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Oral History and the Discursive Construction of Identity in Flint, Michigan[1]

This article explores the ways that Flint residents report on their encounters with various kinds of "outsiders" who are influenced by mass-mediated images that position Flint and its residents in a certain way. Through the voicing of outsiders who engage in the circulation of negative discourses about Flint, residents then insert their own voices as they contest negative discourses about the city. Here, the images that they project about life in Flint provide a powerful counternarrative about what it means to have lived in the city during its deindustrializing period. This suggests that oral history interviews are an important site for the discursive production (and contestation) of individual and collective identities for Flint residents. [oral history, discourses of place, identity, Flint, chronotope]

On December 26, 2013, an article appeared on the *Policy.Mic* website originally titled, "This Is America's Most Apocalyptic, Violent City—And You've Probably Never Heard of It." This article, written by New York–based journalist Laura Dimon, hit such a raw nerve in Flint, Michigan, the focus of this article, that *Policy.Mic* editors were forced to retitle the article, "This Is America's Most Apocalyptic, Violent City—And It Deserves More Attention" and provide an apology and clarification about the wording and authorship of the original title. Nevertheless, the body of Dimon's article provided a string of commonly cited statistics about the city of Flint—the reduction of jobs at the automotive giant General Motors (GM), staggeringly high poverty and crime rates for a predominantly African American city of just under 100,000 residents, and a rapidly declining population. The article also included photographic evidence of the "apocalyptic" nature of the city including images of abandoned, burned-out homes, and desolate city streets. In the weeks that followed, residents and city leaders responded in a number of social media outlets and a local news outlet, *MLive*, decrying what they considered faulty journalism centered on their belief that the author never actually visited the city and that some of the original pictures in the article, which were later removed, were not of Flint, but of houses in Detroit and even a street in Ramla, Israel (Stamm 2013; Atkinson 2014). Local and national news outlets also began to highlight the voices of entrepreneurs (Mariotti 2014), university faculty members (Atkinson 2013), and city leaders (Acosta 2013) who challenged the negative view of Flint and even the

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accuracy of the statistics cited in the original article. These responses were coupled with the use of the Twitter hashtag, #*FLINTLOVE*, where residents presented images of positive growth and change in the city and challenged the *Policy.Mic* staff to visit the city for a first-hand view of these positive changes. This incident also inspired a Flint Youth Theater production of a play titled, "The Most (Blank) City in America," which opened in April 2016 (Atkinson 2016).

As the *Policy.Mic* episode illustrates, residents of Flint, Michigan, are often in a push-pull relationship with externally produced discourses about their city that have their origins in mass-mediated news outlets. In fact, reports like the one in *Policy.Mic* can be said to construct *chronotopic* (Bakhtin 1981; Agha 2007) representations of Flint that cast the locale (Flint) as a certain type of place (i.e., "apocalyptic" and in decline) populated by a certain type of person (i.e., dangerous and impoverished) at a certain moment in time (i.e., in its current deindustrializing/postindustrial period). Like many Rust Belt cities of the Midwest, chronotopes of loss and decay predominate, anchoring the subjectivities of residents and ultimately limiting the scope of who they, and their cities, are allowed to be. In many ways, these negative representations are deeply reductive, erasing from the public narrative the dynamic nature of life within these locales and reducing residents to either passive victims of their circumstances or casting them as agents of violence and destruction. Furthermore, these negative representations may be used as an excuse to strip agency from residents as city leaders propose "solutions" to the city's conditions (Cope and Latcham 2009). Thus, by establishing counter-chronotopic representations of place, residents may gain agency through the ability to re-anchor their identities and possibly establish new subjectivities for themselves and their communities.

Through an analysis of oral history interviews with Flint residents, I illustrate the discursive tools that residents use both to challenge and construct new chronotopic representations of Flint. Much like the community members and city representatives in the *Policy.Mic* episode, the residents in this study spend a great deal of discursive effort resisting negative place talk about their city. One important component of their resistance occurs through their use of reported speech to give voice to different character types who engage in different kinds of place talk about Flint. Using reported speech, residents both report on their encounters with various kinds of "outsiders" who are negatively influenced by mass-mediated discourses about the city while calling the chronotopes that these outsiders evoke into question. As I will argue, these challenges serve as a springboard for residents to open up new possibilities for the kind of place that they believe that Flint "really is," providing a context for them to reconceptualize a better present and future for their city than dominant chronotopic representations would allow. These new conceptualizations include visions of a dynamic, living city where proud residents are actively working to contribute to the well-being of the city.

Chronotopes, Place, and Identity

Media representations of Flint's economic and social history serve as an important backdrop for the kinds of talk produced in this study and the overall identity work that residents are doing. As the birthplace of automotive giant General Motors, the city of Flint is an important contributor to American automotive and labor history (Highsmith 2015; Fine 1969). However, during the post–World War II era, changing corporate strategies at General Motors led to the strategic shift of manufacturing facilities into mostly White suburban areas, particularly during the period between 1940 and 1960 (Highsmith 2014:31). In addition, economic downturns in the 1950s led to the beginning of a string of layoffs at General Motors (Highsmith 2014:37). The suburban relocation strategy and decreasing jobs in the city center impacted Flint's residents disproportionately along racial lines. Thus, while the city's overall unemployment rate rose to 10 percent in the 1950s, African Americans experienced a 20 percent unemployment rate during the same time period (Highsmith 2014:37).

Furthermore, a period of deindustrialization in the 1970s and 1980s led to the loss of nearly twenty thousand jobs at General Motors (Highsmith 2014:42). From its peak of nearly 80,000 employees in the 1950s, today General Motors employs 7,200 people in the area (Burden and Wayland 2015). Economic downturn, shifting corporate strategies, and poor municipal oversight over these economic and labor shifts have transformed Flint into what (Highsmith 2015:5) describes as a "hypersegregated" city in crisis.

The story of Flint's ongoing economic decline and intensifying social crisis has been referenced in a number of media outlets since the late 1980s. For example, Michael Moore's 1989 documentary *Roger & Me* depicted the harsh impacts of deindustrialization on the city's residents (Moore 1989). In addition, Flint has appeared repeatedly on *Business Insider's* "25 Most Dangerous Cities in America" lists with a #4 ranking in 2010 and as #1 in 2011, 2012, and 2013 (Lubin 2010; Goldman 2011; Rogers 2012; Warner et al. 2013). Flint has also appeared on *Forbes's* lists of most miserable cities in America every year between 2008 and 2013 (Badenhausen 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013). Headlines describing Flint commonly highlight violence including a 2011 *New York Times Magazine* article titled, "Riding along with the Cops in Murdertown, USA" (LeDuff 2011) and in June 2013, *Business Insider* also published an online article titled, "How Flint, Michigan Became the Most Dangerous City in America" (Sterbenz and Fuchs 2013). Sadly, Flint's negative portrayal has been exacerbated by its recent water crisis related to the discovery of lead in the local water supply (Ganim and Tran 2016; Mathis-Lilley 2016).

