring between January 1, 2009 and March 16, 2012 has been provided by the Swedish Enforcement Agency, which is the sole body authorized to execute home evictions in Sweden. The data from the Swedish Enforcement Agency have been linked with longitudinal data from other national registers. Those used in this study are: Statistics Sweden’s longitudinal integration database for health insurance and labour market studies (LISA) and its geography and domestic residential mobility database; the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention’s data on conviction for criminal offences; and the National Board of Health and Welfare’s National Inpatient Register and Prescribed Drug Register.

In addition to providing information on the population exposed to eviction during this time period, data from the linked registries also includes records from a 10 percent comparison group drawn on December 31, 2008, made up of a representative sample of the Swedish population aged 16 and above not exposed to eviction during the same period.

The project has received approval from the Regional Ethical Review Board in Stockholm (reference number: 2014/24-31/5). All data have been anonymized by and stored at Statistics Sweden and accessed through their secure Microdata online access (MONA) system. The researcher did not have access to personally identifying information at any point.

4.2 Sample

The sample for this study consists of the group of women and men aged 18 to 64 who were exposed to an imminent threat of eviction (i.e. whose landlords applied for a writ of execution) during the one-year period from January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2009, and a control group restricted to all women and men aged 18 to 64 in 2009 from the comparison group drawn from the Swedish population. The age range is restricted to working age adults in line with previous life event research (cf. Brown, 2002). Individuals listed as having erroneous personal numbers are excluded from the sample, as are those who were not
resident in Sweden during the entire study period or who have evidence of receipt of mental health care during the six months prior to the defined start date (explained below). Information on social, economic, geographic and behavioral variables would ideally be assessed at the time of eviction; however, since the available data for these records are only drawn at the end of each year, these variables are recorded according to the 2008 records, the latest data available prior to evictions occurring in 2009. Where education is missing in that year, it is imputed from the prior year when available. Less than one percent of the total sample is excluded from analysis on grounds of missing data in control variables.

The final sample included in analysis consists of 510 758 individuals, of which 5 970 are in the group exposed to an imminent threat of eviction, and 504 788 are in the control group.

4.3 Study period

The 54 month study period (4.5 years) is shown in Figure 2 and is designated according to a start date and the period preceding and following it. The start date for the exposed group is coded as the date of registration of their creditors’ application for a writ of execution with the Enforcement Agency. For the few who face imminent eviction more than once in the year 2009, the date of the first registered application is used as the start date. For the comparison group, the start date is defined as January 1, 2009; the day after the random comparison group was drawn. Only exposure to imminent eviction in 2009 is assessed so that the start dates for the exposed group and control groups fall in the same calendar year.

In order to isolate new episodes of depression in the follow-up period, a six-month period prior to the start date is defined in line with Melfi and colleagues (1998; also, Gardarsdottir et al. 2009) to identify and exclude from analysis individuals who during this period show any evidence of having received mental health care.10 Individuals admitted to or remaining in the hospital during the six-month pre-start period with a diagnosis of any mental illness [F00-F99 in ICD-1011 as recorded in the National Inpatient Register] and individuals receiving a prescription of anti-depressants during the six-month period [N06A in the Anatomic Therapeutic Chemical classification system (ATC) as recorded in the Swedish Prescribed Drug Register] are excluded from the study. Of those who met all other inclusion criteria,

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10 These individuals are excluded from analysis, rather than simply controlled for, because for this group, depression in the follow-up period cannot be identified as a new episode and is a different outcome.

11 International Classification of Disease, Version 10.
over 10 percent of those exposed to eviction and less than 5 percent of those in the comparison group are excluded on these grounds.

The study period extends further back to take into account recent mental illness in the remaining sample. Since the Swedish Prescribed Drug Register began on July 1, 2005 (Socialstyrelsen, 2009), data on mental health care is collected from 42 months to 6 months prior to the start date, for a period of 36 months (3 years) in total (see Figure 2).\textsuperscript{12}

In line with prior life events research, individuals are followed up for 12 months after the start date to capture incidence of depression (cf. Brown, 2002). People who are not registered as resident in Sweden for the entire 54 month study period are not included in the study because they may lack important information on recent mental illness and depression in the follow-up period. There is not significant dropout due to migration in either group, though it is slightly higher among those exposed to eviction.

\textbf{Figure 2. Study period and mental illness for included sample}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>36 months</th>
<th>6 months</th>
<th>12 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control for prior mental illness</td>
<td>No mental illness</td>
<td>Follow-up for depression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Start date
Exposed Group: Eviction date 2009
Control Group: January 1st 2009

\section*{4.4 Operationalization}

\subsection*{4.4.1 Independent variable}

As discussed above, the explanatory variable of interest in this study is \textit{imminent eviction}, an event measured here as the date of registration of a creditors’ application for a writ of execution. This is the best proxy for when tenants find out that their creditor is pursuing formal eviction because they receive notice shortly thereafter (cf. Kronofogden, 2016a). Since all creditors in Sweden apply at the Enforcement Agency from whom the data in this study has been provided, information on who experienced this event is very comprehensive.

\textsuperscript{12} Prior mental health care (in both the 6-month exclusionary period and the longer control period for recent mental illness) is based in part on antidepressant use, a good measure of receipt of mental health care in general (often outpatient) since over 90 percent of antidepressant prescriptions were found to be made for psychiatric conditions, rather than depression alone (65 percent of antidepressant prescriptions are made for mood disorders) (Mark, 2010).
4.4.2 Dependent variable

The outcome of interest in this study, *depression*, is measured as the date of inpatient hospitalization recorded in the National Inpatient Register with a primary diagnosis of depression. Depression is coded according to ICD-10 diagnoses of mild, moderate and severe cases of depressive episodes, including those diagnosed as part of bipolar affective disorder (F32, F33, F31.3, F31.4, F31.5). This measure is consistent with life events research, which uses comparable criteria for measuring depression (discussed above). ICD-10 diagnoses of persistent depression lasting for many years (F34) are not included in the measure of the outcome of interest in this study; this is also in line with Brown and Harris (1978), who separate out chronic cases of depression lasting over one year.

