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American Refugees: an Ethnographic Study of the Street Homeless*

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AMERICAN REFUGEES: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE STREET
HOMELESS*

by

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AMERICAN REFUGEES: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE STREET
HOMELESS

JASON ADAM WASSERMAN

MEDICAL SOCIOLOGY

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the phenomenon of street home-

lessness and the variety of social responses to it. As an understudied subpopulation,

the street homeless are viewed as exceptionally problematic, because they call into

question not only social structures which predicate homelessness itself, but also the

way in which we provide homeless services. Our data come from more than three

years of ethnographic fieldwork, during which we spent time with the street homeless

in their camps and work corners and also in the shelters. Additionally, we inter-

viewed and observed service users, service providers, politicians, police officers, and

others to map the positions of various groups. Using grounded theory, our data was

coded and emergent themes developed. We innovate on grounded theory by employ-

ing fractal concept analysis to build these emergent themes into conceptual models so

that thematic content in our data is systematically linked with broader cultural

themes. By using fractal analysis we can retain a systematic vision of conceptual ar-

chitecture, rather than being relegated to conceptual pieces and forced linear relation-

ships between them. From the merging of these two analytic techniques, we conclude

our work first by presenting our thematic findings and then by building fractal con-

ceptual models from them. The latter highlight the conceptual disconnects between

society and the street homeless and contain also our suggestions about how to restruc-

ture homeless service provision.

DEDICATION

For Nicole, with all my heart.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

CHAPTER

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When I was ten, my mother took me to a local soup kitchen to serve the poor and homeless in our community. The experience was intended as a lesson in appreciating all we had as a middle class family and it still furnishes vivid memories. I can remember the uncomfortable feeling—guilt, tension, and the vulnerability. I felt sorry for the people in line. I remember disliking one of the other volunteers who yelled at someone for trying to get a second helping of food before everyone else had eaten. I was raised in a solidly middle-class family with a Grandfather, who as far back as I can remember, had lectured me about financial responsibility. So on the way home when my mother asked how I thought those people had ended up that way my answer was simple. "Bad investments," I responded with confidence.

People always laugh at this story, at my humorous misconception. But the general feeling towards homelessness is equally, although more subtly, absurd. The culture of the United States is saturated with an intense individualism, the bootstrap vision of social mobility. We see our country as a land of opportunity, where anyone who tries hard enough can be successful. But inverting the logic yields a darker worldview. If working hard leads to success then, by deduction, those who are unsuccessful simply are not hard workers. The policy-conclusion that follows allows us to construct problems such as poverty and homelessness as individual, not social, in nature. We can therefore ignore them; they are not *our* problems. At ten years old my answer was the product of precisely this individualist ideology that I had been socialized to accept at the most fundamental of levels.

This view of homelessness is the result of a fundamental disconnect between "us" and "them" (Kyle 2005). This social separation is both physical and conceptual. The former consists of political, economic, and cultural practices which systematically disadvantage certain groups. It is not a coincidence that African Americans are far more likely than their white counterparts to be poor and homeless (see Arnold 2004). Conceptually, we most often define individual identity by group membership and the contrast between our groups and others. Homelessness is not purely an economic disadvantage, but also a stigmatized social identity, deriving meaning as a social position from its conceptual distance from "the norm".

In contrast to this atomistic view, which sees groups in rather rigid ways, we could have a dynamic vision of society in general, and homelessness in particular; one which recognizes our interrelatedness, the insufficiency of "us" and "them". As a society, our relationship to the homeless is wholly broken, partly because we fail to recognize our co-existence. When we do actively engage in a relationship with the homeless, through service providers and government programs, we often are unsuccessful in resolving any issues, either for the homeless themselves or for society at large.

The purpose of this project is to explore the relationship between the homeless and society. We focus both on legal institutions and homeless service providers as the arms of society, which most actively engage homelessness, paying particular attention to differences between those who live on the streets and those who live in shelters. By definition the street homeless are individuals who consciously reject what is being made available by a social service system that has proven incapable of reaching them in a meaningful way. This makes the street homeless a significant group to study as they highlight, not only the general failures of our society in providing for the poor, but also the failures of our responses to the homeless, the policies and services

society aims at the homeless population. Using ethnographic fieldwork and novel analytic techniques to gain in-depth knowledge, our project will make a significant contribution to literature and policy for two primary reasons: 1) The presence of street homeless has been strikingly resilient, even in the face of a multitude of service programs and shelters and 2) there is a relative dearth of research focused on this subpopulation of the homeless.[1] These general observations provide an impetus for research because they suggest an overarching hypothesis that there are characteristics of the street homeless population, which are fundamentally different from the more researched groups who use shelters and other programs. This difference was one of our earliest observations and drove much of our subsequent research. Using fractal concept analysis, a novel analytic technique capable of systematically working between micro-level observations of data and macro-level cultural themes, are able to provide more depth to the social problematics surrounding homelessness.

Project Background

Our roots in homeless research, or rather the lack thereof which entailed our grounded approach, warrant some explanation. We imagine ours began like thousands of other field research projects. For their varied epistemological dispositions, ethnographers surely all share a common pre-arrival anxiety. By definition, the researcher is not 'one of them'. Outsider status creates discomfort and nervousness. A thousand things ran through our heads as we left to go 'make contact'. Would two white, middle-class, academics be accepted by a group of poor, mostly black, homeless men? Would we be resented? Would we be safe? Our research easily could have been over before it began.

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[1] A glaring exception is Snow and Anderson (1993).

As we were getting into the car for our first field excursion a man approached us whom appeared homeless and somewhat intoxicated. He did not speak coherently, but indicated that he wanted to shake Wasserman's hand. As they shook hands, he moved in as if he was going to give Wasserman a hug. Wasserman stiffened his arm to block the attempt and the irony of the moment became crystal clear. The idea that we were going out to look for homeless people, to make contact with them, like it was some sort of trip, was absurd. The homeless were every-where.

When we arrived at Catchout Corner, a locally famous gathering spot for the homeless, we had no idea what to expect, no idea what we were going to say, and certainly no idea that four years later we would still be making these trips. Catchout essentially is a vacant lot, which usu-ally serves as the venue for dozens of homeless and poor men waiting for random jobs that pay "under-the-table". The lot was empty that day because of the rain, but four or five men were gathered under the train viaduct just a few yards away. After introducing ourselves by name, Clair explained who we were and what we were doing there. His explanation was as good as it could have been, but by most research standards we did not really know what we were doing there.

We knew that we were trying to make a short documentary film on homelessness as a project for a class we were teaching. We knew that the service providers and researchers we al-ready had interviewed could not explain why someone would live under a bridge rather than in a shelter and we knew that lots of people—a seemingly increasing number—were living that way. We also knew there had to be a reason. And mostly, we knew that we were disillusioned with 'experts'; we both deeply believed that if you want to know about someone, you should start by talking *to* them, not talking *about* them. "What do you want to know," the homeless men asked.

"We just want to know what your life is like." It was the best we could do. We had only one specific question: why did they not go to the shelters? Other than that, we just kind of wanted to know it all.

We kept our visit short, staying just long enough for them to tell us that they felt a "peace of mind" on the streets—a relaxing mental state that comes with no responsibility or social constraints—and that they hated the shelters because they were dirty, unsafe, confining, and degrading. We asked if we could come back and talk to them and they said that Sunday afternoons would be a good time. We did not stay long that first day, but we learned a lot. We learned that the service providers' conception of the street homeless did not mesh with our impressions or what they were saying. We learned that there was a wealth of the unknown and that these men could teach it to us if they were willing. We learned that this was not going to be any small-scale class project. And we learned that by default we would be doing grounded theory. We would allow our conceptual understanding to emerge from our observations, not because we were philosophically disposed to the technique, but because we were completely ignorant of the subject. In other words, we did not learn much about the street homeless on that first trip, but we learned a great deal about ourselves (and the experts we already had contacted). We learned that we were ignorant about these people and even on that first day we learned that the next several years of our lives would be spent trying to whittle away at that ignorance. Our title to some extent betrays our critical conclusions about the assertion of homelessness as a function of addiction and mental illness and the social responses these entail. Rather, like refugees worldwide, the homeless in the United States have been displaced by violence and war, political upheaval, and severe economic deprivation.

Chapter Descriptions

This dissertation will adhere to a standard format in terms of its chapter structure. That is, following this introduction the order of the chapters will be literature review, methods, findings, and conclusions. We employ this structure largely to meet disciplinary and administrative demands, but the production of this manuscript followed a decidedly less traditional course.

Primarily, our use of grounded theory naturally re-ordered our progression. The grounded theory strategy allows theory to emerge from data, rather than verifying *a priori* theory, which tends mostly to be derived from the literature.[2] As such, grounded theory is best done by minimizing one's contact with the literature in an attempt to lessen its influence.[3] Our literature review, therefore, was done at the very end of this project, rather than as a preface to our fieldwork, despite its place as the second chapter. It should not seem surprising then that many of the themes we elucidate there will recur in later chapters. This is intentional as the order of operations of our method allowed such a tailoring of the literature.[4] In chapter three, the description of our methods also strays from the norm. While we draw on the methodological order and coding process of grounded theory, we do so in a novel fashion by using a fractal concept methodology so that emerging themes are always seen as conceptual structures, rather than independent concepts.

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[2] We are aware that Clarke (2005:292), while presenting her adaptation of grounded theory into situational analysis, strongly encourages the traditional order of conducting extensive literature reviews in advance of research.

[3] We note here that it is impossible to approach any subject *tabula rasa*, as everyone holds a conceptual architecture rooted in their life experiences. We therefore do not assert the "epistemological fairytale of grounded theory," but only that we can minimize our specific inclinations toward any particular theory of homelessness (Wacquant 2002:1481). Furthermore, Glaser (1978:72) clearly speaks of needing some broad prior knowledge to theoretically explicate the subtleties of ones data.

[4] See Charmaz (2006:165-68) who suggests the literature review be analyzed in relation to what you are addressing in your developed grounded theory, as well as addressing other issues on the grounded theory "disputed literature review".

In chapter four we present our findings in a narrative fashion typical of ethnographic texts.[5] However, in reading this chapter, one must keep in mind that the organized themes are simply the first step in our theory building process. In other words, chapter four organizes our data by a multitude of emergent themes. This sets up for us a conclusions chapter that substantively differs from the standard recapitulation and projection model. Rather chapter five will examine the conceptual structure of the emergent themes in chapter four. We use a fractal concept methodology (described in detail later) to organize themes hierarchically into conceptual models capable of illustrating the connective links between our micro-level data and broader macro-level cultural processes. Using an explicated ontological structure as the generator, our fractal concept methodology advances ethnographic analysis by systematically working across various levels of scale, showing for example, exactly how current homeless service provision is characterized by a particular western cultural concept of the human being and identifying the various conceptual steps in between.

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[5] While many of our quotes are taken directly from film and audio recordings, some are taken from fieldnotes and are therefore not verbatim. We feel nonetheless confident that we have accurately represented the sentiment and personal flavor of these.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction: Ideological parameters

The tradition of rugged American individualism can be easily located in our political and economic institutions. Drawing on political theorists such as Locke and economists such as Smith, the United States has a long history of believing in the power of the individual to define their own social position. Popular icons such as Horatio Alger portray the ideal that anyone who works hard enough will be successful, a supposition that predicates the American Dream itself. But, caught between the American dream and a much different reality is the problem of home-lessness.

The gap between aspiration and achievement betrays a complex and contradictory social structure, one which produces misery as much out of its ideals as the barriers to achieving them. American capitalism is characterized not just by the *existence* of competition, but also by the *belief* in competition as a social mechanism for progress. Moreover, in order to define success the system must believe and rely on poverty as a natural and just state, as an outgrowth of the cor-rupt (i.e. lazy) individual. Poverty is American capitalism's grand punishment and a threat, which is supposed to motivate citizens to participate and to succeed. The privilege of wealth is nothing more than one's just reward for properly cultivated motivation, and thus not really a privilege at all, but an ex post facto right, in the fullest sense of the word. We ignore both the way in which social structure constrains to produce poverty and enables to produce wealth.

Without recognition of these processes, which are external to the individual, we are left only with the conceptualization of poverty and homelessness as natural law. We found this project on the rejection of homelessness as a natural outcome, and carry a suspicion that this divine justice view, in part, generates the problem. While we do not have a deterministic view of social structure per se, the hegemonic forces which back this American ideology pervade even those who are harmed by it; oddly, it is the embedded ideology of the poor as much as the wealthy.

A recurring theme in American culture suggests "some people assume that in the natural order of things, individual merit underlies personal achievement…one can speak of the deserving and the undeserving in absolute terms. When used as a filter for viewing individual fortune and achievement, those individuals who are more successful (certainly the 'homed') are more valued than those who are less successful---clearly the homeless. The presentation of such dichotomous relationships without explaining the underlying moves making these dichotomies possible bolsters an unproblematic view of these and similar social relations" (Kyle 2005:27).

Poverty and wealth operate as punishment and reward in the American capitalist system. The punishment paradigm extends far beyond the economic sphere, pervading politics and culture, often characterizing social relationships, including society's relationship to the homeless. Local governments jail the homeless, religion threatens damnation, and service providers often require submission to programs, counseling in exchange for the reward of food and shelter (see Arnold 2004; Lyon-Callo 2000; Mathieu 1993). As a society, how we deal with the homeless typically wavers between subtle paternalism and heavy-handed authoritarianism. This dynamic certainly does not facilitate positive dynamics and offers little hope of a meaningful and long-lasting solution, since it precludes effective communication and fails to respect the personhood of the homeless.

The significance of the homeless problem itself is difficult to overstate. In a broad sense, homelessness stands as a challenge to widely held beliefs about opportunities for success in the United States. The problem highlights the importance of structural obstacles and inequality in our society. More practically, addressing homelessness is literally a matter of life and death, as it is associated with all sorts of health outcomes such as addiction, mental illness, chronic and acute disease, malnutrition, and violence. While much research has shown the need to focus on structural causes of homelessness, homeless people seem to be increasingly perceived and treated within a paradigm of individual pathology (Arnold 2004; Hopper 2003; Lyon-Callo 2000).

The purpose of this section is to examine the literature related to homelessness. Our assessment of this literature centers on an overarching trend of medicalizing homelessness. The general theme of medicalization is an adequate contextualization of the literature because it fully encapsulates the ideological tensions between structure and agency, enabling broad coverage within a specified dichotomy that thematically organizes a vast amount of work.[6]

A Brief History of Homelessness

In their seminal work, Snow and Anderson (1993:7) note, "Homelessness in one form or another has existed throughout much of human history." For our purposes here, we will identify shifts in the nature of homelessness in U.S. history from the industrial to post-industrial eras, since it is these, which bear direct relation to our research population.[7]

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[6] Extensive discussion of the "medicalization of society" can be found in Conrad (2007) and Conrad and Schnieder (1992). See also an explanation of the "medicalization of the life cycle" in Clair, Karp and Yoels (1993).

[7] More detailed historical treatments can be found in Arnold (2004); Depastino (2003); Failer (2002); Feldman (2004); Hopper (2003); Kusmer (2002); and Kyle (2005).

