

Study examines denigration when people call a place a 'shithole'

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By tracing the use of the word and hashtag 'shithole' on Twitter, researchers have examined who is engaged in the stigmatizing discourse of denigration, the types of place that are stigmatized, and the responses to stigmatized places.

In a *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* study, the majority of tweets were aimed at places where the tweeter was not from, a form of othering consistent with how territories are stigmatized by those in positions of power such as [policymakers](#), politicians, and

journalists. Also, an important and gendered minority of tweets were characterized by a 'cry for help' and [powerlessness](#), where the stigma was aimed at their own places.

"As well as showing what people think about other places, our research showed how people talk about the places where they live and how a significant proportion—38% of the tweets we studied—maligned the place where they live," said lead author Alice Butler, of the University of Leeds, in the UK. "There was a significant gender difference in the way that men and women experience living in a place, and we also noted a tendency to try and separate place from self-identity."

More information: Alice Butler et al, What does it mean when people call a place a shithole? Understanding a discourse of denigration in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* (2018). [DOI: 10.1111/tran.12247](https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12247)

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