4.4.3 Control variables

According to the Brown-Harris model of depression (see Figure 1), there are background factors that can play an ancillary role in the onset of depression. Vulnerability and protective factors may directly shape a person’s response to a disruptive life event, which influences their likelihood of becoming depressed in its aftermath. Social factors may be indirectly related to depression, both helping determine whether people experience a disruptive event in the first place and shaping the protective and vulnerability factors they are equipped with, or burdened by, in response. In order to assess whether an event, in this case, imminent eviction, is associated with a higher risk of depression in its own right, it is therefore important to control for these types of characteristics, while keeping in mind that, in general, many factors associated with eviction are also risk factors for developing depression.

Basic demographic characteristics (age, gender, birth place) may be related to both eviction and depression. Eviction disproportionately affects men (Eriksson et al. 2010), while depression disproportionately affects women (Kessler, 2003). Although risk of depression varies across the life course, age in general does not appear to moderate the relationship between the experience of severely threatening life events and the risk of being hospitalized for depression (Kessing et al. 2003). People born abroad are somewhat overrepresented among evictees in Sweden compared to the general population but in similar proportions to the renting population (Eriksson et al. 2010). Being born abroad may be related to a higher risk of depression through vulnerability factors, for instance having fewer social supports, experiencing barriers to labor market integration, or residue from displacement due to war or disaster (Hjern, 2012; Roth & Ekblad, 2006).
History of mental illness is another important background factor to consider in assessing the relationship of interest, due to its association with both depression and eviction. Prior mental illness may indicate a general vulnerability to depression but it may also put people at greater risk of future depressogenic experiences (Kessler, 2003), like eviction. Especially recent mental illness may be associated with being threatened with eviction, perhaps in particular for women (Flyghed & Stenberg, 1993\textsuperscript{13}).

Disadvantageous social and economic conditions also leave people more vulnerable to eviction and, potentially, depression in its wake. Resource-weak groups such as the unemployed and recipients of social welfare are substantially overrepresented among people involved in the eviction process, particularly at the later stages like the one assessed here (cf. Rojas & Stenberg, 2016). Recent criminal convictions are, to a lesser extent, associated with eviction as well (Eriksson et al. 2010). Since eviction has been described as an urban problem (Desmond, 2012) affecting larger cities, with most evictions in Sweden previously found to occur in its three largest cities (Flyghed, 2000), it is also important to consider type of place of residence as a factor. Other factors, like education (as a measure of social class) may be related to a person’s likelihood of facing an imminent threat of eviction in the first place, and may also be associated with resources for coping in its aftermath, such as the ability to negotiate and seek legal assistance, which has been linked to improved outcomes (cf. Seron et al. 2001). Families with children have also been found to be at higher risk for eviction in Sweden, perhaps due to greater economic burden and prioritization of children’s expenses over rent (Stenberg et al. 1995), though there has been a recent push to reduce evictions of children (Socialstyrelsen, 2008). Alternatively, family, as a social resource, may be a protective factor for experiencing depression in the aftermath of a major life event (cf. Brown & Harris, 1978).

Based on these background factors, the following control variables are included in analysis. They are measured according to the approach delineated above and are operationalized as follows. \textit{Age}: age turned in 2009. \textit{Gender}: women/men. \textit{Birth place}: not born in Sweden. \textit{Education}: highest level education achieved (pre-upper-secondary, upper-secondary and post-upper-secondary). \textit{Urban}: living in one of the regions of the three largest cities in Sweden (Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö, respectively). \textit{Criminal record}: having been evicted.

\textsuperscript{13} Rates of psychiatric admission from 1987-1991 were found to be 5 times higher among evictees in Stockholm in 1991 compared to the general population. Of those evicted, women who could not be found the following year had substantially higher rates of psychiatric admission pre-eviction (Flyghed & Stenberg, 1993).
convicted of a criminal offense in the one year period prior to start. **Family configuration:** single/all other configurations (single parents with children, married families/civil unions, cohabiting couples with children together) in the previous calendar year. **Social welfare recipiency:** received any social assistance (individualized) in the previous calendar year. **Unemployment:** having been without work any day of the previous calendar year. **Recent mental illness:** having been admitted to the hospital or remaining in the hospital with a primary diagnosis of any mental illness (F00-F99 in the ICD-10) or having been prescribed anti-depressants (N06A in the ATC) in the 42 months to 6 months prior to start date.\textsuperscript{14}

### 4.5 Analytical strategy

The relationship between imminent eviction and subsequent depression is estimated using penalized maximum likelihood logistic regressions, which are appropriate for regressions on a binary outcome for which there are a small number of events in relation to non-events, as is the case with the outcome in this study (hospitalization for depression). This method has been used on similar populations (cf. Rojas & Stenberg, 2016) to correct for the small-sample bias of concern when regressing on rare outcomes, which, uncorrected leads to underestimation of the probability of the event (King & Zeng, 2001). Penalized regressions are conducted using the statistical subroutine ‘firthlogit’ available in STATA (Firth, 1995; StataCorp, 2015).

This study seeks to determine (1) if exposure to imminent eviction is associated with a higher risk for depression in the following year and, if so, (2) whether and how this risk may vary by gender. The following equations summarize the relationships of primary interest, respectively, to these questions:

\[
(i) \quad \text{depression} = \text{imminent eviction} + \text{control variables} + \text{error term}
\]

\[
(ii) \quad \text{depression} = \text{imminent eviction} + \text{gender} + \text{imminent eviction} \times \text{gender} + \text{remaining control variables} + \text{error term}
\]

The former question is assessed in crude and adjusted models that test the significance of the relationship between imminent eviction and depression. The interaction between gender and imminent eviction is also tested along the way, in consideration of the latter question. An interaction is said to be present when the effect of an independent variable on the dependent

\textsuperscript{14} Note that recent mental illness is based in part on antidepressant use as a measure of receipt of general psychiatric care (often outpatient), rather than depression alone (see earlier footnote for explanation).
variable is influenced by a third variable (Jaccard, 2001); in the case here, if the relationship between imminent eviction and subsequent depression varies by gender. As indicated in the second equation, interactions are tested using hierarchically well-formulated (HWF) models in line with best statistical practice, such that all lower order parts of the highest order interaction term are included in the same model (Kleinbaum, 1992). The higher order interaction term is constructed as a product of the two variables of interest and the statistical significance of an interaction is determined using product term analysis: if the coefficient of the product term is statistically significant, an interaction is deemed present (cf. Jaccard, 2001). As has been motivated, the significance of the product term represented above \((\text{imminent eviction} \times \text{gender})\) is of particular interest as a test for whether the effect of imminent eviction differs by gender, even controlling for relevant background factors.