Just after the civil war, the need to build railroads, clear forests, and mine coal created a job sector that was migratory in nature (Arnold 2004; Axelson and Dail 1988). Being a hobo was a glorified lifestyle, portrayed as adventurous; these were a generation of post-agrarian cowboys roaming the wide-open American spaces (Anderson 1923; Axelson and Dail 1988; Depastino 2003). They would ride the rails from town to town, following labor opportunities. It was an exciting life; one certainly not encouraged by the establishment, but most definitely the material of childhood fantasies. But as this type of work vanished, the exciting life of these wayfarers came to a halt. Beginning in the 1890's, economic recessions and shrinking job sectors led to new categories of non-working homeless called tramps and bums (Axelson and Dail 1988; Rossi 1989; Snow and Anderson 1993). With the loss of migratory work, increasing numbers of homeless individuals became static and visible in cities across the United States (Arnold 2004; Axelson and Dail 1988; Rossi 1989). The economic depression of the 1930's and increasing modernization kept the homeless population stable, but it remained relatively small through the 1960's. Furthermore, postwar suburban growth meant that the urban homeless were relatively hidden from the general public.

At this point, the homeless transformed from tramps and hobos (migratory workers and migratory non-workers, respectively) to skid row bums and vagrants (non-migrant non-workers) having traded the nomadic life for permanent residence in American cities (Axelson and Dail 1988; Rossi 1989; Schweik, Forthcoming; Snow and Anderson 1993). Largely unproblematic travelers now became consistent nuisances from the perspective of city residents.

While "poor laws" can be traced back to the middle ages, a particularly illustrative response was a wave of vagrancy legislation beginning around 1895 (Axelson and Dail 1988; Phelan, Link, Moore, Stueve 1997; Rossi 1989; Schweik, Forthcoming). Current conceptions of

homelessness are most directly rooted in the negative attitudes that developed in late 19th Century, when homelessness became a stable problem for American cities (Axelson and Dail 1988; Rossi 1989; Snow and Anderson 1993). However, the problem remained relatively small in scale until the mid-1970's, since when a sharp decrease in manufacturing jobs and wages that have not keep pace with inflation, have lead to a massive increase in the numbers of homeless (Mathieu 1993; Mossman 1997), while at the same time we saw the closing of over 1.1 million Single Room Occupancy Units (Arnold 2004; see also Gibson 2004). More recently, urban re-development projects have brought upper and middle-class individuals back from the suburbs and into downtown areas where they are in close contact with the homeless (Bickford 2000; Gibson 2004; Mathieu 1993; Waldron 2000). As homelessness is increasingly the result of the political-economy, it is increasingly experienced by families, women, and younger men, contrary to the image of the skid-row bum who is an older, alcoholic male (Axelson and Dail 1988; Nunez and Fox 1999; Rossi 1989; Shlay and Rossi (1992) point out that there is still a preponderance of single males despite increasing rates among other groups). Ironically, while homelessness today seems directly related to social structural conditions, perception and social responses have remained rigidly individualistic (Arnold 2004; Baer, Singer, and Susser 2003; Hopper 2003; Lyon-Callo 2000; Snow and Anderson 1993). The homeless today are stigmatized as dangerous, mentally ill, drug addicts (see for example Failer 2002; Feldman 2004; Hopper 2003; Lyon-Callo 2000; Mathieu 1993; Snow, Baker, Anderson, Martin 1986). To be sure, children no longer dream of that life. Hopper (2003:26) sums it up stating that the annals of U.S. homelessness is "a tangled tale of contempt, pity, and, curiously, blank disregard."

Just as the nature and general perception of homelessness has shifted historically, so too has the demographic composition of the population. In the next section we discuss these shifts and the current make-up of the homeless in the U.S.

Describing the Homeless

While fraught with methodological problems, we here describe, as best as possible, the demographic composition of the homeless population. The post-war homeless were typically male. Known, even in the academic literature, as "skid row bums," the 1950's and 60's generated the classic image of the drunken ne'er-do-well (see Bahr 1967). The character "Otis" on the popular *Andy Griffith Show* reflects the perception of homeless at this time, if not the actual population. The population of "skid row bums" was relatively small and relegated to particular unsavory areas the city. Bahr (1967) empirically found nationwide declines in skid row populations in the mid-1960's and attributed this partly to a prosperous national economy. However, recessions in the mid 1970's preceded sharp increases in the numbers of homeless and also their demographic composition (Arnold 2004; Mathieu 1993; Mossman 1997; Rossi 1989; Shlay and Rossi 1992; Snow and Anderson 1993). Rossi (1999) notes that enumeration of the homeless itself is controversial. Homeless advocates often have a vested financial interest in producing high numbers, especially of those most sympathetic (women and children, non-mentally ill, non-addicted, etc), since they are enmeshed in competition with other metropolitan areas and more generally other "causes" for funding, which most often is based on (perceived) need (Rossi 1989; Rossi, Wright, Fisher and Willis 1987; Shlay and Rossi 1992). Keeping homelessness in the public and political consciousness translates to real, desperately needed dollars. This is why Rossi's (1989) substantially lower counts of the homeless produced a great deal of controversy

(see Rossi's (1999) own remarks).[8] Arnold (2004:104) states that counts are controversial since they determine the difference between defining whether "the homeless are an exceptional or anomalous population (small numbers) or a significant group." Lower numbers allow for the argument that the homeless are not a normal part of the population and therefore do not deserve special treatment, making it easier to argue for welfare and social spending cuts. Higher numbers reflect that this is a problem that affects the population as a whole and that the homeless are not just "pathological or abnormal". Although no one contends that a conscious conspiracy is operating here, it is clear that counting the homeless is a politically charged process, with a lot of money on the line.

Of course, problems of enumerating the homeless entail problems describing the general composition of the population: counts at shelters risk underestimating the street population (Rossi 1989); counts which attempt to include the street population might underestimate the avoidance factor of the street homeless (Rossi 1999); studies adopting literal definitions of homelessness do not count those "doubling-up"; and to our knowledge, no one has been able to directly count that population, although some have proffered statistically derived estimates (see Rossi et al. 1987; LaGory, Ritchey, Mullis 1990; LaGory, Ritchey, Fitzpatrick and Irwin 2005). For this reason, estimations of the number of homeless have had such a large range that they are virtually meaningless, unless specifically contextualized by population parameter of particularized definitions of homelessness (e.g. Shlay and Rossi (1992) note that national estimates ranged from 250,000 to 3,000,000).

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[8] It will be interesting to see if the immediate future throws an interesting twist into the "counting controversy". The advent of new programs we will later discuss, such as Housing First, undermine the basic premise on which most homeless service programs operate. Those working in the current, dominant model of service provision (know sometimes as a continuum-of-care model may in the near future have to compete with other types of homeless service provision. This would reverse the enumeration bias as service providers might have an interest in lower counts, which could be constructed as a reflection of the success of their service model.

The demographic composition of the current homeless population is difficult to encapsulate. Shlay and Rossi (1992) note that the homeless are homogenous on some variables and heterogeneous on others. This estimation of course depends on what particular dimensions one is assessing. This is evident from Table 1, which is reproduced from Shlay and Rossi's (1992) meta-analysis of sixty homeless studies.[9]

From Table 1 we can see that the population of the homeless estimated by studies from 1981-1988 was overwhelmingly comprised of single males whose ages centered on 36.5 years (Shlay and Rossi 1992). This seemingly contradicts the assertion that the

Table 1. Racial and demographic characteristics of homeless people, from Shlay and Rossi 1992).

	Mean (standard deviation)	Range	Number of Studies
Percent male	74% (25)	0-100%	60
Percent unmarried	87% (10)	60-100%	41
Median age	36.97 (4.33)	29-53	36
Mean age	36.51 (2.68)	31-43	35
Percent < 30 years old	35% (15)	15-100%	32
Percent > 60 years old	7% (4)	6-90%	52
Percent black	44% (23)	6-90%	52
Percent Hispanic	12% (7)	1-31%	37
Percent American Indian	6% (6)	0-23%	19

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[9] While Shlay and Rossi's (1992) meta-analysis is somewhat dated, it is the only such work of its kind, to our knowledge. Moreover, 2005 data from our city, Birmingham, suggest that Shlay and Rossi's meta-analysis findings mostly are still accurate (LaGory et al. 2005). We report these more current demographic findings from Birmingham below.

family is the new face of homelessness, however, there likely are *more* homeless women and children than prior to the 1980's, even if they do not make up the majority.

In terms of race, regional differences compromise any insights. For example, while across all sixty studies homeless populations were 44% black, which suggests at the very least that they have disproportionately high representation relative to the general population. However, the large standard deviation (23, more than half of the total percentage) means statistically that 95% of all study populations ranged from 0% to 90% black (two standard deviations on either side of the mean).

On other factors, such as poverty, the homeless certainly are a homogenous population (Shlay and Rossi 1992). Additionally, there are a number of variables which are significantly higher among the homeless population relative to the general population include mental illness, addiction, poor physical health, poor nutrition, incarceration, a lack of social ties, and being raised in foster care (Shlay and Rossi 1992). Of course, all of these contain measurement issues that need to be addressed to be correctly interpreted, but this is really beyond the scope of this paper (see Shlay and Rossi 1992). It is however, important to note that the comparative prevalence of these variables should not be confused with preponderancy. For example, while the homeless population has significantly greater mental illness than the general population, most studies suggest that the majority of the homeless are not mentally ill (Shlay and Rossi 1992; Snow et al. 1986, see also Failer 2002). Again, we must consider what types of mental illness were counted in these estimates. Serious mental illnesses such as schizophrenia are not preponderant, but depression seems to be (e.g. LaGory et al. (1990) report 75% with depressive symptomology). This distinction is particularly important as these respective illnesses are thought to

be fundamentally different; depression can be stimulated by environmental factors, whereas schizophrenia, although exacerbated by environment, has some biogenetic basis.

A 2005 homeless needs assessment conducted in Birmingham yields demographic data most relevant to our project (LaGory et al. 2005). Using a combined actual count and projection, LaGory et al. (2005) estimate 2,929 homeless in Birmingham. Consistent with Shlay and Rossi (1992) single individuals comprise 73.6% of the actual sample (n=1,414). Males were the majority with 69.9% and the mean age of all respondents was 41 years (standard deviation = 11 years). While most homeless women were not accompanied by family members (72.7%), this was much less than for men (2.7%). 19.6% of homeless women were accompanied by children compared to .7% of men. The racial composition of the homeless was overwhelmingly African American (67.6% compared to 31.1% white, and 1.3% other) reflecting the effect of region on homelessness not captured by Shlay and Rossi's (1992) meta-analysis.

An intensive survey on a representative subsample (n=161) of the Birmingham count yielded additional demographic data (LaGory et al. 2005). Most of the homeless had at least completed high school (74.0%). 20.5% had served in the military and 24.2% of those had seen active combat.

The Street Homeless

Nearly all previous research has been unable to clearly distinguish and describe the street homeless vis a vis the sheltered homeless. This is important since, as noted, the street homeless represent that portion of the homeless whom services have failed to reach in a meaningful way. That is, the street homeless are not only in the margins of society, but the margins of homelessness service itself.

Rossi et al. (1987) created a probability sampling design in an effort to capture the street homeless, but this method does not overcome a particular selectivity bias, what we might simply call the "avoidance factor". In other words, the homeless, or even more statistically problematic, a particular subset of them, might avoid participating in surveys. Presumably the most suspicious and distrustful would be the least likely to do so. Since Rossi et al. (1987) surveyors also were accompanied by the police (as were surveyors for a local homeless count conducted by a coalition of service providers in our city, Birmingham), this would seeming heighten the avoidance factor. The street homeless by definition resist institutions like shelters, and certainly also the police, so it is not unreasonable to question how well Rossi's, or any other enumeration for that matter, samples them. In fact, Rossi (1989:104) notes that the street homeless hold generally negative views of the shelters, but we might wonder whether distrust of shelters and other institutions bleeds over to distrust of clipboard wielding surveyors. Ultimately, if samples are selective, and moreover, selective of particularly important characteristics such as whether one uses or avoids homeless services, assertions about the nature of the homeless population have to be considered with care. We suspect, for the above reasons that characteristics particular to, or exaggerated in, the street homeless are not well captured by traditional survey research.

To be sure, identifying the street homeless has been troubling to researchers. During the day, shelter and street users mingle and may be indistinguishable. Nighttime research attenuates this, but has other problems (LaGory et al. 1990; Rossi 1989). Rossi (1989:103) attempted to use a several markers to distinguish street users: 1) those whose appearance was relatively, "shabby, dirty, and unkempt;" 2) "incoherent, drunk, confused, or lacking lucidity;" 3) "those who scored high on a scale measuring depression." These, of course, make presuppositions, which are selective and may be unwarranted. Specifically, these tend to assume that the street

homeless are more dysfunctional relative to their sheltered counterparts, an assumption that we will later contest (see also discussions of functionality and rationality of the street homeless in Mathieu 1993; Hopper 1987, 2003; Snow and Anderson 1993). From a research standpoint Rossi's (1989) criteria are problematic because they select non-functional street homeless people and thus risk creating a sample biased in highly problematic way, since it is statistically bound to reflect existing stigmas of the street homeless.

While changing demographics of homelessness, particularly more women and more families may be extant in the general population (e.g. Nunez and Fox 1999; this also is contested, see Shlay and Rossi 1992), this does not hold for the subset of the street homeless. Typical methodology not only has been inadequate to yield results generalizable to the street homeless, but our direct experience has been that there are relatively few women and children who live on the street. This is likely due to the greater availability of formal services for women and children and informally, a greater willingness on the part of family and friends to help women and children. Both of these would seem tied to gender conceptions about the male-as-provider and women (and children, notably also feminized in inverse relation to their age) as those needing provided for.

Snow and Anderson (1993) are a notable exception to the exclusion of the street homeless, or, at best, the lumping together of the street homeless and those who use shelters. Although not the primary research question, their ethnographic fieldwork illustrates that our initial research impetus had been correct; there are key differences between those who stay primarily on the streets and those who use shelters.

As we noted, our project began somewhat by accident. We were completely unfamiliar with the literature and while we were referred to Snow and Anderson's work (1993), we decided

to delay our reading of it. Our pleasant surprise almost three years later was a work, which ours complemented in many ways.

Snow and Anderson (1993) found that the daily routines of the street homeless revolve around getting work, despite popular conceptions of the homeless as lazy. This is done by going to temporary labor services or by gathering at known spots where those with odd jobs will make informal arrangements with the homeless. Selling blood plasma also was a common way to make money (Snow and Anderson 1993). Snow and Anderson (1993) note that the street homeless experience a disintegration of social ties and a bear a constant stigma which erode their identity (see also Arnold 2004). In response, the homeless employ a variety of identity management techniques (Snow and Anderson 1987, 1993). Despite these, many of the homeless begin to settle into street life as their social integration increasingly deteriorates (Snow and Anderson 1993). Snow and Anderson (1993) found also that most of the homeless are not mentally ill and that most alcohol and drug use is a means of self-medication (see also Snow et al. 1986).