From this brief history, it is clear that Flint has experienced extremes of both prosperity and decline, all of which have been well documented in the media. However, this collection of media reports and depictions of Flint since the late 1980s also points to the emergence of an enduring mass-media representation that overwhelmingly depicts Flint and its residents as dangerous, miserable, and in decline. In many ways, these mass-mediated discourses about Flint serve as *chronotopic* representations that locate the city and its people in space and time. For Bakhtin (1981:84), the term *chronotope* was used to refer to the ways that time and spaces are represented in literature. Agha (2007:321), expanding on this notion, defines a *chronotope* as "a semiotic representation of time and place peopled by certain social types." For Agha (2007:322), chronotopes, which can circulate at the interpersonal level or at the level of mass-mediated discourse, serve as a point of reference and inform public beliefs, often presenting an "official picture of the world."

By serving as an official picture, or collective understanding of space and time, chronotopes, by implication, directly impact the identities of subjects that are subsumed under them. As Peeren (2006:69) points out, "subjects do not stand above a chronotope as its masters, but are *within* it or, indeed, *of* it," indicating that chrontopes provide a frame that may enact limits on the kinds of identities that individuals may occupy. This then suggests that individuals may wish to challenge dominant representations of place and time in order to open up new possibilities for their own identities.

Overall, the concept of chronotope serves as a powerful complement to insights gained from the wide-ranging research on the discursive construction of place and identity. As scholars from a number of fields including sociolinguistics, urban geography, and linguistic anthropology (among others) have illustrated, "places" are spaces (i.e., neighborhoods, cities, states, and virtual spaces, etc.) that have become socially and culturally significant for a group of people (Massey 1999; Johnstone 2004; Keating 2015). As a number of scholars have pointed out, the social significance of spaces arises as a result of a number of processes including the kinds of activities and interactions that occur within those spaces (Lefebvre 1991; Massey 1999; Johnstone 2004), the ways that people talk about those places and their residents (Basso 1988; Johnstone 1990; Myers 2006; Modan, 2007; Modan and Shuman 2010) and the ways images of those places are spread to distant locales through mass-mediated outlets

(Spitulnik 1997; Avraham 2000; Martin 2000). Furthermore, the meanings attributed to places are often fraught with internal conflict and are often in flux (Massey 1999; Martin 2000).

Discourses of place, as chronotopic representations, provide important reference points that communities use to make sense of their lives and the spaces in which they live (Basso 1988; Myers 2006). For Myers (2006:324), "by saying where I am from, I take on a location in the world, and the place has a meaning or meanings for the world." In addition, discourses of place also have the function of helping build a sense of shared community and a shared identity among residents of a locale. For example, from Johnstone's (1990) study of the stories told by residents of Fort Wayne, Indiana, news reports and stories about a particularly devastating flood became an important rhetorical tool for residents of the city. Thus, as news reports about the flood deployed metaphors of battle against floodwaters, residents began to build a "community story" (Johnstone 1990:119) that represented their shared experiences with this event and that helped solidify a communal identity.

The way that talk about place illuminates both the character of a place and the identities of its people is also mirrored in Modan's (2007) work in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood of Washington, DC. Here, residents were unified in a common endeavor of using talk "to define their neighborhood as an urban space and themselves as urban people" (Modan 2007:282). Furthermore, their ongoing talk about their neighborhood was pervasive as they worked on "defining what kind of place the neighborhood was and who was a 'real' or 'fake' person" (Modan 2007:282). As these and other studies illustrate, talk about places can reflect collective efforts to shape an image of their community. Talk about place also can have a moralizing dimension as speakers provide images of the kinds of people and behaviors that are acceptable within those communities.

In addition, as was suggested by Johnstone's study, mass-mediated discourses also play an important role in the ways that places and community identities are constructed. However, for some communities, mass-mediated discourses of place can be fraught with tension and conflict, leading residents to contest the stories that are being circulated about their city. For example, in their examination of narratives of decline in Buffalo, New York, Cope and Latcham (2009) point out the connection between the emergence of a dominant narrative of decline about the city and the silencing of powerless groups. Although they find that stakeholders provide varying (and sometimes contentious) narratives about the city, broader discourses still converge on the dominant theme of "a loss of former prosperity, concern for the current economy, and a search for solutions" (Cope and Latcham 2009:152). Ultimately, these dominant narratives of boom, bust, and redemption have led city leaders to adopt neoliberal "remedies" that involved economic restructuring, loss of services, and disinvestment in poorer neighborhoods of color. In other words, narratives of decline have the function of making residents invisible, allowing leaders to strip away their agency. Similarly, in the Frogtown Neighborhood of St. Paul, Minnesota, Martin (2000) demonstrates the role of residents and local news outlets in challenging negative mainstream media portrayals of the city. In this analysis, Martin finds that while residents accept certain elements of the negative media portrayals of their city, they also use local newspaper columns and interviews as a way to actively challenge these images.

As we will see in the analysis that follows, Flint residents are not only aware of negative representations that circulate in the media, but they are also directly affected by these representations in everyday life. Here, negative talk about Flint provides images of the kind of place that Flint is said to be and of the kinds of people who are said to live there. These negative images are then mirrored back to residents when they travel outside the city and they themselves are potentially positioned as violent or dangerous. However, we will also see that residents push back by challenging the authority of the producers of this negative talk while at the same time producing their own visions of Flint that run counter to these limiting discourses.

Positioning, Reported Encounters, and the Story World of the Interview

In this section I turn to a closer analysis of some of the discourse structures involved in the ways that Flint residents construct alternate representations of time, place, and personhood within their interviews. First, as Davies and Harré (1990) have illustrated, individuals use talk to convey to their interlocutors the kind of "self" that they are. In addition, as a person constructs an image of self, they can also set up contrasts between different "types" of people in their community. In fact, the deployment and negotiation of distinct character types within narrative, as ä form of identity positioning (Depperman 2015), allows narrators to make explicit contrasts between certain social types and can help the speaker to highlight specific elements of their own projected identity. Thus, as narrators project different identities into discourse, they can display various degrees of agency, they can highlight degrees of sameness and difference between social types, and they can project their own identities as static or evolving over time (Bamberg, De Fina, and Schiffrin 2011).