Additionally, tests of interactions between imminent eviction and the other control variables are performed to check for any errors in specification. Among any product terms with eviction that are statistically significant for depression when added one at a time to the preliminary full model (following the order of control variables added to the model), those, if any, that remain statistically significant when regressed together on depression (still adjusting for all controls), will be included in a final model. This is in line with guidelines for testing multiple interaction effects that recommend only including product terms in the final model that maintain their statistical significance when also controlling for all other product terms found to be statistically significant (cf. Hosmer et al. 2013: 92-93). If more than one interaction with imminent eviction is robust at this point, higher order product terms are tested in line with standard practice (cf. Jaccard, 2001) to determine if there is a three-way interaction (i.e. if there are two statistically significant interaction terms, a third order product term consisting of the independent variable and the two relevant control variables is tested for significance).

The tests for significant interactions between imminent eviction and the control variables, including gender, provide an additional evaluation of the first research question. If there are any robust product terms, the relationship between imminent eviction and subsequent depression can still be considered to be important in its own right if the significant association between eviction and depression is preserved across all relevant subgroups (cf. Jaccard, 2001); for instance, in the case of gender differences, if both women and men exposed to the eviction event have a statistically significant higher risk of depression than women and men, respectively, in the control group.
5. Results

A total of 370 cases of depression are included in the analysis, of which 37 occur in the exposed group and 333 in the control group (see Table 1). The proportion that experience depression in the exposed group compared to the corresponding proportions in the control group is approximately 5 times greater for women (cf. 0.43 to 0.08) and over 12 times greater for men (cf. 0.74 to 0.06), respectively. In line with previous research, single men are overrepresented among those exposed to eviction. It is apparent that the group exposed to eviction is more socially disadvantaged – particularly in terms of recent mental illness, educational attainment, social welfare recipiency, unemployment and criminality.

Table 1. Distributions of dependent and control variables in the models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exposed Group</td>
<td>Control Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent Variable</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary inpatient diagnosis of depression during one-year follow-up (%)</td>
<td>0.43  (n = 10)</td>
<td>0.08  (n = 188)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age turning in 2009 (mean)</td>
<td>38.81</td>
<td>41.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born abroad (%)</td>
<td>22.55</td>
<td>14.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent mental illness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receipt of mental health care 42 months to 6 months prior to start (%)</td>
<td>25.98</td>
<td>10.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Upper-Secondary (%)</td>
<td>35.96</td>
<td>16.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper-Secondary (%)</td>
<td>54.65</td>
<td>45.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Upper-Secondary (%)</td>
<td>9.39</td>
<td>37.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region of residence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in a large city (%)</td>
<td>26.66</td>
<td>39.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family configuration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single (%)</td>
<td>33.05</td>
<td>26.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social welfare recipiency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social assistance in year prior (%)</td>
<td>42.52</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed any days in year prior (%)</td>
<td>30.39</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convicted criminal offense in year prior (%)</td>
<td>6.30</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>2 333</td>
<td>245 136</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results from the penalized maximum likelihood logistic regression analysis using main and multiplicative effects are presented in Table 2a and 2b (with reported significance at a 95% significance level). In Model 1, Table 2a, imminent eviction is significantly related with the onset of depression in the following year, with a corrected odds ratio (OR) of 9.56. The relationship is weakened only slightly by inclusion of controls for age, gender and place of birth in Model 2, Table 2a (cf. OR 9.47 with OR 9.56) and remains statistically significant.

Models 3 through 6 are shown in Tables 2a and 2b, which are statistically equivalent but with inverse reference groups for the respective control variables in the product term for easier comprehension. Model 3 includes the product term between imminent eviction and gender, which is statistically significant. The coefficient for the independent variable in Model 3a, Table 2a refers to the association between imminent eviction and depression among men who are exposed to eviction (with male controls as reference), for which there is a statistically significant corrected OR of 13.15. Women who are evicted have a statistically significant corrected OR of 5.70 compared to female controls (shown in Model 3b Table 2b). When recent mental illness is included in Model 4, the relationship is weakened substantially for both men (cf. OR 8.42 with OR 13.15, shown in Model 4a Table 2a) and women (cf. OR 3.32 with OR 5.70, shown in Model 4b Table 2b), but the coefficients remain statistically significant, as does the product term. Model 5 represents the preliminary full model. Adjusting for the remaining set of social, economic, behavioral and geographic variables (educational attainment, region of residence, family configuration, social welfare recipiency, unemployment and criminality) reduces the relationship further to a corrected OR of 5.60 for men (shown in Model 5a Table 2a) and OR 2.28 for women (shown in Model 5b Table 2b) but does not change the significance of the association for either gender. The product term between imminent eviction and gender remains statistically significant.