While the work of Snow and Anderson (1993; and also Hopper (1987, 2003) was undoubtedly groundbreaking, particularly in light of homeless research unable to get to these same insights because of a distanced methodology, we not only confirm many of their findings, but add new dimensions. By staying overnight, for example, we had access to the homeless camps hidden away from public view. This allowed us to distinguish those who were primarily street homeless, from those who use shelters at night, and informal labor pools and blood plasma centers during the day. Moreover, the organization and regulation of these hidden communities, among other insights, greatly adds to Snow and Anderson's (1993) realization that survival on the streets requires a creativity and will that counter the presumption of service providers and other researchers (e.g. Rossi 1989) that the street homeless are the sine qua non of dysfunction

(see also Hopper 2003 who holds similar ideas about the creativity of the homeless; see Jencks

1994 for a disturbing account of presumed dysfunction of the homeless in general).

A recurring theme emerging from much sociological and anthropological research is that

of commonality. The descriptive thrust of much ethnographic research is that, in the end, so-

cially distant groups often are not that different (Wacquant 2002; see for example Anderson

1999; Duneier 1999; Newman 1999; Snow and Anderson 1993).

Debunking myths of difference is a worthy pursuit, but also raises concerns. Maharidge

and Williamson (1993:31-32) suggest that a "hobo reality" often is romanticized as one of inno-

cent circumstance and structural causation. They argue that one should realize that homelessness

is potentially the ultimate outcome when one rejects "the system". Being 'houseless' serves as

punishment for a deviant identity, for being a 'non-conformist'. The streets become "a ha-

ven…from the dominant world of regular jobs and nuclear family life" (Depastino 2003:268)

Passaro (1996) rejects romantic notions, referring to homeless men as 'society's rejects', 'trans-

gressors of social identity', 'men who refuse to be breadwinners' (cf. Depastino 2003:269).

Wacquant (2002:1520) refers to the "pitfalls of urban ethnography" in a critique of three

popular works of urban ethnography. His remarks provide an interesting, although perhaps

heavy-handed, warning to ethnography of the street homeless such as ours:

> To counter common sense and to fight social stereotypes are well-established
> tasks of social science and especially ethnography, for with it supplies one tradi-
> tional "warrant" (Katz 1998). But this task is hardly fulfilled by replacing those
> stereotypes with inverted cardboard cutouts issued out of the same symbolic
> frame, as our three authors do. For Duneier, sidewalk vendors turn out to be not
> crime vectors, but crime busters; according to Anderson, the majority of ghetto
> residents are or wish to be "decent," despites street appearances to the contrary;
> and in Newman's eyes, willing low-wage laborers, far from being extinct, over-
> flow the inner city and need only more servile work to snap the bridles of stigma
> and poverty. In all three studies, the inquiry substitutes a positive version of the
> same misshapen social figure it professes to knock down, even as it illumines a
> range of social relations, mechanisms, and meanings that cannot be subsumed un-

der either variant, devilishly or saintly. But to counter the "official disparagement of 'street people'" (COS, p255) with their byronic heroization by transmuting them into champions of middleclass virtues and founts of decency under duress only replaces one stereotype with another. (Wacquant 2002:1520)

Whether or not the authors Wacquant targets fit his assessment, the ultimate conclusion is important: We cannot counter the problematic outcomes of structural inequality by reproducing those structural inequalities either physically in our political and economic systems, or symbolically in our rhetorical depictions. This is an idea to which we will return in our methods section.

Causes of Homelessness

Since the demographic composition of the homeless population is hotly contested, it should be no surprise that agreement on causal explanations also is elusive. Here we discuss the two most prominent themes, which particularly are extant in the attitudes of the general public, but also homeless service programs. Mental illness and addiction sometimes are asserted as *causes* of homelessness and other times conceptualized as inextricably intertwined with the condition of being homeless. While some research has attempted to shift focus toward structural conditions, which predicate homelessness, individual pathologies such as mental illness and addiction have been resilient interpretations of homelessness (Arnold 2004; Gibson 2004; Hopper 2003; Lyon-Callo 2000; Depastino 2003; Snow and Anderson 1993).

Mental Illness

One common explanation for the sharp increase in homelessness beginning in the mid 1970's is that the closing of state mental hospitals has left the streets filled with mentally ill homeless. This explanation is appealing since much research has shown significantly higher rates of mental illness among the homeless population (Conley 1996; Jencks 1994; LaGory et al.

1990; Rossi, Fisher, and Willis 1986; Shlay and Rossi 1992; Snow et al. 1986). One study of the homeless conducted in Birmingham, Alabama showed a mean CES-D score for the sample of 23.5, suggesting significantly high levels of clinical depression among the population (Ritchey, LaGory, and Fitzpatrick 1995).[10] Research suggests that over one-third of the homeless self-report a mental illness and estimates of prevalence are often as high as two-thirds (Ritchey et al. 1995).

The process of deinstitutionalization of state mental hospitals began in the late 1950's (Arnold 2004, see also Failer 2002), but massive increases in the number of homeless did not begin to occur until the early 1970's (Baer et al. 2003; Mathieu 1993; Mossman 1997; Snow et al. 1986). If large numbers of individuals were forced into homelessness by the closing of state mental hospitals, the increase in numbers of homeless would have begun much earlier (Baer et al. 2003; Mathieu 1993; Mossman 1997). Mathieu (1993) further points out that the deinstitutionalization explanation is, at least in part, politically motivated, in that it allows city governments to blame state governments for the homeless who reside on their streets.

Those deinstitutionalized that did make it to the streets did so because: 1) outpatient mental health services never materialized, 2) Medicare and Medicaid cuts meant less services for the poor, and 3) certain populations could not be targeted for care (ex-inmates, runaways, etc.). (Arnold 2004:92).

The mental illness explanation is partly one of visibility (Mathieu 1993; Snow et al. 1986; Rowe 1999). The image of the mentally ill homeless person talking to him or herself or imaginary others is particularly salient because this type of homeless person is particularly visible (Liebow 1993; Mathieu 1993; Snow et al. 1986). We readily see them because their behav-

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[10] On the CES-D, a score of sixteen or greater indicates clinical depression.

iors draw attention. The homeless person who does not exhibit these behaviors is more likely to go unnoticed.

Finally, while homelessness is certainly an indicator of mental illness, questions of causality remain. While much research asserts that homelessness is the result of mental illness, it could easily be the case that homelessness is the cause of mental illness (LaGory et al. 1990; Mathieu 1993; Mossman 1997; Snow et al. 1986). Data from Ritchey et al. (1995) show that homelessness is a condition associated with increased daily hassles, decreased social support, decreased health status, and increased life events, all of which are ultimately related to increased depressive symptoms. In short, the homeless condition is a stressful and depressing one. We might intuitively conclude then, that increased rates of mental illness among this population are the natural result of the condition, not the cause of it. Furthermore, psychosocial measures used to assess mental illness often do not differentiate causal types. For example, the CES-D is the most common measure of depression, but it cannot differentiate someone who is clinically depressed (e.g. as the result of brain chemistry) from someone who is depressed because of circumstantial factors (e.g. because they recently have gone through divorce; Horwitz 2002). But despite the precarious position of the mental illness explanation, it remains convincing to both the general public and service providers (see Mathieu's (1993) contention that this reflects their political interest rather than any empirical reality). As we will discuss later, this has engendered particular responses from policy-makers and service providers.

Addiction

Another equally prominent and individualistic explanation for homelessness is addiction to drugs or alcohol. Addiction, in general, has been increasingly approached from a disease per-

spective. While this has increasingly yielded service programs for the homeless a "treatment orientation," it does not seem to have tempered the stigmatization of addiction among them or other disfranchised groups. The general public continues to count addiction among the variety of bad choices made by the homeless individual, even in an era where the increasing medicalization of addiction would expectedly reduce its stigmatization.

Alcohol and drug use clearly is prevalent among the homeless population (Conley 1996; Rossi 1989; Shlay and Rossi 1992). Ritchey et al. (1995) find that over 50% of the individuals in the sample reported that alcohol had caused a problem in their life. Further, nearly 30% of the respondents in the sample reported using drugs other than alcohol at least once in the previous month (Ritchey et al. 1995). Similar data from New York City shows that 50% of respondents admitted to having a drug problem (Conley 1996). Measuring rates of addiction is difficult. As a deviant behavior, self-reported addiction would expectedly tend to underestimate its real rates. Stigmas of the homeless might cause overestimation in more directly empirical measurements (e.g. behavioral observation) since a homeless person drinking would more readily be labeled an addict, regardless of whether they truly possessed addictive symptomology.

Clearly addiction can be an obstacle to obtaining housing (Conley 1996). The obvious logic is that money that could be used to get off the streets is instead spent on drugs and alcohol. But here again, we are confronted with causal ambiguities. Conley (1996) notes that 82% of the respondents in his study reported increasing their substance use after being homeless (see also Arnold 2004). While certainly an obstacle, we cannot conclude that addiction causes homelessness, since it may often be the case that homelessness causes (or worsens) addiction.

A substantial portion of the general population uses illicit substances,[11] but most do not become homeless. This suggests that other factors are at work (e.g. poverty and the lack of affordable housing), or at least that other factors must converge with addiction in order to cause homelessness. Furthermore, patterns of substance use among the homeless may not be significantly different from patterns of use in the general population (Baer et al. 2003). A substantial portion of the general population also uses legal substances, even prescribed narcotics to medicate themselves for reasons such as stress and depression. The substance use among the homeless may follow similar patterns (Snow and Anderson 1993). It would stand to reason then, that there would be increased substance use among the homeless since there is increased stress and depression among them (LaGory et al. 1990; Rossi 1989).

Finally, as noted, substance use may be disproportionately stigmatized in the homeless population. This may result from judgments of character about the homeless person or the types of substances they use (Baer et al. 2003). A person of high socio-economic status who "unwinds" with a cocktail before dinner, wine with dinner, and a nightcap (not an uncommon drinking pattern) is not likely to be stigmatized, whereas a homeless person who drinks cheaper alcohol for the same reason (to reduce stress) will more readily be labeled as an addict. While addiction helps construct perceptions of the homeless, homelessness also might help construct perceptions of addiction.

Social Structure

Study of structural causes of homelessness has been illuminating, although social responses tend to disregard or prove impotent in dealing with structural conditions. Previous re-

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[11] The nationwide estimates from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) show that over 8 percent of the nationwide population 12 and over "admit" to using some form of an illicit drug. The average for prescription drugs is 11.3 prescriptions per individual each year nationwide.

search has addressed all sorts of systemic problems, all of which result from an overarching structure of inequality. First, although it sounds simplistic, homelessness is, in large part, a housing issue (Arnold 2004; Feldman 2004; Hopper 2003; Mathieu 1993; Moore, Sink, and Hoban-Moore 1988; Rossi 1989; Shlay and Rossi 1992). Depastino (2003:271) writes: "For however it is imagined, the American home remains an essential means for gaining access, belonging, inclusion, and power."

We have witnessed a decrease in available low-income housing since the early 1970's (Arnold 2004; Axelson and Dail 1988; Rossi 1989; Shlay and Rossi 1992). During the 1980's the Reagan administration cut the budget of the Federal Agency for Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) by 80% and in 1985 there were only half as many low-income houses as there were low income families (Axelson and Dail 1988; Mathieu 1993; Moore et al. 1988). Conley (1996) notes that the process of obtaining available housing aid is plagued with bureaucratic complexity, often insurmountable for those homeless who lack government identification (see also Gibson 2004).

Since increases in homelessness coincide with economic downturns, it is reasonable to conclude that lack of employment opportunities is an important consideration (Arnold 2004; Mathieu 1993). Since the early 1970's corporations in the United States have been exporting manufacturing jobs to other countries. While in earlier time periods the manufacturing industry propelled many unskilled, uneducated workers into middle-class socio-economic status, there is a deficit of these types of jobs today. Further, the wages in the United States are not keeping pace with inflation, meaning that workers are earning less in real dollars every year (Economic Policy Institute 2006).

Homelessness often is precipitated by costs associated with the healthcare and criminal justice institutions (Arnold 2004; Hopper 2003). For example, people without health insurance who suffer an injury or illness requiring medical treatment will likely incur costs that they cannot afford. These costs may push them into an economic crisis in which they lose their house, transportation, and job. Likewise, arrests even for misdemeanor crimes often carry fines or time in jail (which means one cannot work) and can lead to similar consequences (Arnold 2004; Hopper 2003).

The healthcare and criminal justice systems become increasingly problematic obstacles once an individual becomes homeless, since contact with them becomes more frequent (Arnold 2004). Homeless individuals are more likely to become sick as a result of their living conditions or injured because of the type of work they perform. Exacerbating the latter, the informal arrangement of work (Snow and Anderson 1993) that the homeless perform leaves them little recourse for work-related injuries. They also are more likely to be arrested for misdemeanor crimes such as vagrancy, because they are forced to do private things in public spaces (Arnold 2004; Gibson 2004; Waldron 2000). Since they are often unable to pay the fines for these arrests they accumulate debt in the court system.

Conley (1996:32) notes that lack of basic facilities presents a difficult obstacle to overcome. The homeless in his study often mentioned that the inability to bathe and have clean clothes was, in large part, what prevented them from getting a job or housing. Conley (1996:32) writes, "One knowledgeable and articulate respondent waved his hand over himself and proclaimed, 'No one will rent to someone looking like this'" (see also Gibson's (2004) discussion of the need for city's to provide public hygiene centers).

Since addiction and mental illness are not particular to the homeless population, they are insufficient explanations for the problem. While clearly these individual problems contribute, they are "choices" constrained by a variety of structural conditions such as poverty. Arnold (2004) notes that rates of mental illness and alcoholism have not increased (if one attenuates for changes in measurement), but that more of the mentally ill and the alcoholic are not housed. This speaks, at the very least, to the significance of the opportunity structure in which individual behaviors are carried out.

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While in most research, at least some attention has been paid to the structural conditions which predicate homelessness, public sentiment, government policy, and service provision alike have continued to operate on the premise of homelessness as an individual pathology (Arnold 2004; Hopper 2003; Marcus 2006; Lyon-Callo 2000; Rossi 1989; Snow and Anderson 1993). Moreover, the individual pathology approach is not exclusive to non-academic circles. A glaring example is Jencks' (1994) *The Homeless*. Explaining his use of census data, Jencks (1994:44) writes, "Living with the homeless is both disagreeable and dangerous, so only the adventurous want to do it." Apparently lacking a sufficient sense of adventure, Jencks (1994) uses distanced, secondary data analysis as his evidence and completely ignores the political and economic structure (things not well measured in the census). He writes, "If no one drank, took drugs, lost contact with reality, or messed up at work, homelessness would be rare" (1994:47). Later, he gives a nod to political-economy, but clearly downplays its importance, "Stable housing and daily work might reduce alcohol and drug consumption a little and might make some mentally ill a little saner, but they will not work miracles" (Jencks 1994:121).

Jencks (1994) and others employing the social-deviant explanation of homelessness—aside from employing research methods which keep them distant from actual homeless people, on whom they claim to be experts—also miss a crucial, overarching fallacy which destabilizes such a position. If homelessness is the result of individual morally bankruptcy and the numbers of homeless have increased drastically, we would have to conclude that there simply are more bad people in the world (Arnold (2004) also makes this point). This makes little sense, even if we are willing to put out of our minds the nagging correlation between increasing structural inequality and rising homelessness.

In the next section we address the various reactions and responses to homelessness, which predominantly operate under within the individual pathology paradigm.