Furthermore, As Wortham et al. (2011:43) point out, "narrators always 'voice' narrated characters as having some recognizable social role, and they always evaluate those characters, taking their own position with respect to narrated characters and events." In the present study, various forms of reported speech and reported thought serve as important tools for giving voice to both the residents and outsiders in the their history interviews. Structurally, *Direct* reported speech is said to use deictic and tense markers that are tied to the original speaking context, thus sharing the vantage point of the original speaker, while *indirect* reported speech presents the ideas, tense, and deictic markers from the perspective or vantage point of the reporter, often paraphrasing the original content (Tannen 1989; Clark and Gerrig 1990; Fairclough 1992; Schiffrin 2002; Coulmas 2011; Li 2011). In addition to directly and indirectly representing what one has *said*, reported *thought* represents a speaker's previous thoughts, emotions, and feelings (Vázquez and Urzúa 2009; Kim 2014). Reported speech and thoughts can be used to demonstrate previous stances and feelings and can make a stretch of talk more vivid for listeners (Clark and Gerrig 1990; Holt 1996; Li 2011). Even in non-narrative contexts, direct reported speech can be used to dramatize events and bring participants closer, allowing for deeper engagement in communication (Baynham 1996) and it can act as a form of evidential that displays authority in contexts of assessment (Clift 2006).

Retuning to the notion of the positioning of characters in narrative, the social implications of the deployment of reported speech are critical for the current analysis. For example, drawing from Bakhtin's (1981) notion of character voicing and Basso's (1979) work exploring Native-American's stories of encounters with Whites, Buttny (1997) and Buttny (2004) have found that reported speech can be used to construct "portraits of the other" that can then be challenged and evaluated in ongoing talk. In fact, in his study of African American, White, and Latino students' responses to a documentary on racism, Buttny (1997) found that African American students used reported speech in claim-evidence sequences to illustrate the ways that Whites (the outgroup) unjustly stereotype African Americans (the in-group). Furthermore, students utilized reported thought to illustrate their mental responses to being the targets of these stereotypes. Importantly, after reporting on the kinds of stereotypes that they encounter, African American students then provided evaluations and rebuttals of these stereotypes. As Buttny (1997) concludes, and as is supported by previous research on narrative and identity, the process of constructing the voice of others has the implicit effect of discursively constructing the self. The fact that African Americans utilized reported speech more than White students, particularly in their reporting of stereotypes, reflects the asymmetry in each group's experiences of racism. Yet, through their use of reported speech, African American students also display "performative power" in challenging negative stereotypes about their

community (Buttny 1997:503). These last points are critical for the present study, particularly given the ways that Flint residents use reported speech and reported thought to challenge outsider discourse.

The Interview Situation

The excerpts examined in this paper come from a subset of interviews from the Vehicle City Voices (VCV) corpus,[2] an ongoing oral history and linguistic survey of Flint, Michigan currently being conducted at the University of Michigan-Flint. The 24 interviews examined in this paper were collected in 2012 by undergraduate and graduate students for civic engagement projects in linguistics courses at UM-Flint and by a graduate student research assistant in 2013. Residents were recruited through references from Flint Club,[3] a local community pride organization, as well as through friends, family members, and community contacts of the interviewers. Residents were either born in or have lived in Genesee County, Michigan, for most of their lives. Interviews took place in a quiet room on a university campus and in other quiet spaces in the community. The interviews used for this study represent a total of 14 hours and 32 minutes of talk and interviews lasted an average of 36 minutes long. The 24 interviews were selected from the broader corpus to represent a balanced sample of self-reported genders and ethnicities (see Table 1) and a range of levels of education (see Table 2).

Figure 1 also provides a breakdown of the distribution of interviewees by decade of birth.

Residents were asked to reflect on their past and present experiences of living in the city of Flint and/or Genesee County, Michigan. Interviewers were prepared with a list of interview questions, but they were encouraged to allow residents to shape the discussion as much as possible. The questions, which were initially developed in collaboration with a community partner from Flint Club, focused on resident recollections of important community events and festivals, their remembrances of important buildings, community centers, and neighborhoods that may or may not still exist, their (or their family's) relationship to the automotive industry, and their reflections on the economic, demographic, and physical transformation of the city. In addition, some residents were also asked specific questions about their sense of

Table 1
Interviewees by Self-Identified Gender and Ethnicity

	White	Black	Asian Indian	White/Hispanic	Total
Male	4	6	1	1	**12**
Female	8	4	0	0	**12**
Total	**12**	**10**	**1**	**1**	

Table 2
Interviewees by Self-Identified Gender and Level of Education

	Completed High School	Some College/ 2-Year Degree	Undergraduate Student/ Bachelor's Degree	Graduate School Student/ Graduate Degree	Not Reported
Male	2	3	3	3	1
Female	2	3	4	3	

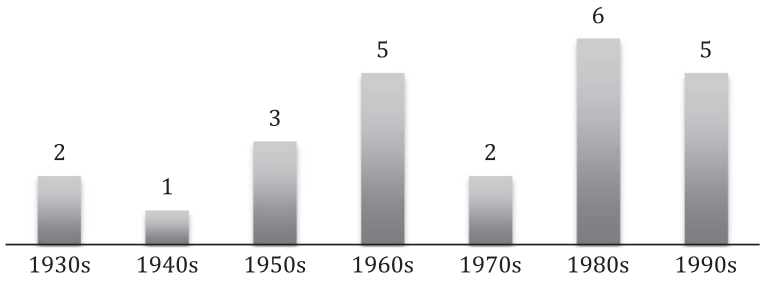


Figure 1. Distribution of Interviewees by Decade of Birth

community pride, their own activism, and the negative perceptions of the city that they have encountered.

With these factors in mind, as Briggs (1986) and a number of scholars have pointed out, we must take care to consider how the assumptions that go into preparing for the research interview and the interactional dynamics of the interview itself may impact the kinds of talk that is produced. For Briggs (1986:46–49), the way that interviewees "orient" to the interview itself depends on the kinds of assumptions that they may make about the norms and goals of this type of social interaction. When turning to the interviews examined in this study, interviews were conducted by undergraduate and graduate student interviewers, many of whom have resided in and around Flint for most of their lives. Based on our in-class discussions about the mass-mediated representations of Flint, students were tasked with discovering from interviewees their personal understanding of what it means to have grown up in Flint and how these understandings may align with or differ from some of the common stereotypes that circulate about the city. Here, the interview can be seen as a type of exploratory work whereby the interviewer seeks to "uncover" a different story about Flint, possibly challenging their own preconceptions about the city.