For specification purposes, interaction effects between imminent eviction and the remaining control variables were tested according to the strategy outlined in the previous section. When the interaction between eviction and recent mental illness (imminent eviction*recent mental illness) was added to the preliminary full model (not shown), the p-value of the product term between eviction and gender became 0.054, just above the 95% significance level. Since its significance was on the edge, the three-way interaction with gender, recent mental illness, and imminent eviction was tested in case of hidden effects but not found to be significant (also not shown).
Table 2a. Penalized maximum likelihood logistic regression of imminent eviction and depression among 18-64 year olds in Sweden 2009. Crude and adjusted odds ratios (OR) with 95% confidence intervals (CIs). Models 3a-5a: “Male” is the reference for Gender. Model 6a: “None” is the reference for Recent Mental Illness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Model 1 Crude OR (95% CI)</th>
<th>Model 2 Adjusted OR (95% CI)</th>
<th>Model 3a Adjusted OR (95% CI)</th>
<th>Model 4a Adjusted OR (95% CI)</th>
<th>Model 5a Adjusted OR (95% CI)</th>
<th>Model 6a Adjusted OR (95% CI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Imminent eviction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.99 (0.99-1.00)</td>
<td>0.99 (0.99-1.00)</td>
<td>0.98* (0.98-1.00)</td>
<td>0.99* (0.98-1.00)</td>
<td>0.99* (0.98-1.00)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1.26 (1.03-1.55)</td>
<td>1.37* (1.10-1.70)</td>
<td>1.19 (0.95-1.48)</td>
<td>1.10 (0.89-1.35)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth place</td>
<td>1.17 (0.89-1.54)</td>
<td>1.16 (0.88-1.53)</td>
<td>1.02 (0.77-1.35)</td>
<td>1.01 (0.76-1.34)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent mental illness</td>
<td>9.42* (7.62-11.64)</td>
<td>8.35* (6.73-10.37)</td>
<td>9.35* (7.46-11.72)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1.30 (0.99-1.70)</td>
<td>1.30 (1.00-1.71)</td>
<td>0.83 (0.61-1.17)</td>
<td>0.85 (0.61-1.17)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region of residence</td>
<td>1.13 (0.91-1.40)</td>
<td>1.13 (0.91-1.40)</td>
<td>1.13 (0.91-1.40)</td>
<td>1.13 (0.91-1.40)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family configuration</td>
<td>1.34* (1.08-1.66)</td>
<td>1.36* (1.01-1.71)</td>
<td>1.35-2.62</td>
<td>1.33-2.56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social welfare recipiency</td>
<td>1.88* (1.35-2.62)</td>
<td>1.85* (1.33-2.56)</td>
<td>1.85* (1.33-2.56)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>1.26 (0.94-1.68)</td>
<td>1.25 (0.93-1.67)</td>
<td>1.25 (0.93-1.67)</td>
<td>1.25 (0.93-1.67)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminality</td>
<td>1.11 (0.66-1.85)</td>
<td>1.18 (0.71-1.96)</td>
<td>1.18 (0.71-1.96)</td>
<td>1.18 (0.71-1.96)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interactions (Product terms)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender differences</td>
<td>0.43* (0.21-0.91)</td>
<td>0.39* (0.19-0.83)</td>
<td>0.41* (0.19-0.87)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Recent mental illness</td>
<td>0.31* (0.16-0.62)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>510 758</td>
<td>510 758</td>
<td>510 758</td>
<td>510 758</td>
<td>510 758</td>
<td>510 758</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\* p < 0.05
Table 2b. Penalized maximum likelihood logistic regression of imminent eviction and depression among 18-64 year olds in Sweden 2009. Adjusted odds ratios (OR) with 95% confidence intervals (CIs). Models 3b-5b: “Female” is the reference for Gender. Model 6b: “Recent Mental Illness” is the reference for Recent Mental Illness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Model 3b Adjusted OR (95% CI)</th>
<th>Model 4b Adjusted OR (95% CI)</th>
<th>Model 5b Adjusted OR (95% CI)</th>
<th>Model 6b Adjusted OR (95% CI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Imminent eviction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application for execution of eviction</td>
<td>5.70* (3.05-10.63)</td>
<td>3.32* (1.77-6.21)</td>
<td>2.28* (1.19-4.36)</td>
<td>2.36* (1.38-4.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age turning in 2009</td>
<td>0.99 (0.99-1.00)</td>
<td>0.98* (0.98-0.99)</td>
<td>0.99* (0.99-1.00)</td>
<td>0.99* (0.99-1.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (reference: female)</td>
<td>0.729* (0.59-0.91)</td>
<td>0.91 (0.73-1.13)</td>
<td>0.842 (0.67-1.05)</td>
<td>1.10 (0.89-1.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (reference: male)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Birth place</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born abroad (reference: born in Sweden)</td>
<td>1.16 (0.88-1.53)</td>
<td>1.09 (0.82-1.43)</td>
<td>1.02 (0.77-1.35)</td>
<td>1.01 (0.76-1.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recent mental illness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receipt of mental health care 42 months to 6 months prior to start date</td>
<td>9.42* (7.62-11.64)</td>
<td>8.35* (6.73-10.37)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.11* (0.09-0.13)</td>
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<tr>
<td>No receipt of mental health care 42 months to 6 months prior to start date (reference: recent mental illness)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Interactions (Product terms)</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender differences</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imminent threat of eviction*Male</td>
<td>2.31* (1.10-4.86)</td>
<td>2.54* (1.20-5.36)</td>
<td>2.46* (1.16-5.22)</td>
<td>3.18* (1.60-6.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recent mental illness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imminent threat of eviction*No recent mental illness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| N                                         | 510 758 | 510 758 | 510 758 | 510 758 |

Note: Adjusted for remaining social, economic, geographic and behavioral control variables

*p < 0.05

No other product terms with eviction and the remaining control variables were found to be statistically significant. The only multiplicative term included in the final model, Model 6, is therefore that between imminent eviction and recent mental illness.

The coefficient for imminent eviction in Model 6a, Table 2a can be interpreted as the association between imminent eviction and subsequent depression among those with no recent mental illness (reference: controls with no recent mental illness), which is statistically significant (OR 7.49). The association between imminent eviction and subsequent depression among those with recent mental illness (reference: controls with recent mental illness) is smaller but still statistically significant (OR 2.36, shown in Model 6b, Table 2b).
6. Discussion

This thesis has addressed the relationship between the experience of imminent eviction and subsequent depression. Using unique data on all working-age women and men who received a final notice of eviction in Sweden in 2009 and taking advantage of register data on hospitalizations for depression, this study captures one aspect of the fallout of an event about which there is still much to learn (cf. Desmond & Kimbro, 2015). The results indicate that, compared to a control group not exposed to eviction, people who face imminent eviction have a higher risk of depression in the following year, even controlling for a range of relevant background factors as well as recent mental illness. This relationship appears to vary to some extent by gender, though not in the same direction as indicated by prior research, nor as unequivocally. Recent mental illness is the only control variable significantly influencing the association of interest, which nonetheless remains significant regardless of illness history.