<center>Social Responses to Homelessness</center>

While the "Ugly Laws" in the late 1800's had either been repealed or become lame by the 1920's (Schweik Forthcoming), vagrancy laws neither began nor ended with those statutes. Society has consistently engaged in practices aimed at getting rid of the homeless, in one-way or another (Arnold 2004; Axelson and Dail 1988; Failer 2002, Feldman 2004; Gibson 2004; Hopper 2003; Kyle 2005; Mathieu 1993, Depastino 2003). In this section we address social and legal responses to homelessness. We discuss approaches from legal institutions (including local government and the police) and also from service providers, both of which can be adequately characterized within the context of medicalization (see Hopper 2003; Lyon-Callo 2000; Mathieu 1993; Snow and Anderson 1993). The former seeks to quarantine the homeless (a response to sickness prevalent in past eras), while the latter seeks to diagnose and treat the homeless (a response prevalent in medicine today).

Quarantining the Body

In feudal Europe, poor persons were essentially assigned to the servitude of a nobleman (Axelson and Dail 1988). However, those unable to secure a life of servitude were literally excluded from the social system (Arnold 2004; Axelson and Dail 1988; Kyle 2005). Vagrancy laws therefore begin to arise in the middle 600 C. E. (Axelson and Dail 1988; Phelan et al. 1997; Rossi 1989). English Common Law in the middle ages served the propertied classes, but an examination of current vagrancy legislation shows not much has changed.

As we noted, beginning in the late 1800's, as destitute people increasingly became a part of the urban landscape, the discomfort of the public was translated into legislation (Schweik, Forthcoming). In a number of cities in the United States "ugly laws" in various incarnations prohibited public appearance by undesirable people (Schweik, Forthcoming). Ambiguity in the wording of the laws allowed for enforcement based on the will of public sentiment and the discretion of authorities. An early version appearing in Chicago in 1881 read, "It is hereby prohibited for any person, who is diseased, maimed, mutilated or deformed in any way, so as to be an unsightly or disgusting object, to expose himself to public view" (Schweik, Forthcoming). Not surprisingly the targets of this sort of legislation and the homeless were coincidental groups. In fact, the last recorded enforcement of an "ugly law" occurred as recently as 1974 in Nebraska, where a police officer arrested a homeless man for having "marks and scars on his body" (Schweik, Forthcoming).

The 1980's saw both increases in homelessness and the reappearance of vagrancy laws. Most famously, New York City (NYC) and its then mayor, Ed Koch, postured new policies of homeless "round-ups" as benevolent. Mathieu (1993:174) argues, "…that officials were more

concerned with removing homeless people from the public's view than assuring that homeless individuals—mentally ill or not—would receive adequate housing and social services." These efforts were undertaken in spite of a lack of adequate shelter (Hopper 1987; Marcus 2006; Mathieu 1993). Moreover, much of the rhetoric at the time focused on the visual burden borne by the general public and tourists to NYC (Mathieu 1993). The notion that the homeless are a public nuisance and that "normal" people (the propertied classes) are victimized by the mere presence of such undesirable and unsightly people—not to mention some private-made-public behaviors endemic to being homeless (Gibson 2004; Waldron 2000; see Kyle 2005 for an excellent treatment of the obsession with normalcy and its relationship to stigmas of homelessness). Mathieu (1993) also describes the way in which the NYC vagrancy legislation was justified by conflating homelessness with mental illness. The media aided in this by reporting a policy aimed at removing "dangerous" mentally ill people as a "homeless policy" (Mathieu 1993; see also Arnold 2004). Similar punitive policies followed those in NYC and by 1999 all fifty of the largest cities in the United States had (re)enacted vagrancy laws (Arnold 2004; see also Gibson 2004 for a detailed account of those in Seattle, WA)

In Birmingham, vagrancy legislation began to reemerge in the late 1990's and continues at the time of this writing. A "doorways ordinance" gave police the power to remove homeless people sleeping in the doorways of businesses. While not yet passed, various versions of an "urban camping initiative" continue to be discussed by the city council and would prohibit homeless people from "staying" on public property. This intentionally vague wording gives much latitude to the police who then would have the discretion to decide whose presence in public space constitutes "staying" and whose does not. At the time of this writing, homeless encampments are under siege as the city is conducting a massive "clean-up" which consists of bulldozing entire

homeless communities (Coman 2007). Like other city initiatives, these homeless sweeps have

been postured as in the best interests of both the homeless and society at large (see Coman 2007).

Common to the discourse surrounding new vagrancy laws is the replication of us/them

divisions and the conflict of "contested landscapes" (Wright 1997; see also Arnold 2004; Gibson

2004; Kyle 2005). Tempering the pure utilitarian calculations of those calling for "cleaning up

the streets" while drawing on Mill's notion of the marketplace of ideas, Waldron (2000) notes

that the public's distress in seeing the homeless should not count as a negative burden because it

is distress caused by a true condition of society. In other words, society cannot operate off of a

system, which disfranchises a portion of its citizens, while at the same time crying foul at those

who are the product of its own structures and policies. Waldron (2000:111) writes:

> This principle of the given-ness of community is quite rightly invoked by Ellick-
> son, Teir, and others when they argue that street people too have responsibilities
> to the community—responsibilities, for example, for the condition and safety of
> the community's public spaces. Whether or not a homeless person has any choice
> about being on the street, the sheer fact of his being there means that he too has a
> duty to the community in that regard. This we can accept. What we cannot ac-
> cept, however is that the definition of communal responsibilities should proceed
> on a basis that takes no account of the predicament of the homeless person or of
> the particular nature of the stake that she may have in the way public spaces are
> regulated. If the norms for public spaces are to be observed *by* him, then the logic
> of genuine as opposed to cosmetic communitarianism requires that those norms
> be constructed in part *for* him as well. We are not entitled to insist that the home-
> less person abide by community norms or that those norms be enforced against
> her, if the norms are constructed in an image of community whose logic denies in
> effect that homelessness exists.

Captured here is the irony under which anti-homeless legislation proceeds. In the United States,

the comparative comfort of many, not to mention the incredible wealth of the few, is in part the

product of a system of inequality. Yet while the comfort of the privileged has been built on the

back of this inequality, at great financial, physical, and emotional cost to the poor, vagrancy leg-

islation institutionalizes complaints about even seeing the poor.[12]

While less direct than vagrancy legislation aimed specifically at the homeless, the very

construction and delineation of public and private space seeks to separate "us" and "them".

Bickford (2000:356) convincingly argues, "…the world is being constructed, quite literally, in

ways that adversely affect how we regard politics and who we regard as fellow citizens." Sub-

urbs increasingly are guarded by gates and security personnel, and more recently, planned com-

munities have become replete with stores and restaurants of their own (Bickford 2000). More-

over, local governments and businesses work together, not only on specific policies, but also in

constructing exclusive spaces (see Bickford 2000; Duneier and Molotch 1999). City zoning or-

dinances create areas designated for single purposes, such as retail (Bickford 2000). Therefore,

entire city blocks become places only for those who are there to purchase goods. This means

that the homeless, who are not among those consumers, effectively are forbidden from these ar-

eas, since they are not using them for their designated purpose. Increasingly there are attempts to

extend a sense of the private further and further into public life (Bickford 2000). This is accom-

modated by political maneuvering and suburban development, which, in cyclical fashion, con-

tributes to the legitimizing of an attitude of exclusion (Bickford 2000; Kyle 2005; see also

Duneier and Molotch's (1999) discussion of the "Urban Interaction Problem").

Public attitudes of the past and present stem from viewing homelessness within a frame-

work of disease (Lyon-Callo 2000; Mathieu 1993; Phelan et al. 1997). Prior to the domination of

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[12] Another justification for vagrancy legislation has been made using Wilson and Kelling's infamous "Broken Win-dows" theory of crime (Gibson 2004). The street homeless, it is purported, are "broken windows;" their existence indicates a general social apathy that begets more crime. The attendant problems of conceptual objectification of the homeless as "broken windows" should be a rather obvious reflection of social stigma. For a more detailed refutation of the connection of the "Broken Windows" theory of crime to the phenomenon of homelessness see Waldron (2000).

the germ theory as the guiding principle for professional medicine, illness was sometimes under-

stood as the result of vapors, called miasmas that emanated from undesirable places such as

swamps or poor parts of town (Gallagher 1994). When passing a collection of undesirable peo-

ple, wealthier individuals were known to spray perfume on a handkerchief and cover their nose

and mouth so as not to breathe in the unsavory vapors (Gallagher 1994).

We might say that society views homelessness as a psychological miasma; a condition

that, upon sight, makes people feel *dis-ease* (Clair et al. 1993). The general public is uncomfort-

able seeing the homeless because their very presence calls into question the validity of their own

lives and all the things that they have. To deal with public unease, legislation in both the past

and present attempts to forcibly remove the source of the discomfort (Zukin (1991) has called

this the "institutionalization of urban fear"). We no longer cover our noses; we collectively

cover our eyes. The legislation is not an attempt at resolving homelessness, but at removing it

from our sight to protect our sensibilities, it is an attempt to quarantine the homeless from the

rest of "us" (Arnold 2004; Hopper 2003; Kyle 2005; Foucault's (1994[1963]) discussion of

quarantining as an exercise of social control also is relevant here). And while quarantine will

likely do little even to make the problem invisible—common sense would tell us that the person

sleeping on a bench in the park has likely run out of suitable places to go—it tells us a great deal

about the general attitude society holds toward the homeless. It appears many view the homeless

as constantly invading our space and spirits, interfering with our ability to achieve happiness, a

satisfying life, and overall mental health.

In the next section we discuss homeless service provision. While postured against quar-

antining practices, treatment programs whose intention is to alleviate the actual problem of

homelessness may appear to be a kind alternative. However, while nicer in demeanor, the current model of service provision for the homeless is rife with its own problems.

Treating the Mind

There is no doubt that a number of homeless people have been helped out of that condition by homelessness service providers, particularly those operating under the continuum-of-care paradigm. However, high rates of recidivism and the stable, if not growing, number of street homeless who tend to resist these service institutions is evidence that homeless services are not entirely sufficient (Hopper 2003 has a similar conclusion; see also Feldman 2004). This is a rather uncontroversial claim; most shelter directors would themselves concede that homelessness is best addressed at a structural level, for example, by correcting a lopsided opportunity structure, which systematically disadvantages particular groups, those who cycle in and out of homelessness. However, despite this recognition, homeless services tend primarily to treat addiction and mental illness (Lyon-Callo 2000). Feldman (2004:147) has referred to this process as 'shelterization'…isolating the individual homeless person…for treatment and shelter." Hoch and Slayton (1990) describe helping agencies as fostering dependencies.

The nature of homeless services has changed dramatically. Until the 1980's when homelessness reemerged in the national spotlight, homeless shelters mostly provided emergent services (Hopper 2003; Liebow 1993; Lyon-Callo 2000; Marcus 2006). That is, people were given food and shelter. Conditions in emergency shelters, however, often were lacking (see Hopper 1987 where he describes NYC emergency shelters as "inhuman"). Mathieu (1993:175) notes that in NYC, "…the State Commission on Corrections rejected a building as a proposed jail where a city agency had been housing 280 homeless men."

On the recognition that the emergency shelter model does not address the underlying causes of homelessness, or at least problems endemic to the homeless condition, a new paradigm of homeless services emerged, typically referred to as the continuum-of-care model (Axelson and Dail 1988; Goetz and Schmiege 1996; Lyon-Callo 2000). This model not only provided basic necessities, but also aimed to give case management, mostly in the form of treatment for mental illness and addiction (Lyon-Callo 2000). "Clients" (a term itself reflective of the paradigmatic shift) ideally were treated in residential shelter programs, *then* helped with gaining employment, moved into transitional housing and eventually, and more gradually, re-assimilated into normal society as now-functioning individuals.

The medicalization of homelessness in the shelter actually hinders discourse on structural causes, which many suggest ought to be at the forefront of discussion (Arnold 2004; Baer et al. 2003; Hopper 2003; Lyon-Callo 2000; Mathieu 1993; Snow et al. 1986). Lyon-Callo (2000:330) writes, "…focus on "disease" within the discourses of "helping" actually obliterates discussion of alternative explanations and thus hinders developments aimed at resolving homelessness through altering class, race, or gender dynamics." Grunberg amd Eagle (1990:522) describe this process as "shelterization…a process of acculturation endemic to shelter living…The adaptation to shelter life includes the development of a shelter vocabulary, the assimilation of shelter themes, the acceptance of shelter ideals and beliefs, and an eroding will." While recent focus of shelters on a continuum-of-care seems to be an improvement to the simple food-and-shelter provision of the past, these facilities nonetheless tend to individualize a problem that appears predominantly social.

Once admitted to the shelter "helping" involves diagnosis and treatment (Lyon-Callo 2000). Typically, an individual's homelessness is deemed the result of drug addiction or mental

illness. Treatment follows this diagnosis focusing on what the individuals can do to fix them-selves. Discussion of structural causes homelessness is sometimes met with sympathy by treatment providers, but typically seen as outside the range of what they have the ability to correct (Lyon-Callo 2000).   The homeless themselves internalize an individual-pathology understanding of their situation (Lyon-Callo 2000). Treatment for homelessness takes an Alcoholics-Anonymous approach in that the first step is to admit that *you* have a problem. Without doing this, one cannot move on to other steps, they cannot get services for their homelessness. Lyon-Callo (2000) writes of a woman who after an unsuccessful two-month job search came to understand her homelessness as resulting from depression. Her idea became that she did not interview for jobs well because she was depressed. Of course being homeless would likely be enough to cause depression in any individual. Nonetheless, she came to understand it as the *cause* of her situation (Lyon-Callo 2000).

Moreover, service providers most often paradoxically seek assimilation while holding tight to the us-them dichotomy that underlies their treatment relationship with the homeless (Desjarlais 1996; Kyle 2005). Kyle (2005:24) notes that even when homeless advocates attempt to counter stigmas of the homeless they cannot help relying on notions of "normalcy and the ordinary." We constantly hear well-intentioned assertions of the idea that the homeless are just like the rest of "us," as if "we" necessarily are a barometer for the legitimate way of life.

While those homeless who use shelters and other services have internalized the idea of homelessness as individual pathology, the street homeless are much less likely to do so. In the shelter, talk of political-economy is dangerous and it may be seen as unwillingness to address the "you" problem (Lyon-Callo 2000). "Being difficult" can become an actual diagnosis and might even get you kicked out of the shelter (Lyon-Callo 2000).

Critique of the now dominant continuum-of-care model has not only come from social scientists, but also is now emerging in competing models of service. In particular, the emergence of wet shelters and the Housing First initiative, at very least de-prioritize the social control orientations of the dominant medicalized service paradigm. Some shelters have begun take in intoxicated homeless persons (the typical shelter requires at least the appearance of sobriety) and some even allow residents to drink alcohol, usually restricted to designated areas (Cat Le 2002; Crane and Warnes 2003; Silberner 2003). The idea is that it is safer and more cost effective for the homeless and the public for the homeless to be in shelter, rather than out on the street, even if they were intoxicated (Cat Le 2002; Crane and Warnes 2003; Silberner 2003). Since this clearly counters the treatment model, which focuses heavily on addiction, response from most homeless service providers has been critical (Cat Le 2002).

