Author’s response to reviews

Title: “They’re always there”: Resident Experiences of Living with Rats in a Disadvantaged Urban Neighbourhood

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Author’s response

Dear Dr. Negev:

Thank you for the opportunity to revise our manuscript “‘They’re always there’: Resident experiences of living with rats in a disadvantaged urban neighbourhood” and for the interest of the journal in publishing this paper. We have carefully considered the constructive comments of Reviewer 2, and have incorporated their suggestions accordingly. Indeed, we agree that restructuring the results around the three themes proposed improves the clarity and impact of our manuscript, and we are grateful for this feedback.

In addition to the changes outlined by Reviewer 2, we have also made a slight amendment to the abstract (Page 1 Lines 18-21) to reflect the restructuring of the manuscript. We have also edited Figure 1 to represent the revised thematic structure.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kaylee

Reviewer 1
Thank you for your time in reviewing our manuscript, and for your positive recommendation of our paper.

Reviewer 2

Thank you again for your thorough review of our manuscript and constructive feedback around revising the themes to strengthen the results and discussion. We have carefully considered these comments and agree that restructuring the themes would improve this manuscript. In particular, we are grateful for the observation that our 5th theme (Importance of Rats) downplays the importance of the work, which certainly is not our intention. As such, we have enthusiastically adopted the proposed restructuring around three themes and have detailed our changes below.

Comment 1: I would take out the comment on saturation as you admit yourself that you have not reached saturation and the sample is relatively small. It would be described as a 'convenience sample'?

Page 6 Line 22: We have specified that this is a convenience sample and have removed the statement around saturation as suggested.

Comment 2: Still some gaps in the methodology. The approach to analysis is textbook and abstract - I would either shorten this or make more relevant to the study i.e. explain how the themes emerged from the process by using an actual example.

We have attempted to better link the methods to the analysis by providing examples of codes and themes as suggested. Specifically, on Page 7 Lines 5 – 9 we provide examples of questions that were determined a priori and in vivo during analysis. Similarly, on Page 7 Lines 21 – 24, we have identified codes determined a priori and in vivo, while on Page 8 Lines 2 – 7 we have given examples of themes derived a priori and in vivo.
Comment 3: I think the findings could be clearer and better structured around three main themes (rather than five).

Accordingly, we have adopted the three themes suggested. Specifically:

1. **Rat Encounters – Context and Symbolism (Page 9 Line 5 to Page 16 Line 14).** In this section, we have combined the previous sections on “Rat Encounters” with “Perceptions of Rats”, as well as a few aspects of "Importance of Rats". This section now details both the experiences of participants with rats as well as the associations participants make with these encounters.

2. **Emotional and Physical Responses (Page 16 Line 16 to Page 22 Line 10).** Previously this section was centered around “Mental Health Impacts and Consequences”. We have largely reordered this section to decrease the repetitiveness noted in the review and substantially reduced the number of quotes. Some of the previous notes in this section have been moved to the third theme on “Power, Control, and Responsibility”.

3. **Power, Control, and Responsibility (Page 22 Line 12 to Page 27 Line 7).** This section now combines the previous sections of “Perspectives on Pest Control” and “Importance of Rats” to more clearly highlight how a lack of action by parties deemed responsible for rat infestations, in combination with other neighbourhood level stressors, contribute to participants’ views of neighbourhood neglect. We have further emphasized the tone of this section by replacing the previous heading title with a new quote “It’s not the rats that’re wrong, it’s the landlord that’s wrong”.

Comment 4. Currently some disconnect between the findings and discussion. Big issues emerging are environmental injustice, social injustice and poverty and control, linked to the presence of rats in the neighbourhood. This is covered well in the discussion.

We believe that reformatting the results as suggested has improved the connection between the findings and discussion to address the disconnect noted here.
Comment 5: Still too many quotes; even though they are lively they need more analysis.

Thank you for your comments around too many quotes. Some time away from them has certainly helped in further reducing their number (they have obviously been difficult to part with). We have removed a further 15 quotes from this manuscript, and incorporated some of the focus of these quotes into the analysis.

Thank you again for all of your suggestions which have greatly improved this manuscript.