On the other hand, for many interviewees, who in many cases were friends, relatives, or classmates of the interviewers, these oral history interviews were explicitly presented as an opportunity to talk about the positive and negative elements of their city and provide their reflections on Flint's past. As Schiffrin (2001) has pointed out, oral history interviews can play a role in helping communities produce (and potentially reconstruct) visions of the past. In addition, oral history interviews, rather than simply reporting on the past, involve the interviewee's interpretation of the relationship between the past and the present and the ways that these reflections are responsive to the demands of the interview situation (Briggs 1986:14). When set against the backdrop of the negative media reports about Flint, in many ways interviewees in this study may orient to an implicit positioning of being "spokespeople" for the city of Flint who are engaging not only with their own experiences of the city, but also with the stereotypes that have been (and continue to be) circulated about the city.

Analysis

While reported speech appears in all 24 of the interviews examined for this study, younger speakers seem to be using reported speech specifically to represent the voices of others who often display a negative evaluation of the city. Of the eleven residents born after 1980, ten were specifically asked about their sense of community pride or outsider perceptions of the city and seven of these residents used at least one instance of reported speech to represent the negative views of outsiders/non-residents. By contrast, of the thirteen residents born before 1980, eight were specifically asked questions about their sense of community pride and outsider

perceptions of the city. Of these eight residents, only one resident born before 1980 provided an illustration of negative outsider views.

On first glance, this is not surprising when we consider the research on the correlations between the functions of reported speech and age which shows that younger speakers are more likely than older speakers to use reported speech to illustrate a previous comment or idea or to express their own thoughts or opinions (Vincent and Perrin 1999:307). However, what is particularly notable about the uses of reported speech in this study is the similarity in the content and structuring of reported exchanges among younger residents. Although there are slight variations, the younger residents' reported exchanges with non-residents often involve at least two of the following features:

1 The resident's revelation that they are from the city of Flint
2 The use of reported speech to illustrate some expression of surprise (i.e., "oh" or "oh man") from their interlocutor
3 The use of reported speech to illustrate some expression of fear of the resident, an attribution of physical prowess or toughness to the resident, and/or an attribution of violence or danger to the city
4 The resident's depiction of their own response to and/or opposition to these characterizations and views

In the excerpts that follow, I will explore the reported exchanges that appear in the interviews of four residents who have been given pseudonyms: Sasha, a Black female born in 1984; Michelle, a Black female born in 1991; Anthony, a White male born in 1985; and Todd, a Black male born in 1989. These excerpts were chosen for analysis because they were the most interactionally rich exemplars of the types of reported exchanges and place talk that occur in the data set. The excerpts presented in this paper were transcribed using an adaptation of conversation analysis (CA) transcription methods. Transcription conventions are described at the end of the article. Reported speech and thoughts are indicated using bold text.

Sasha

Sasha was born and raised in Flint, attended college at a regional university, and then returned to Flint to begin her career. Sasha was recruited for this interview through a contact from Flint Club and was interviewed by an undergraduate student as a component of a research project for a linguistics course. Throughout her interview, Sasha is fairly positive about her earliest experiences growing up in Flint and she describes a number of positive and negative changes she has witnessed while living in the city.

In excerpt 1, Sasha's first layer of identity production is evoked by the interviewer's question about her sense of pride in Flint. Here, the statements that follow the interviewer's question in line 1 provide the context for the production of "evidence" of Sasha's pride including occasions where she has challenged negative discourses about the city. After giving an emphatic answer to whether she is proud to be from Flint (line 4), Sasha paints a picture of a communal effort and she links city pride with the active work that residents do to create a positive living experience in Flint. In essence, lines 4 through 14 provide the overall gist of what pride looks like to local residents. Following this broader characterization of Flint's people, Sasha restates her original claim ("so. . .I'm pretty proud of it" in lines 16–17) immediately followed by the reported exchange (in bold text) that begins in line 17. Here, the reported exchange helps illustrate Sasha's claim that she is proud of the city.

Excerpt 1 – Interviewer (IR), Sasha (S)

1 **IR**: A:re you proud to be <u>from</u> Flint. (0.2) °and we'll start with tha:t. ° (0.3)

S: uh yeah. hh [((*laughs*)).
IR: [yeah, [okay. why so. ((*laughs*))]
S: [DEFINITELY,] .hhh (0.5) d- I think, hh (0.5) I think a lot of people are proud to be from Flint I know there' s .hhh a lot of issues: that go on here, (0.3) but. (0.6) um ((*smacks*)) (1.8) I think there (0.2) people have a bit of pride in how hard they have to work in order to make (0.2) .hh make their life (0.2) good. (0.6) You know like people take pride in the work that they do: (0.3) .hh So you take pride in like your life and where you're from and the work you had to do in order to make- make it here and make it- .hh (0.3) make- 'n make it a- a good time to be here and be happy here and not have .hh all of the negative stuff keep you from enjoying ((*laughing voice*)) your life [and=
IR: [um hum
S: =making the most of everything. So: .hh I think peo- (.) I th- I'm pretty proud of it, like when people say °**o:h, you're from Flint. o::h ma::n**° and they get all like ° **O:h I can't believe it**° .hh[h
IR: [um hm
S: And it's- it's really annoying? hh ((*laughs*))
IR: ((*laughs*))
S: so you're like **yea:h I'm from Flint there's nothing wrong with that** like. .hh so s- you like get defensive about it a little bit like. °**Why are you:** (0.2) **knocking my ↑hometown. like it's not ba:d. where are ↑you from. like why is it so different.**

Within the story world of the reported exchange (which occurs in lines 17 through 25), listeners also get an image of two social types—her interlocutors and the "self" that Sasha is projecting for the interviewer. First, as Sasha constructs the voices of her interlocutors, it is clear that she is not reporting the speech of a specific named individual, but of a generic group of "people" (i.e., "when people say" in line 17). In addition the use of "when" and the tense of the quotative "say" suggest that Sasha is not referring to a specific utterance from the past but to a habitual pattern of linguistic behavior from this generic group. Here, listeners are being presented with the image of a specific social "type" who regularly constructs Flint in a certain way.

Next, Sasha provides details about the linguistic behaviors that this generic group engages in. As is common in these enactments, Sasha begins by depicting the shock that arises from the revelation that she is from Flint (i.e., "Oh man" and "Oh I can't believe it" in lines 17 and 18). Utterances like "oh" can be considered a "change-of-state-token" (Heritage 1984; Holt 1996) indicating that the speaker has gained newsworthy information. In this case, the speaker's change of state token in line 17 indicates their shifting perception of the Sasha once they learn that she is from Flint. Instead of this being a positive revelation, the idea that Sasha is from Flint is treated as a trouble source that is worthy of remark from the outsider. Here, Sasha makes it clear that being from Flint or being a Flint resident is constructed by others as a negative identity position. In essence, her interlocutor seems to be informed by (and reproduces) the negative chronotopes that circulate about Flint. Furthermore, the speaker's reaction is presented in an exaggerated manner with drawn out vowels in words like "oh" and "man" in line 17. This contrasts with the rather firm and composed voice of Sasha as she reports her response to the outsiders' surprise in lines 22 through 25. As we will see in the other narratives in this study, this exaggerated depiction of surprise is a common element in the characterization of individuals/outsiders who produce negative talk about Flint.