"Housing First" is a phrase touted by a variety of organizations with a variety of meanings. While some groups seemingly use it solely to designate a call for more affordable housing (e.g. www.housingfirst.net), it also is the calling card of a new approach to homelessness (see Eckholm 2006). While the typical continuum-of-care model makes housing conditional on one's enrollment in a treatment program, for housing first programs, like that of Pathways to Housing Inc. (2005:1303), "Program founders decided not to require treatment participation or sobriety as a precondition to housing." These programs are founded on considerations of housing as a right, rather than a privilege of quid pro quo arrangement and/or on utilitarian notions which assert that the comparative personal and social safety of an apartment versus the street, even for those drinking or doing drugs, translates to saved dollars in terms of social services (e.g. hospital care, incarceration; Eckholm 2006; Pathways to Housing Inc. 2005).

A smaller scale, but similar initiative to provide "hygiene centers" has been hotly contested (Gibson 2004). Gibson (2004) gives an account of one such controversy in Seattle. In our experience, these types of alternatives to the dominant model of service provision not only are opposed by government and businesses involved in urban renewal projects, but, as we will discuss later, also from service providers and other advocates who refer to such initiatives as "enabling". Indeed, we are witnessing more and more of what Wright, Rubin and Devine (1999:213) describe as "*the inevitable institutionalization* of the homeless problem…a vast cadre of shelter and soup kitchen operators, advocates, social workers, health care professionals, case managers, researchers, and others whose professional identities, job security, and personal values revolve around the homelessness issue. Already , we hear of turf battles between groups trying to protect their fiefdoms, sometimes even at the expense of the homeless people they are presumably trying to serve."

Critique of the continuum-of-care shelter model has its theoretical roots in Gramsci's (1971) notion of hegemony and Freire's (1994) discussion of oppression in the form of 'helping'. While well intentioned, homeless advocates subtly impose particular conceptions of homelessness on the homeless person. These entail particular goals and courses of action, which reflect the dominant social order. That is, by literally or effectively defining homelessness as a medical problem, specifically as addiction or mental illness, one places the onus on the homeless individual, and tacitly obscures social conditions (Lyon-Callo 2000). Social inequalities remain in tact. The ultimate goal of these treatment programs is re-assimilate the homeless person into normal society (Kyle 2005, for an example see Goetz and Schmiege 1996). Making someone a functioning member of society means they must fit into the social order, and so means they must take on its ideology and its logic.

Using our research as a basis, we later will give more depth about the hegemonic nature of medicalized homeless services and suggest how to restructure service provision to avoid social control processes and refocus service providers on the legitimate agency of the homeless person.

Redeeming the Soul

There is a somewhat bizarre lack of mention of the way religious groups factor into homelessness and service provision. After all, religious organizations may make up the majority of homeless services, including running shelters, soup kitchens, and spiritual outreach programs. Yet in the academic literature, these groups hardly are mentioned. Accordingly, this section will be somewhat brief, and will necessarily draw on our experiences rather than staying true to the technical demands of a literature review section.

Perhaps one explanation for the dearth of literature here is that, religious groups are not easily subsumed under a common theme. In the U.S., for example, Christianity has so many variants that the term itself does little to define any one person or group invoking it. So while countless members of Christian groups engage in homeless services and outreach, their broad religious identification tells us little about the beliefs that they operate under.

Some religious groups clearly reflect the medicalized model of homelessness, employing the concept of sin in the same way that other service providers employ it as sickness. Their approach is to use food and shelter in exchange for the opportunity to witness (Lyon-Callo (2000) makes a brief comment about this; we observed this in two shelters and also at multiple "street feedings" conducted by religious groups).

Others, however, reflect a more classic notion of Christian charity, acting out of obligations to the poor, based on thematic extrapolations from the bible. We would expect that these groups would tend to proselytize less, but also they tend to reflect and replicate the us-them dichotomy and, and acting as "virtuous Christians", in somewhat of a patronization, conceptualize the poor and homeless as "the meek" (see Kyle 2005:69).

Finally, there are those who take radical approaches to homelessness, which emerge directly from their religious orientations. In Birmingham, a pastor named Lawton Higgs focuses his attention on structural problems and social inequality. He directly opposes the notion of the homeless as sinners, stating in an interview, "That is what everybody tells the homeless, that they are a problem and they are sinners. Well, and then so they, and that only bashes them down further, right. In other words makes religion contribute to the oppression."

We later will return to the way in which these religious approaches fit with and reflect various models of service provision when discussing our data. For now, suffice it to say that the diverse way in which religious groups interact with and provide services for the homeless is grossly underrepresented in the research literature. In the next section we address other missing voices from the discourse on homelessness found in radical, anarchist literature.

Anarchist Literature on Homelessness

The concept of homelessness clearly has negative connotations. Currently, the word "homeless" elicits notions of mentally ill and hopelessly drug addicted people who plague city streets pushing shopping carts and sleeping on park benches rather than getting a job (Liebow 1993; Phelan et al. 1997; see for example Jencks 1994). Although research demonstrates the multitude of insufficiencies with this image, nearly all agree that homelessness is a condition of

pain and misery, a problem to be solved (e.g. Hopper 2003; Rossi 1989; Snow and Anderson 1993). In this section we address a small but significant literature, which celebrates the freedom of being homeless. While some ethnographers (see especially Hopper 2003; Snow and Anderson 1993) have noted the creativity of the street homeless, artistic, anarchist writers give insight with their deeper appreciation of it.

It should be clear that finding positive aspects in homelessness, done properly, *in no way* attenuates the culpability of social inequality in producing involuntary and often problematic conditions of homelessness. Nonetheless, there exists a paradox in homelessness. Our homeless participants all discussed the various hardships noted above, but also they talked about having a "peace of mind" on the streets. A constant in our findings (chapter four) is that social life is full of these "contradictions". Ironically, the complexity of social life resists the overly broad generalizations common to social science. Homeless research seems often to seek *the* characterization in an effort to be concise and consistent. They conclude therefore, that homelessness is bad. This is not untrue, just incomplete and overly simplistic. Not coincidentally, an alternative view can be found in the political writings, biographical essays, and travelogues of small press radical literature. It is especially worthy of inclusion as it fills in parts of the homelessness picture left obscure by academics.

Homeless-by-choice is a concept typically invoked by those wishing to alleviate themselves and society at large of is sizable role in producing poverty and homelessness. The plain fact is that most people are not homeless by choice. However, drawing on images of homeless rooted in the hobo-adventurer, some people still seek their own personal Walden-pond, often by riding the rails, hitch hiking the highways, and squatting in abandoned buildings and under bridges. While their experiences do not capture totally the experience of the average homeless

person, they can help explain the peace-of-mind "paradox" that tunnel-vision social scientists cannot well resolve.

Travelogues from modern-day homeless-by-choicers suggest an appealing life of freedom, creativity, self-reflection, and a conscious attempt to remove oneself from social structures deemed exploitative and unacceptable.[13] Using only their first names, two such authors, Hibickina and Kika (2003:9), write:

> This is what it means to be an adventurer in our day: to give up creature comforts of the mind, to realize possibilities of imagination. Because everything around us says no you cannot do this, you cannot live without that, nothing is useful unless it's in service to money, to gain, to stability.
> The adventurer gives in to tides of chaos, trusts the world to support her—and in doing so turns back on the fear and obedience she has been taught. She rejects the indoctrination of impossibility. My adventure is a struggle for freedom.

Captured here is the notion of not only adventure, but of a life of self-reflection and peaceful freedom.[14] This contributes to our understanding of the homeless' assertion of a "peace-of-mind" on the street, which often is discounted as a rationalization rather than a legitimate observation.

In another poetic example, the anonymous author of the book Evasion (2003) takes the reader through his life as a dumpster-diver, squatter, train-hopper, and shop-lifter with romantic attention paid to the creative demands and artistic qualities of living outside the system. On vacation in a neo-bohemian, artsy community (an irony the author himself notes), he writes:

> And when the artists doing Yoga in the park gasped as I stumbled from the bushes at 5a.m., we and scary, they might not recognize it as art, but they should. I wanted a little credit. Rooftop sonnets and mold bagel blues. A novel is born

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[13] Some examples include *Hopping Freight Trains in America* by Duffy Littlejohn, *Evasion* by Anonymous, and *Off the Map* by "Hibickina" and "Kika".
[14] Given the controversial and politicized nature of homelessness and homeless research, we find it impossible to stress enough that finding our way conceptually to a positive version of homelessness, or at least positive aspects of it, does not in anyway justify its existence as forced condition of economic deprivation. These divergent conceptions of homelessness turn on the notion of freedom. When chosen or *utilized* as a means of liberation, homelessness can be positive. When forced upon someone in direct opposition to human agency and freedom, it is indeed an unacceptable form of oppression.

each night in an unlocked U-haul. Yes, I would show them art. (Anonymous 2003:51)

Again, while not structurally similar, we can draw insights from the experiences of the homeless-adventurer, which are applicable to the majority of homeless, displaced by political-economy. For example, it clearly takes a good deal of creative energy to survive on the periphery of society. Whether one chooses it or not, those surviving in these margins clearly reflect positive aspects of the human spirit, its will and creativity. As we noted, while lacking depth and the affective aspects critical to any discussion of art, the creativity of the homeless has not gone totally appreciated by researchers. Hopper (2003:191) touches on it:

> …settlements of homeless people are lumpen creations, wrested out of waste spaces and discarded materials in the precarious margins of our urban landscape. By an alchemy born of necessity, their proprietors—people with no property except what they scavenge—have turned these outlaw spaces into places of habitation, respite, and even hope.

Ultimately, we ought not gloss the complexities of homelessness, or any social phenomenon for that matter. If nothing else, the conceptions of homelessness in this radical literature should lead us to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the homeless condition, in all of its complexity, shedding some light on how those forced street bound manage to continually search for agency and freedom. And despite their abandonment by law, the homeless must live somewhere. They therefore creatively seek out sustaining habitats. Feldman (2004:147) reminds us 'that public policy should be oriented toward enabling dwelling, not criminalizing it or reducing it to the stripped-down client relationship of the shelter.

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We hope our review of the literature points toward the depth and complexity of what it means to be homeless. There are as many variations on that concept as there are homeless peo-

ple. While we can locate tendencies and trends, the generalizations of social science often obscure the complexity of social life until it is rendered unrecognizable. Of the multitude of popular social science methods, ethnography, in particular, bestows the ability to reject linear interpretations of social life. We do not need to log variables to attenuate outliers; we can leave the outliers right where they are. In the next chapter, we discuss our methods in detail and illustrate exactly how we intend to avoid the simplistic linearity by using a grounded method and fractal concept analysis.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Ethnography really is a collection of methodological orientations organized around a basic dynamic proposition (Adler and Adler (1999) make this clear). That is, while all ethnography involves the researcher engaging in qualitative field research, there are a multitude of epistemological dispositions from which they work. In this section we discuss our particular approach, which is born from multiple perspectives. Thus our explanation entails discussion both of the historical development of ethnography and various current models of ethnographic work. A detailed account of this development is beyond the scope of our work, so our historical account will serve to identify various strands of ethnography that are influential to ours. Moreover, we pay far greater attention to ideological progression rather than strict chronological accuracy.[15],[16] Since we find the classifications of this and that type of ethnography to be artificial and constraining we attempt to avoid these dogmatics by locating ourselves at their intersection.

We detail classic ethnographic traditions and their attendant epistemologies to lay a basis for those of current ethnographic theory, which struggles with notions of representation and truth. We then answer the "crisis of representation" with our own ontological stance that concepts are real (Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Marcus and Fischer 1986). This is a crucial foundation

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[15] An adequate treatment of this history can be found, among other places, in Mintz 2000; Vidich and Lyman 2003).
[16] In keeping with our purpose of explaining the research at hand, we collapse nuances in theoretical traditions to give a broad account. For example, we group post-structuralist, post-modernist, symbolic interactionists all under the umbrella of interpretivism. However, there is reason to collapse these, beyond our pragmatic concerns. Abbott (2001) illustrates that disciplinary divisions are the outcome of a cycle of fractal dividing and remapping. That is, theoretical traditions wax and wane, and create new terminology to discuss old ideas. Thus, the difference between various categories (e.g. relativism, postmodernism, poststructuralism, interpretivism, etc) has more to do with disciplinary power than theoretical disagreement.

for our work, since producing theory from data is essentially a conceptualizing process. Our ontology avoids both nihilistic postmodernism and naïve realism by reframing the status of concepts altogether, and enables our conceptual analysis to proceed because it makes concepts (the building blocks of theory) viable objects of analysis.

Theoretical Perspectives on Ethnography

While ethnography is a multidisciplinary research practice, it unmistakably emerged from anthropology, particularly in Europe, and it has remained the dominant model of research for that discipline, despite unheeded calls for the "end of ethnography" (Clough 1992, see also Clifford 1988; Stacey 1999). Among other disciplines, sociology generally has been fond of ethnography, although quantitative methods within sociology have remained dominant (Stacey 1999).

Ethnography's roots in Western imperialism are disconcerting to current social scientists for which exploitation and power are central features of study and disdain (Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Jordan and Yeomans 1995; Stacey 1999). By the advent of professional ethnography, the explicitly terrorist methods of domination inflicted on native people in North America in earlier periods had become unfashionable (Jordan and Yeomans 1995; Vidich and Lyman 2003). Ethnography became central to establishing hegemonic control of native cultures (Jordan and Yeomans 1995; Stacey 1999; Vidich and Lyman 2003). The goal of understanding another culture was largely a foundation for manipulating them under the auspices of saving native cultures from their own primitivism and the Great Chain of Being theory, which provided the ontological justification for actual subjugation (Vidich and Lyman 2003). This has consequences extending to current work, including our own, where researchers today often are objects of distrust among indigenous cultures.

The epistemological perspective of ethnographer's in this period can best be character-ized as "realist". Pioneer ethnographers such as Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard investigated the world as though what it discovered there were true representations (Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Jordan and Yeomans 1995; Marcus and Cushman 1982, see for example Malinowski 1960). Among philosophers of science this is known as "truth correspondence," the notion that a particular concept is a true representation of a corresponding piece of reality. As if identifying truth was not ambitious enough, work of this period aimed at "total ethnography," which at-tempted complete descriptions of the societies under examination (Marcus and Cushman 1982).

The trust that ethnographers of this period tacitly placed in observation led to texts from which the researcher's voice was absent (Anderson 1986; Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Marcus and Cushman 1982). Attempts at pure description were the norm, with no explicit information about the researcher themselves, their biography, or personal impressions. These works largely ignore any influence that the researcher has on the observational field, the participants in the study, and the construction of the textual presentation (see Meneley and Young 2005).

Consistent with their realist epistemology, structural functionalism was the dominant so-cial theoretical perspective in early ethnographic work (see Malinowski 1960). Both sociology and anthropology experienced dominant trends of structural-functionalism in the early 1900's (Marcus and Cushman 1982; Marcus and Fischer 1986; Marks 1995). Generally speaking, struc-tural-functionalism holds that the existence and maintenance social institutions are founded on their positive functions in society (Kincaid 1996). The accuracy of this proposition depends on a notoriously broad vision of society, such that whole institutions and even whole societies are taken as the appropriate units of investigation. This requires a homogenous view of societies and that "social facts" can be derived from social inquiry (Durkheim [1895] 1982). The former was

first to come under attack, primarily by Marxist thinkers; the latter was later called into question by a variety of interpretive theorists.