The study set out, first and foremost, to identify whether there is an association between imminent eviction and depression. The results from the first crude and adjusted additive models (Models 1 and 2) provide initial indication that imminent eviction is significantly associated with subsequent depression. At the same time, the results from the subsequent multiplicative models indicate that the association between imminent eviction and depression differs significantly by gender (Models 3 to 5) and significantly by recent history of mental illness (Model 6). Given significant interaction effects, the relationship of interest in this study could potentially be non-significant for particular subgroups; however, this does not seem to be the case here. Even controlling for all other background factors as well, the association between imminent eviction and depression remains significant across all relevant subgroups (i.e. for women and men, in Model 5; and for people with and without recent mental illness, in Model 6). Together, these findings suggest, as predicted, that exposure to imminent eviction is meaningfully associated with subsequent depression.

The second and related aim of this study has been to check for gender differences in the relationship between imminent eviction and depression. The interaction between imminent eviction and gender remains significant in all models up to and including the preliminary full model (Model 5). The nature of the interaction in these models, however, is not as predicted in research on threatening life events. The first three multiplicative models (Models 3 through 5) show consistently that men who are evicted actually have a significantly higher risk of
subsequent depression than women who are evicted (at least in relation, respectively, to men and women in the control group). This is contrary to the expectation, grounded in previous life event research, that women would be more affected. Although gender differences are suggested in these models, based on the few cases of depression, particularly in the evictions group, these findings must be viewed with caution. Moreover, since the standard statistical significance of this relationship essentially disappears when the interaction between imminent eviction and recent mental illness is included in the model, these results cannot be said to show definitive gender differences, though the unexpected finding that if anything men are more affected by eviction is of note. In regard to the second research question, the results on a whole appear to suggest that imminent eviction affects men at least as negatively, in terms of depression onset, as it does women.

Since facing eviction appears to be significantly related to subsequent depression for both men and for women and for people with and without recent mental illness; and, more generally, since this association withstands across all models, even controlling for a wide range of social, economic, behavioral and geographic variables, the evidence from this study gives firm empirical grounds for asserting that imminent eviction may play a role, in its own right, in the onset of depression. Support for this conclusion is further strengthened by the fact that testing for interactions between imminent eviction and each of the control variables yielded only the one significant interaction, with recent mental illness. Altogether it therefore seems reasonable to suggest that the imminent threat of eviction may in fact be a provoking agent, as defined in the framework put forward by George Brown and Tirril Harris. Hence, facing eviction can be conceived of as a disruptive life event, sufficient alone to prompt an adverse emotional response with the potential to lead to depression. In order to better understand this finding, imminent eviction can be considered in light of the specific elements thought to explain people’s negative responses to events in general, i.e. loss, humiliation, defeat and entrapment (cf. Brown, 2002).

Much of the research on housing and mental health, as with housing studies in general, reflects a focus on the latter element, entrapment. In housing research, entrapment is depicted, more or less, as the experience of being stuck in a ‘humble abode’ with poor living conditions.

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15 It should also be considered that women who are recorded as being evicted (i.e. whose names are on the housing contract) may be selected for certain traits. If they are negatively selected for depression, this could have placed a downward bias on the coefficient for eviction among women and enhanced the appearance of gender differences in the first multiplicative models. This is another reason why the initial findings of gender differences should be interpreted with caution and are by no means definitive.
conditions. By placing particular emphasis on housing’s objective physical attributes in relation to their supposed effect on people’s wellbeing, this line of research has tended to reflect and reinforce a common approach to valuing housing according to its “bricks and mortar” properties and market worth (for a review of this type of research, see Evans et al. 2003). But an important assumption of this approach – that the physical properties of housing act directly on occupants’ emotional well-being – is not well-supported empirically (Clapham, 2010; Shaw, 2004). Moreover, it has been found that people can form strong attachments to even the most stigmatized areas (cf. Manzo et al. 2008; Fried, 1963). In fact, people in more disadvantaged circumstances may in some ways derive greater immediate value from their home than people living in more ‘objectively’ desirable locations or living arrangements. For instance, for those who are “excluded or disadvantaged,” home can be a place to “re recuperate from their struggles in the world at large” (Fox, 2006: 373). These observations further discount the assumption that people in a marginalized social position are at intrinsically greater risk of mental illness because of the physical state of their home, the space it provides (or lack thereof), or even the social and economic characteristics of the neighborhood in which it is situated (cf. Shaw, 2004); suggesting rather that no matter how humble the abode, ‘escaping’ may be far from desirable and being forced out may have serious implications for a person’s mental health. Hence, while for some in the modern age of travel and exploration, to be at home is to be imprisoned and constrained, for those who are on the verge of being shut out from their homes, the meaning of home can be of a somewhat different nature; in Bauman’s words, “For them, to be free means not to have to wander around. To have a home and to be allowed to stay inside” (1997: 92).

Yet, perhaps in part due to the focus on supposed issues of entrapment, the experience of losing one’s home, particularly to eviction, has been largely ignored in the discussion of housing and mental health. Framing the investigation of housing-related experiences in terms of entrapment, as has been the tendency, directs attention towards the negative implications of staying at home, rather than of losing home. It can therefore be beneficial to consider other means through which an event like eviction may be emotionally traumatic, particularly to enlighten the results from this study. Brown and Harris’s research helps guide this endeavor, as they identify three other elements, aside from entrapment, that are often components of depressogenic life events; namely: loss, humiliation and defeat.

Through the amplified lens of the theory of place, these components, otherwise so seldom a part of the dialogue on people’s experiences in the housing market, have been shown to be
involved in events affecting home. Like urban renewal, natural disaster, and residential burglary (cf. Brown & Perkins, 1992) imminent eviction has been described in this text as a disruption in place, which can affect important social psychological processes and in so doing, implicate loss, humiliation and defeat. In these terms, the home can be seen as a foundation for a sense of familiarity, attachment and identity, all vital in different ways to a person’s emotional wellbeing. The familiarity of home, for instance, provides comfort and stability in place, crucial to a person’s sense of ontological security. Attachment to home offers a feeling of social and spatial belonging. Identity as it is established in place can make home and the activities performed there a part of a person’s self-concept. In these diverse ways, home can be seen to be an important and multidimensional ‘source of positive value’ akin to (and often also comprising) other aspects of people’s life-space elsewhere discussed in the life events literature, including cherished persons, possessions, roles and ideas (cf. Brown, 2002); the loss of which may incite feelings of grief and hopelessness in line with Brown and Harris’s model that, unresolved, may lead to depression.