As Buttny (1997:485) has pointed out, speech is rarely reported without comment. In this case, immediately after constructing the voice of her interlocutor, Sasha provides a depiction of her own defensive stance in lines 20 through 25. Here, she begins with an evaluation ("It's really annoying" in line 20) followed by a report of

her challenge. The use of *like* as the quotative in lines 22 and 23 may serve to indicate that Sasha is conveying her general feelings and thoughts, rather a direct report of what she actually said (Blyth, Reckenwald, and Wang 1990; Romaine and Lange 1991). Interestingly, the use of the pronoun *you* (i.e., "so you're like" in line 22) may also blur the line between whether Sasha is presenting a voice specifically tied to her individualized self or to a generalized pattern of behavior of Flint residents who also constantly have to engage in the defense of their city. In terms of the content of her reported resistance, Sasha is also depicted as challenging the presupposition that there is something notable about being from Flint (line 22) or that there are notable negative differences between Flint and other cities (lines 24–25). She even calls out the imagined speaker for the discursive violence that they are doing to the city (i.e., "Why are you knocking my hometown?" in lines 23–24). Overall, it is clear that Sasha is not reporting on a specific event, but of a generalized "type" of encounter that she regularly experiences as a Flint resident. In this sense, she also constructs an image of the self that is generally resistant to these negative discourses—whether these words were actually spoken or not.

In excerpt 2, Sasha responds to the interviewer's questions about how she explicitly challenges misconceptions about Flint. Again, Sasha uses reported speech in order to provide evidence to the interviewer of who she is and the ways that she fits a certain social type that contrasts with some group of "others." Before entering into this reported speech, Sasha starts with the declaration that "whenever people ask me about Flint I tell them positive things about Flint" in lines 5–6, illustrating that she believes that *talk* is the means of accomplishing the work of challenging misconceptions.

Sasha then provides exemplars of talk that she *avoids* (in the form of hypothetical reported speech) in order to support her identity construction as person who works to change the city's image (i.e., "I don't go oh yeah it's so bad" in lines 6 and 7). In this case, negative talk about Flint is presented as a kind of *negative identity practice* (Bucholtz 1999:211), or discourse that Sasha avoids as she constructs herself as a proud resident of the city.

Excerpt 2 – Interviewer (IR), Sasha (S)

1	**IR**:	I think we already talked about this, but if you have any other
2		ideas um (0.5) what are you doing personally to change
3		misconceptions about Flint?
4	**S:**	((*smacks*)) O:h yeah we talked about it a little bit. .hh um (1.0) I think
5		.hh whenever people ask me about Fli:nt I: tell them positive things
6		((*laughing voice*)) about Flint .hh and I don't go **O:H YEA:H it's so**
7		**ba:d.** 'cause
8	**IR:**	um hm
9	**S:**	some people, just, the::y do no:t say good things. .hh and some people,
10		they:: .hh if they say **where are you from** and you say **Flint** and then
11		they go **o:::h ma::n. .hh**(1.5)
12	**IR**:	**Aren't you worried about getting sho:t=**
13	**S**:	=↑YEA:H. O:::h that's- .h **Have you ever seen a gun.** I've had people
14		ask me (0.2) > **Have you ever seen a gun**< (.) >**Have you ever seen a**
15		**drug deal**< (0.2) .h **is it dangerou:s** (0.5) .h I had somebody say **oh**
16		**that must be exci:ting.** (0.6) no- I was really ((*laughing voice*))
17		[confused about that one? (0.6) .hh I've never seen anybody get shot.
18	**IR:**	[((*laughs*))
19	**S:**	I've never seen a gun before in my life? ((*laughs*)) (0.5) u:m unless it
20		was on a wa::ll in: (0.5) like in some hunter's: (.) house or som- you
21		know lik- I've never seen an actual: (0.2) handgun ever, (0.3) or unless
22		it was like a police officer's gun and (0.2) still it was in a holster and
23		I've never seen it (0.3) pulled out or anything? ((*laughing voice*)) .hh
24		I've never seen anybody doing dru:gs I've never done drugs((*laughing*

25		*voice*)) so: ↑I always tell people positive thin:gs and I just try to
26		>present myself in a< positive wa:y and be: polite and everything and
27		people are .h (0.8) a:re like **o::h you're from Flint oh wo::w**. They're
28		just so surpri:sed. like (0.5)
29	**IR:**	um hm
30	**S:**	**↑Yea:h I'm from Flint I don't really** (0.5) **understand what**
31		**kind of things you think happen?**
32	**IR:**	**((laughs))**
33	**S:**	**It's just another ↑city like any other city in the**
34		**↑country**, (0.3) .hh You know, people don't say (0.3) .h **↓o::h, you're**
35		**from Chicago that must be horrible,** (0.3) **.h** people go, **o:h, you're**
36		**from Chicago that's a really cool town**. (0.4) .h so but it's (0.3) a
37		city: just like her:e (0.6)
38	**IR:**	um hm
39	**S:**	and so- but it's bigger:, so they ha:ve the same problems, (0.4) It's just
40		not as sma:ll so they have (0.4) good neighborhood (.) bad
41		neighborhoo:d (0.1) they have cri:me >blah blah blah blah blah< (0.7)
42		.hh but nobody goes **o::h man that's:** (0.3) **well that's terrible**.

In contrast to the talk that she avoids, Sasha presents an image of two groups of people who do not uphold these standards. The first group, which is ambiguously composed of Flint residents and nonresidents, actively participates in producing negative talk about the city ("some people just. . .do not say good things" in line 9). The second group, which is less ambiguously composed of nonresidents, uses talk to problematize her status as a Flint resident. Their speech includes the change-of-state-token *oh* (i.e., "oh man" in line 11 and "oh you're from Flint oh wow" in line 27) followed with a series of questions displaying their perceptions of violence in the city (i.e., "Have you ever seen a gun" in line 14 and "Is it dangerous?" in line 15).

Again, after depicting the voice of these individuals, Sasha uses reported speech to challenge the negative presuppositions about her city in lines 17–26. The use of *like* in line 28 as a precursor to her own reported speech may indicate, as in the previous excerpt, that Sasha's reported rebuttal is not necessarily a word-for-word recounting of a specific past conversation, but her general sentiment when hearing such talk from outsiders. Thus, this segment of the exchange may provide the opportunity for Sasha to "talk back" to the outsider's claims within the context of the interview. In addition, as she projects these sentiments, she also draws the listener's attention to the disparate treatment of Flint when considering hypothetical reactions to larger cities like Chicago that also have high rates of crime (lines 33 through 42), but do not receive the same type of response (i.e., "But nobody goes, 'Oh, man. That's terrible'" in line 42).