Among various groups and individuals within society, stratification and conflict call into question the scope of structural functionalism, which does well to explain the existence of institutions in society, but not in addressing the nature of their relationships within the parameters of society itself. Conflict perspectives address these sorts of research questions and as they became mainstays of social science, so too they began to frame ethnographic research (Marcus and Fischer 1986). The paradigmatic concerns of conflict theory also foreshadow epistemological questions with which social science continues to struggle today. Marxists and other conflict theorists added to the functionalist claim that a social institution serves a positive function in society, the question became "for whom?" Implicit in this addendum is the idea that significantly different conditions exist for different groups within societies. But in keeping with the Marxist tradition, when analyzing the for-whom question the conceptual markers of interest for early conflict theorists were material. Therefore, despite the relative concerns of Marxism, the research it framed remained epistemologically positivistic (Marcus and Fischer 1986; see also Jordan and Yeomans (1995) critique of Sharp (1982)). It was a theoretical alternative to structural functionalism, but one that epistemologically was very similar (Marcus and Fischer 1986).

The influence of Weberian theory and the second Chicago School culminated in work from late-modern and postmodern theorists such as Bourdieu and Giddens in the 1970's, which launches fully the transition away from positivistic ethnography, toward various brands of interpretive ethnography (Marcus and Fischer 1986). In recognizing that physical and material concerns were not the sole motivators of human behavior, Weber introduces the notion of cultural meaning to social science inquiry (Weber 2002). For ethnographic research, this meant a shift

from description of visible social practices interpreted from perceived social phenomenon to an attempt to understand the ontological vision of other cultures (Geertz 1973). Indeed a Pandora's box of 'meaning' had been opened, but it would take ethnography several decades to detect its resonance. This often is referred to as the "crisis of representation" (Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Marcus and Fischer 1986). The notion that interpretation of the same observed phenomenon could vary between cultures, or even individuals with shared culture, had entered the consciousness of social science (Hesse-Biber, Nagy, and Levy 2006; Marcus and Fischer 1986).

A slew of overlapping theoretical paradigms were all built to varying extents off insights first from Cooley, Simmel, and Weber (although Weber's influence was delayed in the U.S. until the postwar period; Platt 1985; Ritzer and Goodman 2004). Symbolic interaction, poststructuralism, and postmodernism all hold an interpretivist epistemology to be correct, although to varying extents. For these theoretical orientations, truth is relative to the observer because, they contend, each person sees through a lens of concepts that define their world (e.g. Berger and Luckmann 1967). Since it is the mind that makes sense of the world, and one's mind is a product of culture (socialization), world-views can differ significantly. Clifford (1988:41) notes the growing distance from positivism, characterized even by a fracturing of the notion of interpretation itself:

> It becomes necessary to conceive of ethnography not as the experience and interpretation of a circumscribed 'other' reality, but rather as a constructive negotiation involving at least two, and usually more, conscious, politically significant subjects. Paradigms of experience and interpretation are yielding to discursive paradigms of dialogue and polyphony.

While the role and influence of the ethnographer in the observational and textual process had been disregarded by positivist ethnography, these became central issues once interpretivism entered the fray (Geertz 1973; Marcus and Fischer 1986; Marcus and Cushman 1982). Clearly the researcher's observations are influenced by their ontological frame of reference, but ethnog-

raphy has been split on how to deal with the issue (see Adler and Adler 1999). Some take a ni-hilistic approach by hopelessly asserting that researcher bias cannot be overcome (see Denzin and Lincoln's (2003) interpretive ethnography, for example), while others ignore it altogether and still attempt to present 'pure observation' (Gans (1999) and Sanders (1999) are particularly opposed to the inculcation of qualitative research with postmodern epistemology). Most ethno-graphic works take some middle ground between these two extremes, employing various solu-tions to deal with the role and influence of the researcher (see Churchill 2005; Jarvie 1983; Karp 1999; Marcus and Fischer (1986), Marcus and Cushman (1982) and Sherman and Strang (2004) seem also to split the difference with the notion of "experimental ethnography"). We discuss this more below, and explain our approach to dealing with this issue by incorporating into our re-search an explicit ontological framework for conceptual analysis as well as our own biographies to explicate our conceptual lens.

Whereas conflict theory added the notion of "for whom" to material functions, interpre-tivist theorists add "for whom" to the question of truth. Whose truth? Little else has produced as much discord within social science and much current ethnographic discourse centers on how to address or resolve this most fundamental question. While convenient to ignore—and researchers often do—much hangs in the balance. If there is no truth, the validity and significance of all re-search is called into question. We later will draw on these theoretical cornerstones of ethnogra-phy to make clear our own position. Primarily, we argue that the significance and validity of re-search can be maintained by reframing the postmodern critique altogether.

Structural-functionalism, conflict theory, and the various interpretivist perspectives, with their attendant epistemological frameworks, provide the foundations of current ethnography, which now routinely struggles with the fundamental question of truth. The realism of the struc-

tural-functionalist tradition is rarely explicated in current qualitative research, but most often is present by default. However, for most current ethnography, discussion of epistemology has been routinely incorporated into research texts since Geertz (Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Marcus and Fischer 1986; Marcus and Cushman 1982). Three current, popular approaches are critical ethnography, reflexive ethnography, and design-ethnography.

Critical ethnography draws heavily from the Marxist tradition while the interpretivism of reflexive ethnography (not to mention "interpretive ethnography" itself, see Denzin and Lincoln 2003) draws heavily from poststructuralist theory (Jordan and Yeomans 1995; Salzman 2002). Design-ethnography is a post-Marxist model, with philosophical foundations in thinkers such as Paulo Freire (Barab, Thomas, Dodge, Squire, and Newell 2004; Jordan and Yeomans 1995). Design-ethnography synthesizes symbolic aspects of culture with considerations of class and stratification, but is most especially concerned with the ontological and epistemological antecedents of these, particularly the relationship of thought and action (Freire 1994). These two concepts are tied together inextricably for the design-ethnographer in the concept of praxis, which recognizes thought and action occur simultaneously and influence each other cyclically.

However, while social scientists often draw more or less heavily from one or another perspective, distinctions often are blended into a complex research framework built on insights from all of them. Similarly, we find value in all of these traditions and wish also to avoid the type of disciplinary dogmatism that aims at separation. In the next section we discuss our reframing of the postmodern critique such that we take our findings to be true, but not in the naïve realist sense. We further combine functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interaction into a single perspective by relegating them to their proper ontological place. Disconnects between them can be dismissed when one understands that the aims of each, while fundamentally different, are

complementary (see Abbott 2001, Kincaid 1996). This leads us ultimately to locate ourselves within various current ethnographic approaches, drawing from each of critical, reflexive, and design ethnography.

Film as Ethnography

As our initial plan was to make a short documentary film, our data collection has included filmed field sessions and interviews. While in depth visual analysis is beyond the scope of this particular project, at some points we will indicate the actions of participants in our footage. This calls for some discussion of the use of film in ethnographic research, if only for the reason that the camera introduces an additional, significant element. Using film to study culture is a practice as old as academic ethnography itself. The philosophical trajectory of ethnographic filmmaking follows the same general order as traditional ethnography, from structural functionalism to post structuralist (Jarvie 1983; Marks 1995). However, the recognition of creativity inherent in the filmmaking process thrust it into the postmodern crisis of doubt before that epistemological struggle had fully gripped the academy (Jarvie 1983). With their methodological bases in observation, film and ethnography share epistemological problems (Barbash, MacDougall, Taylor, and MacDougall 1996; Morphy 1994). While film employs audio-visual media and traditional ethnography uses text, both must consider the implications of the constructed nature of their presentation (Barbash et al. 1996; Jarvie 1983; Morphy 1994).

While the same epistemological debates inherent in current ethnography also grip ethnographic filmmaking, film also contains its own troublesome issues. The use of film allows footage of the population under study to be directly seen by the audience, but this can be misleading since the filmmaker nonetheless constructs it, in terms of shot selection, style, and editing (Jarvie

1983; Barbash et al. 1996). Furthermore, film allows the ethnographer to capture data in greater detail and to repeatedly analyze the same observational moments (Barbash et al. 1996; Clarke 2005; Morphy 1994). This may provide a better means for analyzing abstract cultural content such as affect and meaning, whereas earlier structural-functionalism film sought a pure description of institutions. But these types of abstractions are difficult to justify, particularly in the truth-doubting climate of current ethnography. Use of film in ethnography makes epistemological concerns explicit; its observational nature cannot be ignored (Jarvie 1983). In this section we consider problematics of the filmmaking ethnographer in the field, epistemological concerns about audio-visual media, and then define our use of film both epistemologically and practically.

Researcher presence in the field alters the phenomena that can be observed (Arhem 1993). No matter how much one tries to minimize the effect of one's presence, without employing unethical secrecy, observations made by researchers entail their presence in the field of observation. Logically, the greater the difference between the researcher and the participant, the more influential their presence will remain.[17] A white researcher from the United States standing amongst an indigenous tribe is hard to ignore. In our research, our white ethnicity stands out very clearly among our largely African American sample; our socio-economic status remains obviously different from our desperately poor participants. For the ethnographic filmmaker, the challenges of 'blending in' are exacerbated by the ominous presence of the camera (Arhem 1993). Even amongst like-individuals, a researcher with a camera becomes an elephant in the corner. While we discuss the practical barriers this poses to accessing the research population in the next chapter, it is important to note here that the presence of the camera alters the actions that it records.

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[17] We later will discuss the practical hurdles these types of differences pose, and our strategies for dealing with them. We argue there that difference also can be beneficial if well managed.

Early ethnographic film was predicated on a naturalist conception, suggesting that the film portrayed the subject in their "natural environment" (Marks 1995). Ignoring the objectifying way this can be interpreted as a comparison of indigenous, non-western cultures to wild animals, it also makes the crucial oversight that the presence of the camera inevitably alters the participants' actions. If the presence of the researcher has an effect on the field, and the camera an even greater effect, then the recording does not, in fact, reflect the 'real' goings-on of the participants. Being filmed necessarily transforms the participant into an actor, in the pejorative sense of that term. Anyone who has ever stood in front of a camera knows that it is a difficult presence to ignore. One is inevitably more self-conscious when being filmed, because normally fleeting moments are being made permanent. When the things someone says or does can be replayed and displayed to others, conscious management of one's behavior is only natural.

In the filming and editing process, the filmmaker necessarily must make decisions about what is meaningful and what is extraneous (Barbash et al. 1996). Moreover, meaningful film often ends up on the 'cutting room floor' purely for logistical reasons (time constraints, technical difficulties, etc). These decisions are made on the basis of the filmmaker's vision of what is meaningful and important, or even most important among an "excess" of important footage (Barbash 1996). From this the postmodern critique suggests that the constructed nature of film creates insurmountable disconnects between the filmmaker and the subject, and the filmmaker and the audience. The conclusion that follows is that knowledge from film is not trustworthy. In the next section, we reframe the positivist-interpretivist dispute altogether, which will re-establish concepts as viable objects of analysis. This legitimizes observational data, including that of film.

Theoretical Foundations of Our Ethnography

Philosophical Precursors

Locating our epistemological perspective is more than just academic exercise. Rather it provides a foundation for judging the ultimate value of our findings and the possible informative reach. If we accept the postmodern preclusion of reality, then research in general, and ours in particular, has been largely stripped of its value in terms of producing knowledge. However, this version of the interpretivist argument is overly simplistic. In this section we reframe the post-modern critique to argue that concepts are not flimsy products of the mind, but real, although fluid, pieces of reality. With the understanding that again we are not giving adequate depth here, we intend to proceed with the goal of illustrating our approach rather than fully defining the vast amount of previous debate. In the final analysis, this strategy of defining our perspective rings consistent with our vision of epistemologically sound ethnography. That is, to ground our concepts in an explicit and holistic ontological framework ought to allow for the transmission of real knowledge, even to those whose individual worldviews do not coincide with our own. This position has its foundations in a variety of philosophers of science who range from positivist to interpretivist in orientation.

Among postmodern thinkers, Rorty may rightly be considered the least nihilistic. His concept of neopragmatism gives much ground back to science (although he continues to endure much criticism from realists; see Kincaid 1996). The neopragmatist approach asserts that, concepts, while not ultimately real in the sense of having truth-correspondence to the physical world, are nonetheless useful. Concepts are cultural products, according to the postmodern critique, but neopragmatists add that culture is widely shared. For example, concepts such as the atom, photosynthesis, race, class, etc, are widely held to be real within western culture. Science then can

explore them as objects of interest and the knowledge that it produces will be widely useful, although within that cultural parameter.

Neopragmatists are not the only thinkers to have recognized the notion that the fluid nature of concepts does not preclude their use, and even value amongst highly variable worldviews. Some philosophers of science assert contextual objectivity as a solution to the nihilism of the postmodern critique. There are various versions of the contextual objectivity approach (see for example, Logino 1990; Kincaid 1996; 1998). The common denominator among them is that knowledge does not have to be real, in the traditional positivist sense, in order to have value. This is because epistemological foundations can be explicated and scientific analysis can proceed formally within a delineated (although not "real") paradigm. Kincaid (1996) goes a step further in asserting that nothing about postmodern arguments (Kuhn and Rorty, in particular) precludes the notion that paradigms can be translated from one to another. From this, one can argue that there is some underlying truth which cannot be fully explained by concepts, but which concepts approach. This roughly echoes the notion of "deep structure" by Chomsky (1965) and other linguists, and also the concept of truth-likeness taken on by a variety of critical realists (see for example Archer 1995).

Just as contextual objectivism moves a step closer toward a non-naïve realism from neopragmatism, we move a step closer to non-naïve realism than contextual objectivism. In the next section we argue that while individual concepts (i.e. mental pictures) can be fluid, and therefore differ amongst varied worldviews, they can ultimately be grounded in a universal ontological framework. This framework, of course, uses concepts to define its categories, but its roots in human cognition span the possibilities of kinds of conceptualization. Furthermore, by recognizing that the our ontology makes artificial divisions within a seamlessly integrated world, we al-

low appropriate flexibility of ontological forms such that they can be adapted to any individual conceptual framework.

Reexamining the Process of Cognition

The starting point of social investigation, and of the realist-interpretivist dispute, is observation. The process of observation involves the combining of percepts and concepts. Percepts are physical stimuli; concepts are the ideas, which organize the percepts in the mind. Cognition is the process of combining concepts and percepts into the mental picture. The postmodern critique rests on the notion that concepts are flimsy and interpretive. This follows from an error, which confuses the percept with the mental picture, which is an individualized concept (see Steiner [1894]1999). The mental picture can vary based on a number of considerations. For example, in discerning the essential and important qualities of a particular percept two people may apply different combinations of concepts to form their mental picture of the object. This is why people from different cultures, socialized in radically different ways, actually can see different things. A person who has never seen a car or even cognized anything like one, may not be able even to see the door handle, because the individual concepts they apply to the percept to form the mental picture of the car do not recognize the meaningfulness of this particular part. However, we cannot conclude from this that what they see is not real, only that they draw from a different set of concepts to form a mental picture of the object.

In fact, while mental pictures may vary in the postmodern sense, we assert that concepts are real, and moreover that they contain more reality than percepts. This turns the postmodern critique on its head since it typically asserts that percepts are real but meaningless because of the

variation in concepts. But concepts actually contain more reality than percepts. This idea bears directly on our conceptual analysis. We explicate several arguments for the reality of concepts.