On top of being a loss of a source of familiarity, attachment and identity, eviction, as a denial of a person’s identity in place, can also be seen to involve humiliation and social defeat, an experience that, by no far stretch of the imagination, can lead to diminished self-esteem and a generalized sense of hopelessness, critical factors in depression (cf. Brown et al. 1995). The potential implication of loss, humiliation and defeat in the experience of eviction, as articulated through the literature of place, finds empirical support in interviews with individuals facing mortgage repossession, who report negative emotional responses (“feeling lost, isolated, extremely sad”); feelings of uncertainty, fear and a lack of control; and a sense of stigma and shame (Ford et al. 2001: 157).

By understanding home as a place and eviction as a disruption in place, it seems necessary to move beyond a notion of eviction as a form of material deprivation that can be resolved simply through rehousing. Instead, with theoretical grounds in the literature of place, it is possible to embrace a new narrative that emphasizes loss (both material and immaterial) as well as humiliation and defeat as key components of what makes facing imminent eviction a disruptive life event (even if housing is regained or, in the minority of cases, not lost in the first place). The results from this study, which show a greater risk of depression among those exposed to an imminent threat of eviction, regardless of outcome, provide empirical support for this idea. This type of conceptual framework, as opposed to one based on entrapment, emphasizes home as having what Fox (2006: 373) calls “universal value” – in other words,
some sort of basic benefit that all can derive from it, irrespective of, and even on an entirely different dimension as other more tangible means of valuing home and housing based on material properties and market value.

The idea that home has universal value as an important place in people’s lives is most contested when it comes to gender. Insight on gender differences in response to the threat of eviction is therefore of particular interest and relevancy to this debate. One argument that has been raised against home having universal value is that the home may actually be fundamentally more important for women than it is for men. Despite advances in gender equality in the past decades and changes in men’s expected role at home, it has been noted in support of this assertion that "[f]or most women … the home and the ‘family’ it encloses remains ideologically and materially the expected focus of their everyday lives” (Bowlby et al. 1997: 344). This perspective, as articulated by Bowlby and colleagues (1997), depicts the loss of home as particularly disruptive for women, whom they argue to be on the whole more invested in roles and identities tied to the home. This line of reasoning resonates with the finding within life events research that when people are more committed to the aspects of their life affected by a disruptive life event, they are more vulnerable to depression in its aftermath (Brown et al. 1987). In fact, based on this rationale, a study within the life events literature that found women to be more susceptible to depression in the wake of events affecting the household environment attributed this to their greater commitment to these domains (Nazroo et al. 1997).

However, as has been noted above, the prediction that women will be more susceptible to eviction, as an event affecting the household, was not upheld in the findings here. On the contrary, the association between imminent eviction and depression was, if anything, strongest for men, who had a higher risk of depression in the aftermath of an eviction threat than women in every test of gender differences. At first glance, this finding could be seen to indicate that the home may be more meaningful to men and, therefore, its loss more disruptive. This would appear to be consistent with the idea, expressed within feminist critique of romanticized depictions of home, that men reap the benefits of home at women’s expense. Since for women, the home can be a ‘prison’; a vehicle of patriarchy and oppression; and a location for terror and violence, it has been reasoned within the broader critique of the conceptualization of home that any positive value of having a home is wholly unavailable to women (described in Fox, 2006: 367-370). Taking this type of argument to its limit, the loss of home could be predicted to be inconsequential for women; in terms of
entrapment, even a form of escape – a hypothesis that goes directly against the contention that home has universal value. However, this type of hypothesis is not supported in the results here, which demonstrate that, though initial tests of gender differences indicate that men may be more susceptible to depression than women, losing home is nonetheless associated with a heightened risk of subsequent depression among women, too. What is more, it would be hasty to conclude that there even are gender differences at all based on the results in this study, since the significant interaction between eviction and gender disappears when conducting further tests for specification. Thus, neither the prediction that women would be more affected by losing home than men, nor the prediction that they would not at all be affected, is supported here.

This study’s results can be better reconciled with the insight driving the latter prediction (i.e. that home may be host to many undesirable circumstances, especially for women), by considering the observation that in situations where leaving home on their own volition may seem to be in a person’s best interest, the home itself is often an obstacle. Drawing from the example of domestic violence, Somerville claims that “[t]here is no contradiction in battered wives having a positive attachment to their home. Indeed, this may be part of the reason why [they] do not easily give up their homes in order to escape the violence” (1992: 535). Even in this extreme scenario, the prospect of losing home can pose a greater threat than the implications of being entrapped in it. This example highlights the idea present elsewhere in the theory of place that having a “shadow side” (Chawla, 1992) does not automatically preclude a place from being a source of positive value in terms of familiarity, identity and attachment. Likewise, the meaningfulness of a home to its inhabitants may encompass many different spectrums of experience, both desirable and deleterious; but this is nonetheless consistent with the notion of home as having universal value. Consequently, insight that home is not always experienced positively, while important, is not evidence against its universal value (cf. Fox, 2006) and does not necessarily clash with this study’s findings.