In essence, Sasha's connection of Flint to other cities challenges the idea that Flint is a place that is uniquely violent or dangerous. Thus, by comparing Flint to other cities, Sasha carves out the possibility for viewing Flint as a dynamic city and that there is more to its identity than is presented in the media. This theme of carving out new possibilities is also mirrored in the value judgments that she provides about the kinds of people in Flint. Thus, in order to build a more positive future for Flint, Sasha makes it clear that individuals who take pride in their city and actively work to make it better are highly valued. Here, she expresses a clear desire for a different, more agentive kind of subjectivity for Flint residents than is either depicted in the media or than is sometimes displayed in face-to-face discussions.

Michelle

Michelle was also born and raised in Flint and was attending college at the time of the interview. Michelle was recruited and interviewed by a graduate student as a part of a research project in a linguistics seminar. Like Sasha, Michelle provides evidence of

her exchanges with outsiders who hold negative views about the city of Flint and its residents in excerpt 3. Her use of reported speech in this excerpt is occasioned by the interviewer's questions about the kinds of stereotypes that outsiders have about Flint and its residents.

Like Sasha, Michelle's reported speech serves a clearly evidential function. However, for Michelle, the image of self that she constructs is decidedly more passive than Sasha in that her report mainly illustrates the ways that her identity position is constructed by *others* once she leaves the city. Like Sasha's experience with outsiders, Michelle's interlocutors come to this interaction influenced by a chronotope of Flint and its people that is overwhelmingly negative. While Michelle isn't depicted as providing a lengthy "talk back" or challenge to the assumptions of the outsiders, what is still notable is that of all of the tellable events for her to illustrate in response to the interviewer's question, she has chosen to share this specific type of encounter that, as Sasha and others indicate, is quite common for Flint residents.

When constructing this encounter, Michelle begins in lines 7–8 where she makes the claim that outsiders have a stereotype about Flint residents. Next, the reported exchange in lines 10 through 17 gives us a clear indication of the worldview and beliefs of the outsider. Notably, the trouble source for the outsider begins not at the revelation that Michelle is from Michigan, but that she is from the city of Flint. Here, the outsider's change-of-state-token *oh* (i.e., "oh my gosh" in line 12) is immediately followed by their statements of fear about the city and violence in lines 12 through 15.

Excerpt 3 – Interviewer (IR), Michelle (M)

1	**IR**:	So whenever: (0.6) I guess you: (0.5) meet someone or t- talk to
2		someone who's outside the community=
3	**M**:	um hm
4	**IR**:	=do they automatically assume tha:t (0.6) you
5		have the typical stereotypes of Flint that you know that you're
6		jobless that (0.8) all them (0.3) negative aspects.
7	**M:**	u:m there's generally: (1.4) a stereotype, not usually that I'm (1.2)
8		unemployed. (0.6) um when we went do:wn to Cedar Point >my
9		sorority went down to Cedar Point < ha ha (0.5) a:nd u:m (0.5) we
10		were working: (0.6) obviously its in Ohio: and they asked us **where**
11		**we were fro:m** (0.3) wer- like **oh fr- from Michigan oh where from**
12		**Michigan** (0.4) **From Flint .hh oh my gosh.** (0.1) **I would be so:**
13		**scared to go there.** (0.3) like (0.1) **I would never want to visit**
14		**the:re. .h** (0.3) **Isn't there fighting like a:ll the ti:me,** (0.3) **.h Aren't**
15		**people like always getting sho:t** like that was li- (1.0) I was getting
16		riddled with questions about like (0.8) gang bangers and stu:ff and I
17		was like **u:::h (2.0) that's only partially tru:e** like I can't be like **no**
18		**there's no violenc:e in Flint.** (0.2)
19	**IR:**	((*laughs*))
20	**M:**	But (1.2) it was weird how like nervous they we:re

Other than the information that Michelle provides about the location of the exchange, Ohio, the interlocutors are not individually identifiable from the reported exchange. Instead, Michelle uses the pronoun "they" (line 10) indicating that this is a group of speakers. Next, the reported exchange itself begins as an indirect report of the ways that her interlocutors elicit information about where Michelle and her companions were from (lines 10–11). It is not unusual for indirect reported speech to appear at the beginning of reported encounters as indirect speech often helps narrators to provide the background of the narrative followed by a transition into direct reported speech at the climax or most notable points of the encounter (Holt 2000). Here, Michelle transitions into direct reported speech for the most meaningful portion of the encounter with the quotative *like* and her statement "oh from

Michigan" in line 11. The remainder of the exchange in lines 11 through 15 is reported using direct reported speech.

Much like Sasha's encounter with outsiders in excerpt 2, Michelle's interlocutors are depicted as being in a state of shock upon learning that she is from Flint. Here, they take a deep breath before producing the dramatic "oh my gosh" in (line 12) where each word is emphasized. In addition, they are depicted as interrogating Michelle with a rapid-fire series of questions, indicating their skewed view of the city. While not as lengthy in her rebuttal as Sasha, Michelle does provide an evaluation and critique of her interlocutor's claims with her statement "that's only partially true" (line 17) and her assessment of the encounter with the utterance "it was weird how like nervous they were" in line 20. Although brief, Michelle's "talk-back" challenges the assumptions that govern their production of negative talk about Flint.

Anthony

Anthony was recruited and interviewed by his sister, an undergraduate student participating in a research project in a linguistics course. Anthony grew up in Genesee County, moving between Flint and its surrounds, and he recently moved back to Flint in the year prior to the interview. Due to his military travels, Anthony dedicates a large portion of his interview to comparing Flint to other cities (both domestic and abroad), pointing out their relative rates of crime and safety. He is also quite matter-of-fact in his assessment of Flint and freely acknowledges what he views to be negative elements of the city.

Like the previous residents, Anthony also provides evidence of encounters with individuals who hold negative views about the city in excerpt 4. Here Anthony describes how he delays the revelation that he is from Flint based on the assumption that outsiders might not be familiar with the city (lines 6–9). However, upon revealing that he is indeed from Flint (line 15) he immediately receives the change-of-state-token "oh" in line 16. Through Anthony's commentary on the exchange, we learn that outsiders then ascribe violence directly to him and other residents (i.e., "and then they're really scared" line 26 and "people tend to back off real quick" in lines 32 through 33). In this sense, negative chronotopic representations of Flint also color how they view Anthony once they can clearly associate him with the city.