First, the individuality of the mental picture does not preclude the reality of concepts. If a person asserts that they are cold when we feel warm, we would not conclude that their statement is not true. Moreover we cannot conclude, as the postmodernist critique would lead us to believe, that it is only true for them because this requires an improper recasting of their statement. In other words, we cannot reframe their statement to say that it is only true for them, because, unless we believe they are lying (an irrelevant concern here) we cannot say that the notion that they are cold is only true for them; that they are cold also is true for us.

Second, although our mental picture of the situation is different, that is, they are cold and we are warm, the general concepts are ultimately the same. That is, we can understand their concept of cold, even if we do not draw on it for defining our perception of the temperature of the room.

Finally, our most radical claim is that concepts not only are real, but that they contain more reality than percepts. The percept of a tree, for example, only contains, at any given moment, a two-dimensional view of that object. While we can circle the tree and observe it from all sides, our pure perception of the tree is always two-dimensional. What gives us the three-dimensional mental picture of the tree is the concepts we use to organize the multitude of perceptions. In social science, cross-sectional research designs have been criticized as two-dimensional, giving birth to a variety of attempts to add time into the equation (e.g. longitudinal data collection, time-series analysis, life-course variables, etc). While it remains implicit for most doing such analyses, these research techniques require the same sort of conceptual ontology as does seeing the tree as three-dimensional. That is, multiple points in time can only be strung

together in a whole picture with concepts, just like the individual percepts of the multiple sides of the tree can only be assembled into "tree" using concepts. Thus, while percepts can only give us a limited view of objects, concepts can contain a fuller reality by allowing us to hold in our minds a more robust mental image of an object, even when we are not in the act of perceiving that object.

Foundations for Analysis

Multi-level Integrative Cognition (MIC) is an ontological and epistemological framework which works from the view that concepts, while fluid, correspond with reality (it is mental pictures which are relative). We first address it as a classificatory ontological system and then discuss its appropriate use in ethnographic analysis.

MIC Ontology: Kinds of being

HT employs four basic ontological categories. These are (1) static, (2) dynamic, (3) evaluative, and (4) identity/self (Wilson and Lowndes 2004). These four levels show the ontological distinctiveness of concepts, but also the relationships between concepts such that taken together they form a holistic picture of the world. The static level refers simply to objects which can be delineated as things unto themselves, i.e. things that are this but not that. But not all observed phenomena are able be broken down to the static level. Dynamic concepts refer to action, an ontologically different state than the static level. Where we attempt to wrestle dynamics into the realm of statics, we are left with insufficient conceptualizations. In Zeno's Paradox of Dichotomy, for example, the impossibility of moving from point A to point B is logically validated on the premise that there are an infinite number of midpoints at which one must arrive before

reaching B. This paradox results from an atomistic position that cannot fully define the nature of reality since the concept of movement is not a series of leaps from point to point, but a fully dynamic process. Static objects (e.g. Zeno's midpoints) cannot give full meaning to a dynamic concept. Thus, we must retain the vision of dynamic concepts as ontologically different from static concepts.

The evaluative level encompasses moral judgments, values, and feelings. These are ontologically separate from levels one and two, since nothing about the things or processes inherently implies a value embedded in them or a feeling that they evoke. In other words, Hume's notion that we cannot get 'ought' from 'is' creates a need for an ontological distinction between level three and the others. At level three the human adds something to reality. Level four, identity/self, extends further into the human aspect of knowledge by recognizing the notion of unique identity. Whereas level three represents shared aspects of culture, level four is a place for individual creativity.[18]

This ontological framework captures the world in its entirety; other frameworks certainly are valid, but they will only make different divisions, not recognize anything absent. This is permissible because we recognize at the outset that these divisions are artificial relative to an integrated-integrated world. All phenomena can be understood in this basic framework, even where substantive differences in concepts seemingly factionalize knowledge. Take for example the different world-view of two observers. A Western observer understands a certain disease as

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[18] We necessarily counter the assumption of the *tabula rasa* self with the claim of individuality. If individuals are all "blank slates" then they are all fundamentally alike. Differences would be mere products of socialization. Traditionally, this has been seen as a progressive concept of the human being. We contend, however, that a progressive view of Lockean human ontology stems from opposition to an ill-defined counter-position. That is, opposition to the *tabula rasa* self traditionally has taken the form of fixed, innate personality. Criminology in earlier periods worked from this concept to identify "criminal types," a system dangerously biased by racist, sexist, and classicist preconceptions. But we do not have to allow human uniqueness to rest on the fixed concept of an innate self. Rather, we simply have to see creativity (a notion, in its true sense, that presupposes uniqueness by definition) as a dynamic capacity of the human. Thus, the self is unique because of its capacity to be unique, i.e. creative, not because of a rigid objectified vision of innate personality.

the result of the infection of an organ by a particular virus within the human body, whereas an Eastern observer understands the disease to be the result of a blockage of energy flow both within the human body, but also within the environment of the sick person. Both of these can be charted on the four-level ontology of MIC (both clearly rest on dynamic and static cognitions), because MIC speaks to basic human cognition; it identifies possible ways of seeing, not substantive things that can be seen.

Having defined this holistic ontological framework, we can now undertake a discussion of how this ontology applies to investigating the world. We first examine two basic epistemological practices used to investigate the world, differentiation and integration. Then, by borrowing language from fractal geometry and applying it to conceptual analysis, we put differentiation and integration together into a holistic vision, where smaller scale observations are iterated from larger scale observations and vice versa (a process called catiteration). This gives justification for its use in social science, which we contend also rightly uses both ways of investigating the world, although they appear divided by disciplinary disputes. We then discuss how our fractal concept methodology applies to ethnographic observation and show how our use of MIC as a fractal generator interfaces with our data.

MIC epistemology: From being to knowing

Art and science comprise two practices for investigating the world in general, and the human condition in particular. Each investigates the world in a different way. Science proceeds from a differentiating epistemology; that is, it grasps the world by breaking it into its component parts. For example, it understands the human being by differentiating its essential pieces, such as anatomical structures, molecules, genes, etc. In this sense, the ultimate goal of science is beyond

the human being; it seeks to differentiate universal principles. Art proceeds from an integrating epistemology; that is, it is works from the pieces to build a whole. Art uses components to understand the whole human being, or even the whole human condition. In this sense, understanding the human being, individually and culturally, is the ultimate goal of art.

Social science is uniquely postured to blend art and science together.[19] This is because social science works from both differentiating and integrating processes. It differentiates universal principles (e.g. tendencies of groups), but because its knowledge is always for and about human beings, it also must retain a focus on understanding the human. Ethnography, in particular, benefits from understanding the dual nature of investigating the world. Ethnographers, like scientists, break down the components of those they study, but their efforts ultimately are directed, like artists, toward conveying the human condition (concepts of culture and identity).

Comparatively recent developments in mathematics and natural science show promise for using fractals not only for understanding the natural world, but also the social world (Abbott 2001; Agar 2004; Kuhn and Woog 2005; Salzinger 2004).[20] Mandlebrot (1982) discovered in the ebbs and flows of cotton prices a pattern that was repeated at a variety of scales. In other words, whether one was examining a plot of prices across ten years or ten weeks, the pattern was similar. Since this discovery, fractal geometry has blossomed as a model for understanding all

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[19] It should be noted that much social science already unconsciously and naturally works from both differentiating and integrating epistemologies. However, by explicating these processes and their underlying ontological bases, we further can avoid the trappings of the realist-interpretivist debate. Typically, social scientists are quick to unnecessarily take sides when explicating the particular epistemological foundations of their work.

[20] More generally, chaos and complexity theory are making their way into social theorizing because of an ability to incorporate order and disorder into a single system (Abrahams 1990; Ofori-Dankwa and Julian 2001; Ward 1995). The complexity of social life is commonly recognized, but until recently, scientific study, even at the theoretical stage required the reduction of these complexities to overly simplistic theoretical propositions capable of being operationalized and measured with basic linear mathematics. Emerging theoretical paradigms—Bourdieu's *habitus* and Gidden's *structruation* among them—have led a shift to merge the macro and micro split. This naturally calls for research methodology capable of blending various levels of scale. The emergence of Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) has been an initial attempt, but relies still on a linear conceptualization (although now at various related levels of scale). The multi-dimensional capabilities of fractal geometry point a way toward the quantification of scale-bridging theories, like habitus and structuration, however, any more discussion of this point would take us (further) beyond the scope of this work.

sorts of natural phenomenon (e.g. the tree represents a branching pattern at various scales: the tree itself, the branches, and the leaves). Social science has been relatively slow to pick up on fractal patterns in the social world (although there is some indication that ethnography may lead a charge in that direction in the near future; see Agar 2004; Kuhn and Woog 2005; Salzinger 2004). A notable early attempt at fractal analysis of social phenomenon is Andrew Abbott's (2001) *Chaos of Disciplines*, in which he illustrates the fractal nature of the discipline of sociology across time. Abbott convincingly illustrates a pattern of splitting and remapping of subfields in sociology, giving meaning to the remarkable similarity between schools of thought such as symbolic interactionism and postmodernism and illustrating the waxing and waning various trends in sociology.

A natural prior step to the actual quantification using fractal math, is the development of fractal theoretical models, in the same way that linear hypotheses must precede operationalization and measurement. Thus, we offer here a fractal-concept methodology, capable of generating fractal concept structures. Fractal-concept methodology can be understood in contrast to grounded theory (GT). While we give a full discussion later, GT essentially is a coding-based technique that has been popularly used to analyze various kinds of qualitative data, although primarily written fieldnotes and interview transcripts. However, as with text, when applied to visual media, GT is essentially a process of coding image data, then grouping those codes into concepts in an increasingly hierarchical fashion (see Clarke 2005). Ultimately theoretical models emerge, where concepts are arranged into theoretical propositions. In GT, everything begins with the data, rather than with the hypothesis. The desired end product is a theory with the familiar form of an axiomatic, linear system.

Fractal-concept analysis is similarly grounded on revealing hidden meanings but does so from an entirely different direction. Where GT works from a series of independent codes toward a theoretical system that is used to organize, and therefore give meaning, to the codes, fractal analysis codes social phenomenon such that from the beginning patterns can be observed. Rather than reducing observations to independent codes, which are then re-assembled into an axiomatic system, a process that we believe is only one-half of social science (employing solely a differentiating, with only an additive integrating process), fractal-concept analysis looks for observable patterns in the whole image. It is these always-holistic patterns, which are then translated into conceptual meanings. Furthermore, rather than producing linear theory, as does traditional GT, our fractal concept methodology does not reduce the structural complexity, either within scale or between scales, to a flat linear proposition. This is important since linear models certainly do not capture the complexity of social life.

The core of the observable pattern in fractal language is the generator. For Mandelbrot's (1982) cotton prices, a lightning-bolt pattern could be observed at various levels of scale, for the tree the generator is a branching pattern, and similarly for Abbott's (2001) analysis of social science it is a "V" shaped fracturing. Our four-fold MIC structure also is a generator for fractal concept analysis. In other words, its basic pattern is repeated at various levels of scale in our ethnographic data.

Using the ontological framework of MIC as a conceptual generator, we can offer insights about how to bridge differentiating and integrating practices into a single research framework. This is particularly important because much division within social science has resulted from failure to properly conceptualize the complementary nature of this work. Splits between quantitative and qualitative methodologists break out on this distinction, with the former focusing mostly

on differentiation and the latter mostly on integration. Bridging the epistemological practices of these two camps ought to make great strides toward reconciliation, and most importantly an understanding and acceptance of the work of each, currently undermined by polemic squabbling. Fractals are a natural way to frame this, since they entail self-similarity at various levels of scale, which means that through iteration and catiteration, we can move seamlessly and systematically forward and backward between levels of scale (from the macro to the micro).

In the MIC generator, the differentiating practice of science focuses on the first two levels of cognition, static and dynamic. Science attempts to observe and identify things and processes. Relativists criticize this focus for ignoring the way in which evaluative and identity concepts are implicitly contained in scientific work. Artists use statics and dynamics, but always in an effort to make conceptual statements at the evaluative and identity levels. By recognizing these distinct aims, science and art become complementary means of investigating the world.

By systematically analyzing phenomenon within the framework of MIC, one can discern the way in which differentiated concepts of statics and dynamics convey and contain integrated concepts of value and identity. Therefore, MIC analysis allows the ethnographer to both fully differentiate and fully integrate, and without jumping across epistemological paradigms, because it unifies them by conceptualizing phenomenon according to different cognitive perspectives, which wrongly are taken to be incompatible in the current positivist-interpretivist debate. Later in this chapter we show specifically how the MIC generator can be found in our ethnographic data and the way it improves the traditional grounded theory method. Ultimately, in chapter 5, we present models, which reflect fractal concept structures based on the MIC generator. In the next section we move from epistemological to theoretical considerations.

Theoretical Orientation: Refuse to Choose

Many social scientists can be located within one or another of the major socio-philosophical traditions. But the way in which social science research is theoretically defined more rightly stems from the *appropriateness* of applying one or another social theory to the kind of research questions they address, rather than anything inherently problematic with other theoretical traditions.

The same research question can be understood in radically different ways (Abbott 2001; Kincaid 1996). Following an analysis by Kincaid (1996), suppose we take the following hypothetical observation to be true: In our culture, people traditionally wave to each other using their right hands. To begin our investigation of this phenomenon, we would form the research question, "Why do people tend to wave with their right hand?" The appropriateness of any particular social theory tradition depends on which component of this question one wishes to emphasize. If a person wants to know, "Why do people *wave* with their right hand?" a structural-functionalist theoretical framework might be most appropriate since it seeks an understanding of the institution of hand waving, broadly conceived. However, if one wishes to know, "Why do people wave with their *right* hand (as opposed to their left)?" a conflict theoretical framework might be most appropriate since the goal of the research is an understanding of the character of the institution within society relative to other possible incarnations of it. If one wishes to understand what the practice of waving with the right hand *means* to people or who the people *are*, a symbolic interactionist (or some interpretivist variation) might be most appropriate since this approach to the research question seeks to know value and identity. Of course, insights from each tradition bleed into the particular foci of the others, but generally each one is best-postured address different components of social life.

In this light, the major theoretical orientations can be conceptualized in terms of MIC by distinguishing their foci. Structural-functionalism seeks primarily to understand institutions in society as objects (static).[21] Conflict theory seeks to understand social processes particularly of control and domination (dynamic). The various interpretive perspectives seek to understand what various social objects and practices mean to people (evaluative) and to build notions of cultural identity. While the scope of the sociology and anthropology has typically ignored individual identity as a concept—this has been the domain of psychology—pedagogical approaches (e.g. Freire 1994) to working with individuals that emerge from design ethnography glimpse the potential for incorporating identity cognition into social science analysis, as do queer theory and various feminist perspectives. We employ the notion of creative individuality where we explore new approaches to working with the street homeless that emerge from our analysis in chapter 5.