However, since neither of the explanations explored above are consistent with the final model, which finds that there are no significant gender differences, there is a need to consider alternative explanations. Recent explorations of men’s identity work at home (summarized in Gorman-Murray, 2008) help offer insight into why men may be as affected as women in the wake of eviction. It has been noted, for instance, that many traditional male roles and identities, as with traditional female roles and identities, are situated in the home. With this in mind, facing imminent eviction could be as emotionally detrimental to men, as a failure to
uphold traditional expectations of masculinity (e.g., ‘breadwinner’ and ‘master of the house’), as it is to women, as a loss of a means for performing traditional female roles (e.g., ‘homemaker’) (cf. Gorman-Murray, 2008: 368). But since traditional gender roles may be less salient at this point, particularly in Sweden, it is also important to recognize home as a possible frontier for testing new forms of domestic masculinity, as has been considered in other European contexts (e.g., Pink, 2004). In Sweden, it has specifically been observed that new expectations for men in the home, particularly fathers, may provide further opportunity for men alongside women, to ‘do gender’ in the home (Johansson & Klinth, 2007). These developments in gender roles and relations could also provide some explanation for this study’s findings, since they imply that for men as well as women, the loss of home could entail a loss of a means to fulfil important (and converging) role identities (cf. Thoits, 1991). In this sense, there seems to be further support for home as having universal value.

Too much weight should not be given to the initial findings of gender differences, but nonetheless, the results provide strong motivation for bringing men more purposefully into the discussion of events touching home, especially eviction. Of the few studies that do explore the impact of eviction, there has been a tendency to focus on women, particularly single or low-income mothers, who in the United States have been identified as being particularly vulnerable in the housing market (e.g., Desmond & Kimbro, 2015; Osypuk et al. 2012). The finding from this study suggests that men’s experiences with eviction warrant further exploration, especially to consider the role of different factors such as fatherhood and marital status (though neither of these variables on their own conditioned the association between eviction and depression here), as well as the broader social and policy context (i.e. to determine if insignificant gender differences are specific to a more gender equal Sweden).

Although the results to this point have been taken to suggest that home has universal value, it is also important to consider the robust finding that recent history of mental illness influences the relationship between imminent eviction and depression. As has been indicated above, the presence of significant interaction effects between the independent variable and control variables in this study would only cast serious doubt on the universal value of home to the extent that any resultant subgroup was not significantly affected by imminent eviction (i.e. if their subsequent risk of depression did not differ significantly from comparable controls). This is not the case for women or for men, and it is also not the case for people with or without recent mental illness. Nevertheless, it is still important to consider the role of recent mental illness, since it was the only control variable to significantly influence the main
association of interest. On its own, it seems intuitive that recent mental illness may influence the relationship between eviction and depression given its association with the outcome variable (both are, after all, related to clinical psychiatric diagnoses or treatment). The results also appear reasonable in light of other studies of life events. Brown and Harris (1978), for instance, find that prior losses and previous episodes of depression are related to diminished severity of depression. To describe this finding, they make use of the figure of speech, ‘the first cut is the deepest’ (1978: 211); in other words, people with previous upsetting experiences may be less affected by new ones. In the same vein, later life events research found that the association between threatening life events and depression appears to diminish with prior episodes of depression; the “kindling hypothesis” has been put forward in light of these findings, suggesting, in essence, that people are less vulnerable to depression in response to a threatening life event if they have been depressed in the past, perhaps due to changes in their cognitive responses (Kendler et al. 2000). Similarly, the “disadvantage-saturation” hypothesis, which is applied more broadly to studies of ongoing disadvantageous social conditions and experiences across the life course, predicts that there is a certain point at which people have “little left to lose” and will not be as affected by a life experience that others would consider extremely disruptive (Hannon, 2003: 578). In light of these explanations, the fact that the association between imminent eviction and depression appears to differ by illness history is not at all surprising; and appears to potentially have something to do with exposure to prior adverse experiences, including mental illness and associated factors, which make people’s later experience of facing eviction less disruptive.

While these explanations give context to the results with respect to recent history of mental illness, it is critical to note that the accumulation of negative life experiences is not on the whole an applicable explanation for the results in this study, both in terms of the findings regarding recent mental illness specifically, and especially in terms of the study’s broader results. Regarding the former, disadvantage-saturation does not suffice as an explanation because it cannot account for why imminent eviction still has a significant association with subsequent depression even for those with recent mental illness; regarding the latter, the hypothesis falls far short because no additional interaction between imminent eviction and any other control variable, many of which also indicate accumulated negative life experiences, was found to be significant. That imminent eviction is important in its own right to the onset of depression provides central support for the assertion that imminent eviction cannot be subsumed under the framework of ongoing social marginalization (cf. Rojas &
Stenberg, 2016). In other words, eviction cannot be reduced to any other ongoing social exclusionary process, or to any related pre-existing individual conditions measured here. The results from this study suggest that the receipt of a final notice to evict is significantly disruptive in and of itself to provoke depression, on par with other life events explored in the literature – like a partner’s imprisonment, bankruptcy, the imminent death of a loved one, a child’s delinquency, or the loss of a job.

6.1 Limitations

Although the study contributes in many ways to our understanding of the potential implications of imminent eviction, it is important to consider its limitations. First, it should be noted that the results can only be interpreted for individuals who do not receive mental health care in the six months prior to eviction (or start date) given the exclusionary criteria described in Chapter 4.3. Although this exclusion limits the generalizability of the study to some extent, it is on the whole considered to be a benefit to the study as it facilitates the identification of new episodes of depression in the follow-up period, which, in combination with the control for recent mental illness, goes further toward accounting for pre-existing mental illness than previous studies of eviction that are based on self-reports. Although this approach provides firmer grounds for assessing the extent to which eviction in and of itself is related to subsequent depression, any interpretation of the direction of causality must still be made with caution since mental health problems may have been experienced prior to eviction, without ever resulting in treatment (i.e. hospitalization or medication).

Relatedly, a drawback of a study using inpatient register data to measure a mental health outcome of interest, in this case depression, is the potential for misclassification error due to low sensitivity (cf. Thielen et al. 2009). Most cases of depression go untreated and do not result in inpatient hospitalization. One concern that has been voiced regarding the low sensitivity of treatment-based measures of depression is that they may capture more women than men, since men who are depressed may instead turn to suicide or abuse of drugs and alcohol (Aneshensel, 1992). This would be more of a concern, however, if this study indicated that women more often become depressed in the aftermath of eviction than men.