Excerpt 4 – Interviewer (IR), Anthony (A)

1	**IR:**	I- I know I've had a lot of (0.6) interesting reactions when I tell people
2		that I'm: not even from Flint but from the Flint area? (0.6) What sort
3		of reactions have you gotten when you say you live in Flint.
4		((*IR and A briefly share a joke and then return to IR's question*))
5	**A:**	So yeah I spent you know a lot of the time out of the state away
6		from my ho:me (0.5) .hh um (0.4) and I always start off telling people
7		you know **w- well** >**where are you** ↑**from. well Michigan**.< (0.4)
8		**Well where at in Michigan.** (.) **well Detroit.** (0.4) .h 'cause ↑you
9		know I'm close- >probably closer to Detroit than Saginaw.< (.)
10		[an- and I-
11	**IR**:	[It ↑does seem like people wouldn't kn- kno::w? where Flint
12		is? [but th]ey all seem to.=
13	**A**:	[yeah.] =well and then >an' then they're like< **oh**
14		**yeah? wh- where at,** an' you know like **you're from** >**De**↑**troit.** I'm
15		like< **well ACtually I'm from Flint.**
16		And they're like (0.3) **O:H**
17		(0.2)
18	**IR:**	um hm
19	**A:**	and (0.2) you know 'cuz Detroit, (0.1) first of all that get-
20		>you get your own reaction just as far as you know< **I'm from**
21		**Detroit.=**

22	**IR:**	=um=
23	**A:**	**=**.h People like (.) stand off you know they don't **oh** (0.2) **I'm** (0.2)
24		**my ba:d.** (.) They a-almost apologize to you (0.3) .h for (.) stepping in
25		your pa:th and ↑speaking to you. (0.5) .hh well (.) then you go **I'm**
26		**from ↑Flint** and then they're ↑really scared. (0.3) likehh and I'm like
27		**how do you know about Flint.** like (0.5) **that's worse than**
28		**De↑troit.** (.) like **how-** (0.2) **you- you're from AriZOna.** (0.5) **.hh**
29		**you're from:: Calif- you know California.** (0.5) **.hh Alabama. You**
30		**don't even-** (.) >Alabama they can't even ↑read.< like (0.2) you know?
31		(0.6) sohho (0.5) .h yeah (0.3) .h >so it's pretty interesting. they'll
32		u:h< they definitely- (0.2) people tend to back off (0.4) hh realhh
33		qhhuick hh.
34	**IR:**	yeah

Through this exchange we learn that both Anthony and the outsiders seem to link Flint to another deindustrializing city, Detroit, which has also appeared on a number of national rankings for elevated violence and crime. In this case, Flint and its residents are positioned as more violent than Detroit and its residents (lines 27 through 28). Immediately after voicing these negative outsider views, Anthony pushes back by questioning the source of their information about Flint (line 27) and he even makes a disparaging comment about the outsiders' own home state (i.e., "Alabama they can't even read" in line 30). Here, Anthony's own reported speech, which is introduced by the quotative *like* (lines 26 and 28), may also indicate that he is reporting his internal thoughts, rather than a word-for-word recounting of an actual exchange. In essence, this segment of the interview becomes a space for Anthony to respond to the negative talk that he regularly hears about Flint. Finally, while Anthony clearly resists the negative talk and identity positions that have been constructed about Flint, he also provides counter images of the work that Flint residents do to build up their city. For example, in another portion of his interview, he provides a description of a resident and close friend who works tirelessly to clean and mow the yards of abandoned homes in his neighborhood. Like Sasha, Anthony not only questions the authority of speakers to make negative claims about Flint, but he also illustrates the type of desirable resident that is commonly erased from public discourses about the city.

Todd

The final example comes from Todd who, although not born in Michigan, moved to the city of Flint at an early age and was raised in the city for the majority of his childhood and teenage years. Todd was recruited and interviewed by a graduate research assistant for this project who was also a longtime acquaintance of his. Todd constructs the voice of an unnamed speaker (or group of speakers) in excerpt 5 to provide evidence of the work that he puts into challenging negative perceptions of his city. In response to the interviewer's question about his hope for the city's future, Todd uses the reported exchange (lines 13–16) to provide evidence of his hope.

As Todd constructs the exchange, we hear a voice that says "Oh Flint sucks" in line 13. Like the other excerpts, the speaker of this quote is not a named individual, but a generic person or group of people (i.e., "every time. . .people say" in lines 12 through 13). In addition, the use of *every time* and the tense of the verb *say* indicate that the reported speech does not capture a specific conversation from the past, but a habitual pattern of talk. Next, the interlocutor's talk is reported by Todd in a deep voice with a mocking tone. Immediately following the construction of the image of this generic figure, we are given a projection of Todd's own voice pointing out evidence of the good that is happening in the city (i.e., "Check out this. Check out that" in lines 14 and 15). Todd's use of the quotative *like* and the tense of the verb *to be* (i.e., "and

you're like" in line 14) may also indicate that he is representing his generalized feelings or state of mind rather than his actual response to the speaker. Notably, this exchange ends with Todd's strong positive evaluation of the city (i.e., "We're still awesome. We know it. Boom!") in lines 15 and 16.

Excerpt 5 – Interviewer (IR), Todd (T)

1	**IR:**	Do you see any hope for Flint's perseverance?
2	**T:**	.hh
3		(0.8)
4	**IR:**	I think from our conversation so far I would say [yes obviously?
5	**T:**	[hh
6		.hh (0.6) I'd like to say yes based on our conversation:s? based on
7		what ((interviewer's name)) says our conversation has been u::m
8		I think (0.4) that there's hope for Flint in the persev- in the
9		perseverance o:f (0.8) .hh taking the ci- taking a ci::ty tha:t (1.0) you
10		know so financially:: (0.2) bla::h an::d still:: buildin::g an awesome
11		community:: (0.3) sense of community: around the people who are
12		still here:: and (0.4) .hh just (0.2) amp- upping the ante every tim:e
13		you know people say **OH FLINT SUCKS** ((said in a deep, mocking
14		tone)) >and you're like< **OH YEAH? CHECK OUT ↑THIS CHECK**
15		**OUT THAT AND CHECK OUT THIS** (.)**WE'RE STILL**
16		**AWESOME.** (.) **WE KNOW IT.** (.) **[BOOM.**
17	**IR:**	[((laughs))

Through his last emphatic statement, Todd affirmatively illustrates for outsiders dimensions of Flint that are commonly omitted from public discourses. He also presents an idealized image of himself as a proud Flint resident who actively challenges negative place talk about the city and he gives us an image of other residents who are "still here" (line 12) working to build a better future for Flint. In essence, his chronotopic representation of Flint offers exemplars of a new, more positive subjectivity for Flint residents who display their city pride through their efforts to rebuild the city.