A more general concern with inpatient diagnoses as an outcome measure for depression is if the misclassification error (in this case, the problem of low sensitivity) varies between the exposure and control groups. It is usually assumed that exposed and control groups are
equally affected by misclassification, in which case the resulting bias in the odds ratios would tend towards null and not be of concern (Thielen et al. 2009). However, when the degree of misclassification error varies between groups (in this case, when the outcome measure has different sensitivity for capturing cases in the exposed group compared to the control group), the coefficient may be biased in either direction, posing a greater concern (Thielen et al. 2009; Höfler, 2005; Neuhaus, 1999). The most problematic scenario in this case would be if those exposed to eviction exhibited greater help-seeking behavior, which would lead to an overestimation of the coefficient for eviction. However, there is evidence (from a Swedish context) that people who are evicted are less likely to seek medical treatment despite being in need of it (Nilsson & Flyghed, 2004), suggesting that this is not a major cause for concern.

Furthermore, if people who are exposed to eviction are not more prone to seeking inpatient medical attention, the measure of depression used in this study may actually have the benefit of being a more conservative test of the hypothesis that eviction is a disruptive life event (since inpatient hospitalization for depression occurs among a small sub-set of the depressed population likely experiencing even more severe symptoms). Hence, restricting the measure to inpatient depression diagnoses may in this sense also be a way of accounting for critique (Horowitz & Wakefield, 2012) that in their operationalization of depression, Brown and Harris risk equating common sadness with clinical depression.

The problem of low sensitivity also raises a third limitation of the study. There are few who actually go on to develop depression in the year after the eviction event, indicating a relatively small prevalence of depression in the aftermath of eviction. The study cannot generalize beyond the experience of inpatient hospitalization but it is not unreasonable to suggest that if eviction is associated with higher likelihood of inpatient hospitalization for depression, it is likely to also be associated with higher rates of depression in the community as well. Brown and Harris (1978), who looked at both a clinical sample drawn from an inpatient population and a sample drawn from the community, found that subjects diagnosed with depression in the hospital and others meeting criteria for depression but not having sought treatment had similar exposure to severely threatening life events in the previous year. At the very least, this suggests that effects on emotional wellbeing are not restricted to those who are hospitalized. As the numbers stand, however, they are still very much in line with life events research, which has repeatedly found that few who are exposed to a disruptive life events go on to get depressed (Kessler, 1997).
Additionally, the results should be interpreted with caution in light of the possibility of omitted variable bias causing spurious relationships. Of particular concern would be individual-level factors that increase a person’s propensity for both eviction and depression. Access to subjects’ full history of mental illness, and even their parents’ or siblings’ history, would go further in controlling for any confounding effects of predisposition to mental illness. Ideally it would also be possible to account for personal attributes like self-esteem and cognitive coping skills that Brown and Harris (1978) and others since (e.g., Aneshensel, 1992; Pearlin, 1989) have suggested to be related to a person’s susceptibility to depression in the wake of an event. Nonetheless, with data on 42 months’ worth of mental health interactions in both inpatient and outpatient settings, this study goes beyond previous research in accounting for potential confounding factors that increase a person’s propensity for depression.

Another general limitation of the data has to do with not having information on other major life events that coincide with or precede eviction. For one, there is no information on previous eviction or other housing related life events that could have an impact on people’s susceptibility to depression in the aftermath of a new eviction event. However, previous research suggests that few evictees will have had similar prior events, since people who are evicted once have reduced chances of getting a new contract in a competitive rental market, and therefore of getting evicted again (Stenberg et al. 1995). There is also no information on any other disruptive life events that occur at or around the same time of the eviction event (e.g., relationship breakdown or job loss). Yearly register data does not include information on the timing of events like changes in employment, marital status or housing; one of the limits of using an otherwise unique and comprehensive source of data.

A final note about the data: since the sample is drawn from 2009, any association detected in this study may be to some extent specific to the dynamics of being evicted in a period of global recession, though this should not be overemphasized as Sweden was relatively sheltered from the more drastic effects of large-scale unemployment or foreclosure crises experienced elsewhere. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the moderate decline in evictions in Sweden since the 1990s, was briefly interrupted around the time of crisis (starting already in 2007), with evictions rising slightly for the next three years before continuing on their

16 Since it is the significance of the association between imminent eviction and depression, across all models and subgroups, that is of interest in answering the research questions, and since the magnitude of the coefficient for imminent eviction is not compared across models or groups, further problems of omitted variable bias in logit-based models (see Mood, 2010) are not of major concern here.
decline (Kronofogden, 2016b). This would only be problematic to the analyses here if those evicted during this period of recession were more likely to become depressed than in other time periods. However, increased unemployment levels in Sweden during the latest financial recession were not found to be related to increased rates of suicide (Norström & Grönqvist, 2015); suggesting that recession-specific deterioration in mental health in response to exclusionary experiences (like eviction, as with unemployment) in Sweden, with its relatively strong social safety net, may not be of major significance to this analysis.

6.2 Conclusion

Although eviction is a well-established social institution affecting millions in the western world, surprisingly little is understood about the nature of its impact on those who endure it. In order to contribute to this gap in knowledge, this study has considered one of its potential outcomes – depression, a potentially devastating condition with far-reaching implications. This study’s use of comprehensive data on all evictions in Sweden linked to longitudinal register data, which allows for a standard follow-up period and controls for potential confounding factors, particularly recent mental illness, is one of its major contributions to understanding the relationship between eviction and depression. The results of this study indicate that receipt of a final notice to evict, the critical event in the process of being evicted, is in fact significantly associated with a greater risk of depression in the following year. The association remains significant even controlling for a range of theoretically-motivated background factors. Of these, only recent mental illness appears to significantly influence the relationship between imminent eviction and depression; but even still, the main association of interest remains significant regardless of illness history. Furthermore, contrary to expectations of gender differences based on prior research, the results indicate that men are at least as susceptible to depression in response to the eviction event as women, motivating future research to incorporate men in the study of housing and depression. Taken together, the results provide strong empirical grounds for understanding home as an important place with universal value, the disruption of which has the potential to involve elements of loss, humiliation and defeat, on par with other severely threatening life events linked with subsequent depression. As such, facing imminent eviction should be understood as a disruptive life event, important in its own right; an experience that may have potentially devastating consequences for a person’s emotional wellbeing, which warrant further investigation.
References


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