Chronotopes of Flint and the Mass Media

As we have seen so far, residents of different ethnicities, ages, and genders all share a common experience of encounters with a particular type of outsider whose negative place talk is informed by their preconceptions about the city and its people. In fact, as these excerpts illustrate, these encounters with individuals who produce negative talk about Flint are highly "tellable" events for younger residents meaning that they may be a recurring feature of their experience in Flint. This is confirmed by my own observations talking with other Flint residents in public discussion forums, during in-class discussions, and in informal discussions with students, activists, and other residents since my arrival in Flint in 2011. In many cases, residents, particularly those who have traveled out of state, readily share with me their own experiences of negative outsider talk and the ways that stereotypes about the city impact their exchanges with others once they leave the city. This suggests that negative mass-mediated chronotopes are wide-reaching and have the effect of severely narrowing the range of identity positions for Flint residents as they move outside the city.

As the excerpts in the previous section illustrate, residents are also amazed at the types and sources of stereotypes that others have about their city and, in other areas of their interviews, residents often attribute these stereotypes to broader mass-mediated discourses about the city. For example, the speaker in Excerpt 6 (the only resident born before 1980 to provide an outsider enactment) describes Michael

Moore's documentaries as having a violent impact on the city (i.e., "Flint's the one that keeps the black eye" in lines 6–7).

Excerpt 6 – Interviewer (IR), White Female born in 1960 (IE)

1	**IE:**	So hh (0.3) it's the people who sta:yed and who continued to do
2		business who kept the lights o:n despite what Michael Moore sa:id
3		and despite what GM di:d=
4	**IR:**	=yeah
5	**IE:**	hh you know (0.2) both of them gave us- you know >Michael Moore
6		hit us in the eye< w- he was going after GM but ((sucks teeth)) Flint's
7		the one that keeps the black eye:=
8	**IR:**	=yeah
9	**IE:**	and GM you know KNOcked our knees out from under us so: we were-
10		we kinda lost the fight with those two but hh (0.8) you know there
11		was the peop- there are the people who never gave up (0.4) an:d
12		that's why I always come back. . .

Overall, interviewees frequently attribute the negative face-to-face encounters that they have with outsiders to broader mass-mediated discourses that position Flint—and by extension, its residents—as violent and dangerous. Thus, the oppositional stances that are illustrated in their enactments may be one way that residents can challenge widely circulating negative discourses about the city and open up new understandings of what it means to live in Flint in the current space and time all the while providing a counter image of a city populated by proud, dedicated residents.

Discussion and Conclusions

As Avraham (2000:364) has pointed out, "the 'reality' that the media transfers from distant places is conceptualized as the places' 'objective' or 'true' reality by those who do not live there." In this way, media representations can become a kind of "truth" that is taken for granted by outsiders and nonresidents, even when those truths don't fully align with the livedexperiences of local residents. For Flint residents, this "truth" has a problematic nature in that it paints an official picture of Flint that is limiting both for the city and its residents. In essence, the mass-mediated chronotope of Flint as a dangerous city in decline becomes an enduring reference point that travels with residents even when they leave the city. As a result, some residents seem to be deeply invested in providing an alternate vision of what it means to be from Flint. As the *Policy.Mic* episode illustrates, this struggle for Flint's reputation seems to be a kind of political act and social ritual that sorts residents and "outsiders" into social "types" who are either working for or against Flint's (and it's people's) reputation. While some of the questions asked in the interview situation may have primed residents to engage in this type of talk, it is clear that using talk to defend the city extends well beyond the interview situation as a common routine among Flint residents.

However, turning to the oral history interview itself, the mechanisms by which Flint residents use the space of the interview to "do" this work are quite complex. For example each speaker gives us an important image of the social and discursive behaviors that mark the social "types" that interact within (or beyond) their community. In the construction of these enactments, reported speech allows listeners to "hear" how these individuals typically speak as well as how residents sound as they evaluate negative place talk and defend the city from generic attacks from these individuals. This helps confirm previous scholarly understandings of the ways that stories about place help individuals to represent (and develop) their sense of self and community as well as illustrate the social expectations associated with being an ideal community member (Johnstone 1990; Schiffrin 1996; Modan 2007). In addition, the

content of their reported exchanges illustrates the ways that each resident's identity is shaped by others, particularly by those who are not from their city. Thus, through their narrative we gain a more expansive understanding of what "being from Flint" indexes to others. From these details, it is clear that identity construction is not simply a product of the individual but is partially a product of others' perceptions (Bucholtz and Hall 2005; 605–606).

Overall, the impact of broader, mass-mediated chronotopes of place, especially those that sort cities into more or less desirable places, cannot be understated. In fact, through the residents' encounters we can see the hegemonic power of broader master narratives of place that circulate in mass-mediated contexts. For residents, the amount of discursive effort that they expend contesting negative stereotypes of their city illustrates the extent of this hegemonic power. Nevertheless, through their participation in the oral history interview, participants take the opportunity to display their own power by directly "talking back" to the negative master narrative about their city. Thus, the oral history interview, as a discursive tool for identity construction, becomes an additional site for the production and contestation of individual and collective identity for Flint residents.

Transcription Conventions

The transcription conventions used in this article are adapted from the systems developed by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) and utilized by Atkinson and Heritage (1984).

=	latching, or no interval between adjacent utterances
(0.0)	durations of pauses or breaks in the stream of speech in tenths of seconds
(.)	'micro-pause' or a pause shorter than one tenth of a second
(())	characterizations of stretches of talk, vocalizations, and speaker/audience behavior
> <	faster speaking rate than surrounding talk
° °	lower volume than surrounding talk
?	rising pitch at the end of phrase
.	falling pitch at the end of phrase
,	low tone rising towards the middle of the speaker's pitch range, indicating that the phrase is not complete
CAP	speech delivered loudly relative to the surrounding talk
underline	syllables delivered with stress or emphasis
:	lengthening or drawing out of the preceding sound
↑	upward pitch movement
↓	downward pitch movement
[	the point where the overlap begins
]	the point where the overlap ends
h	outbreath
.h	inbreath

Notes

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2. The subset of interviews used in this study were drawn from the pool of transcribed interviews that were available by the time of this study. Several transcribed interviews were excluded including interviews of individuals who came to Genesee County after the onset of adolescence (i.e., after 13). In addition, some student interviewers selected fellow classmates who were Flint residents as interviewees. These interviews were excluded since the content of in-class discussions may have primed the interviewee to pay greater attention to the depiction of outsider views of the city.

3. More information about Flint Club is available from *The Flint Club Blog*. Retrieved February 4, 2016, from https://flintclub.wordpress.com/i-am-flint/.

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