Since these theoretical traditions have different foci and because we have blended their various epistemological positions, we assert that our research takes all of them to be appropriate under different circumstances. Therefore, we draw from each of them as a foundation for understanding theoretical propositions, which emerge from different conceptual structures with different ontological qualities. For example, in asserting a theoretical proposition, which employs dynamic concepts about stratification, conflict theory can be very informative. In understanding the value orientations that stem from and/or propagate that process of stratification a symbolic interactionist framework might be more informative. We suggest that openness to these various theoretical orientations holds greater potential for generating knowledge, than artificially shut-

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[21] Of course, institutions are observed in action, so one might assert that structural-functionalism is focused on dynamics. This is true; in fact, each theoretical orientation unconsciously uses in varying amounts of each of the levels of cognition. After all, the distinction between them is admittedly artificial. However, we argue that the predominant aim of each theoretical school has an overall quality that can be located in one or another type of cognition. Structural-functionalism focuses ultimately on defining the nature of institutions, more than identifying processes or value orientations within society. Thus we characterize it as having an overall static-level quality, in relation to other cognitive-kinds, in the same way that the volume of a musical note must be defined in relation to the others in a musical piece.

ting oneself off from one or another. This is particularly true given that, properly conceived, they complement each other. Maintaining an awareness of the ontological distinctions that can be made between various incarnations of a research question allows one to be informed by various schools of thought without being theoretically schizophrenic.

Branding our Ethnography

Just as we see various social theoretical orientations as complementary, so too are various models for ethnography. Distinctions need not be made regarding reflexive ethnography, critical ethnography, and design ethnography. In our work, we are simultaneously reflexive, critical, and action-oriented. We draw from different current ethnographic practices simultaneously, and see our brand of ethnography at the intersection of these popular practices.

Katz (2004:280) notes, "…all ethnographies are politically cast and policy relevant" (see also Jordan and Yeomans 1995). We direct much of our assessment toward problematics of the homeless service providing system, contending that these reflect hierarchical, capitalist structures found in western society. They therefore often contribute to the alienation of the street homeless because they are founded on power and social control, something that the street homeless characteristically avoid. Moreover, we hope to give voice to the street homeless who are left out of discourse by virtue of their institutional alienation (see Karp 1999). Clearly this fits a critical ethnography.

Much discussion of ethnography revolves around researcher presence among the population under study. The goal of early ethnography was a pure presentation of the facts, "as they really are." We believe that the researcher is too integral to the observations to make separating

out their biases possible (Fox 2004; Denzin 1999).[22] While some ethnographers try to do so, we attempt to lay bare the researcher's presence; this is generally referred to as reflexive ethnography. By including the researcher in the text many have hoped to partition the effect of researcher presence. Ultimately, regardless of one's epistemological position on theory of knowledge, the ethnographers are in a difficult spot as an inextricable presence in the subject they are supposed to describe. Geertz (1988:10) puts it nicely:

> The difficulty is that the oddity of constructing texts ostensibly scientific out of experiences broadly biographical is thoroughly obscured. This signature issue as the ethnographer confronts it, or as it confronts the ethnographer, demands both the Olympianism of the unauthorial physicist and the sovereign consciousness of the hyperauthorial novelist, while not in fact permitting either.

While the tradition of scientific research requires a dispassionate approach, this is difficult, if not impossible, for ethnographers who inevitably develop close relationships with their participants. Moreover, dispassion is not always advisable. Lofland and Lofland (1995:15) argue, "Unless you are emotionally engaged in your work, the inevitable boredom, confusion, and frustration of rigorous scholarship will endanger even the completion—not to speak of the quality—of the project."

Drawing from the reflexive tradition we consider our presence an integral part of the story, rather than something to be controlled for, like a selective factor in quantitative analysis. This has value in itself, particularly as we are well suited to be conduits of experience flowing from the field to an audience of people largely like us (white, middle class, etc; see also Churchill 2005). Our field experiences we have had a profound effect on our own lives. Our personal insights and transformations can be used to illustrate key findings, particularly when we ground

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[22] It is important to remember here our position that such biases plague the mental picture, not the concepts that emerge in the analysis. Our fractal analysis is a conceptual methodology. The concepts that emerge from its use are real, even if any particular person does not draw on them to form their own mental picture.

ourselves in our own middle-class backgrounds and contrast our lives to the street homeless we study (Fox 2004). These will be present throughout our findings.

Finally, the cumulative nature of ethnography and our ultimate goal of influencing policy with practical recommendations echoes ideas of praxis found in design-ethnography (Barab et al. 2004; Jordan and Yeomans 1995). We agree that thought and action can never be separated (Freire 1994). We have seen this in our work. As we have been in the field, interacting with our participants, we have developed insights, which we have relayed back to them. They accept or reject them and thereby continue the evolution of thought. For example, to increase our numbers, we initially paid five dollars for interviews. After a short while, several participants told us that this was a bad thing to do, because those people who did not want to be filmed still had a share of ownership of the corner, but were not getting anything in return for our access there. This discussion not only shaped a new access approach where we brought food and supplies to be freely shared by all, regardless of their participation on-camera, but it produced a variety of insights about feelings of ownership, sentiments about our presence, etc. From a research standpoint, this type of negotiation is a finding in itself, and one from which it is impossible to remove the researcher (see Fox 2004). Moreover, as our ethnography progressed, we reflected new insights back toward our participants, with the ultimate goal of improving their lives and reforming social practices which we believe disadvantage them (Barab et al. 2004; Jordan and Yeomans 1995). This rings consistent with design-ethnography.

Reflexive Beginnings

While we can academically define our ontological and epistemological standpoint, and locate ourselves within theoretical and ethnographic traditions, as we take ethnography into the

field we are not so academic. As real human beings, our interactions are not explicitly structured day-to-day, but emerge naturally from our personalities and basic dispositions. Here we attempt to sketch our various dispositions toward our society, our participants, and our discipline. Our hope is to ground ourselves as human beings, in the way that the above discussion grounds us as researchers and data analyzers. This section forms the basis for the reflexive nature of our analysis. Here, we explicate ourselves in order to cast light on our observations and findings. While we will show up through out our description of our findings, here we define our respective lens through which we tend to see the world (Berger and Luckmann 1967).

Wasserman's Biography

Wasserman was born to middle class parents in Virginia, 1978. Raised in the Southern United States, by decidedly Northern parents, Wasserman has never felt at home in Southern culture. His family went to church but was not particularly religious and by high school, he had become quite critical of the highly religious culture in Alabama where the family now lived. He also became heavily involved in the local punk and hardcore music scene, attracted to it by its political and self-reflexive nature. Wasserman hated high school where he felt ostracized by classmates and bored by classes. His saving grace there was Lincoln-Douglas debate, which allowed him to engage in thinking and discussion about political and social theory and to apply these to current ethical questions. This formalized an interest in ethics and social theory, which he pursued as an undergraduate and graduate.

His passion has always been found at the intersection of the world and the idea. Debate in high school, applied ethics as an undergraduate, and medical sociology as a graduate, all have been arenas in which he pursued the application of theory to the real-world. Unlike many re-

searchers, he strives to deepen theoretical considerations, going beyond formal hypothesis test-ing, to engage epistemological and ontological questions. Unlike many theorists who work in epistemology, he is never satisfied with leaving questions at an intellectualize stage. He attempts to create work that investigates foundational concepts of being and knowledge but always with the goal of empirical analysis and practical application.

His life can be captured by four general stages that lead progressively to his current frame of mind. At the time of this writing he is twenty-eight years old. His life can be accurately char-acterized by an MIC analysis of four seven-year periods. These generally are common to most individuals as they grow-up, but the particulars, especially of the later periods, serve to illustrate his identity and the way he sees the world, including fundamental ways of seeing the social prob-lems like homelessness.

Wasserman is characterized at the static level by taking on his parents' world-view, prac-tically and ideologically. In one memorable example, as a six-year old, he put up a sign in the front yard, which read, "Don't Vote for Mondale." Having no clear conception of the issues, common to children at this age, he was defined by his parents' conservative political orientation. The second seven-year period is dynamic in that it involved inductive processes where his par-ents' views and values were abstracted and then applied to newly encountered situations. This is exemplified in the previous story where, at ten, his explanation of the newly encountered home-less situation was, "Bad investments." In the third, evaluative period, Wasserman, like most adolescents, began to explore culture on his own. He got involved in music and began to read philosophy. During this period, however, he mostly engaged in the study of philosophical prin-ciples of others and the application of these to the world. His thoughts were becoming more complex, but they were entirely external to him. He knew and applied the thinking of others,

principles of ethics, mantras of punk rock, etc. During the fourth period, the identity phase, his

thinking became more mobile and fluid. He began to eschew rigid ideological structures, grow-

ing disillusioned with the confines of identifying with a particular philosophical tradition or po-

litical ideology. In this period be became fascinated with the concept of freedom and the possi-

bility of being a free individual in a regulative world. Wasserman continues to struggle with

these questions, negotiating the concept of freedom within the confines of social order.

Recognition of these stages, and their various characteristic moments, sheds much light

onto the homeless situation as Wasserman sees it. He is sensitive to the rigidity of the ways in

which homeless service providers and researchers conceptualize and treat the homelessness. He

is concerned about addressing the notion of human freedom within the context of research,

which historically entails invading, influencing, and repressing the individuals under study. He

distrusts assertions of interested parties on all sides and fears compromising complexity in the

interests of presentation. Ultimately, he is interested in liberation of himself and others from de-

terminative structures, even and especially, impositions by society made in a person's "best in-

terest."

In sum, Wasserman is inspired by the following quote from Schiller:

> What is man before beauty liberates him from free pleasure, and the serenity of
> form tames down the savageness of life? Eternally uniform in his aims, eternally
> changing in his judgments, self-seeking without being himself, unfettered without
> being free, a slave without serving any rule. At this period, the world is to him
> only destiny, not yet an object; all has existence for him only in as far as it pro-
> cures existence to him; a thing that neither seeks from nor gives to him is non-
> existent. Every phenomenon stands out before him separate and cut off, as he
> finds himself in the series of beings. All that is, is to him through the bias of the
> moment; every change is to him an entirely fresh creation, because with the nec-
> essary in him, the necessary out of him is wanting, which binds together all the
> changing forms in the universe, and which holds fast the law on the theatre of his
> action, while the individual departs. It is in vain that nature lets the rich variety of
> her forms pass before him; he sees in her glorious fullness nothing but his prey, in
> her power and greatness nothing but his enemy. Either he encounters objects, and

wishes to draw them to himself in desire, or the objects press in a destructive manner upon him, and he thrusts them away in dismay and terror. In both cases his relation to the world of sense is immediate contact; and perpetually anxious through its pressure, restless and plagued by imperious wants, he nowhere finds rest except in enervation, and nowhere limits save in exhausted desire.
--F.C.S. Schiller, 27 Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man

Clair's Biography

Clair was born and raised in a middle class home in Orange County, California. His up-bringing was conservative and matriarchic. His biological father was gone at 5 and his adopted father was around from 9-14. Always present were his mother and his three aunts, as well as his grandparents, who had made the journey from Italy to Connecticut, and then the east to west coast. He remembers the Barry Goldwater signs in the front yard growing up, as well as his early Catholic schooling, which ended, by church mandate, upon his Mother's second marriage. Catholic ritual always stood out in his mind, the strong priestly hierarchy, confessional, not being able to eat meat on Friday, his Mother's dismissal from the church, all of a sudden being able to eat meat on Friday, all the way up to his wedding plans at 27, when the priest at the New Orleans French Quarter refused to marry him and his bride without a signed contract swearing to raise his potential children Catholic. While Clair's family moved from their traditional Catholic roots to mainstream Christianity, he started to stray away toward more philosophical literature. The transition began in earnest, when he was 18 at a large Sunday dinner, and confirmed by all as an idealist.

As a standout jock and honors student, Clair headed off to college to get an education while playing football. He over the next four years started spending less time within the athletic environment and more around intellectuals. Ironically, it was through sport, early morning rac-quetball games with a professor, that he started to realize that he could actually pursue a more

intellectual lifestyle.   He was hired as a research assistant his junior year in college, left the football team, and set off to try and build his more idealized world.

His research interests always have been clearly linked to his biography. He grew up around service providers, he had volunteered a lot, especially with terminal illnesses.   The death of his maternal grandmother sparked a growing interest in coping with death and dying, as losing the head of the extended family generated long lasting disruptions.   Clair wanted to do work that helped people, improved lives. He was exposed to some professors that showed him that research could be designed to be practical, and that if his interests were not found in the literature, that this was even more reason to be interested.

At the time of this writing, Clair is 48. His life can be broken into 4 distinct phases. Through high school, he was treated as the jewel of the family, and in social situations, the popular student-athlete with cheerleader on arm, drunk with future time. During his college days, 18-26, he abandoned his athletic identity, established his own beliefs, met his wife and launched into developing a family and an academic career.   From 27 to 44, he had three kids, received tenure, and was divorced. He practiced sociology the good old-fashioned way.   Although at odds internally, he served in various administrative capacities, which in retrospect seemingly hindered his innovation by his having to work in rigid organizational structures.   He came back from a sabbatical wanting to do everything differently, not the same as it ever was. Since then, he has been a single father, raising three boys (ages 12, 16, 17), care giving for two 70-year-old parents, and trying to find and train students that want to help do a different Sociology.

He continues to be influenced by the following quote from Goethe:

> Concerning all acts of initiative and creation there is one elementary truth the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would otherwise not have occurred. A whole stream of events

and issues from the decision raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, do it. Boldness has genius and magic in it. Begin it now.

Wasserman and Clair as a Team and in the Field

The whole is not the sum of the parts. In the field, the two of us form a research team in the true sense of the word. We assume different roles and assert different parts of our identities at various times during the research process.

Often Clair's credentials as a professor were beneficial. Among the street homeless, there was an air of pride about being in the company of a college professor, of being his informant, his teacher.[23] Wasserman's role as student, and as younger than most of the participants, sometimes gave him 'little brother' status. Similarly among service providers, Clair's professional credentials garnered respect and legitimacy, whereas because of Wasserman's status as a student, providers and other professionals seem to have a sense of 'helping out', the way one would feel obligated to help a child with their homework.

Our personal biographies also were important. Early on, we often fought the rumor among the street homeless that we were undercover police officers. Along with a general sincerity that we tried to maintain, stories of our own past deviance went far in forming bonds and allaying suspicions. Wasserman's tattoos, covering substantial portions of his body, rather than ordinary small pieces, further suggested that they were not police. Moreover, we both normally have and convey an anti-authoritarian attitude, which was fundamental to making connections

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[23] Ironically, we sometimes had to downplay affiliation with our University because the University hospital is the place where mentally ill homeless persons are taken when deemed to be a danger to themselves or others. Naturally, this made some participants quite suspicious of two University researchers who suddenly started coming around. We discuss the impact and management of this in terms of our research later.

with similarly, disposed street homeless. Among service providers it was useful to pull back on this attitude to some extent, emphasizing professional roles rather than personal dispositions.

In terms of sharing deviance, one particular life event played a monumental role in maintaining relationships with our participants and building credibility. In 2005, as Clair was returning home, his son called him and said that a large pickup truck with flood lights was driving all over the golf course where their home is located, destroying the grass. As Clair got close to the home, he saw a truck matching the description coming the other way. He flashed his lights and turned his car to bring the truck to a halt while he called the police. The driver of the truck rammed Clair's van, pushing it out of the way and began to flee. Clair followed the truck, talking to 911 operators and continuously updating them on the trucks location. When the police finally responded, they arrested *Clair* for misdemeanor reckless endangerment![24]

The entire episode was a horrible experience, frustrating, emotionally draining, and completely unbelievable. Ironically, however, in terms of our research, it was wholly positive. By the time that unfortunate event occurred we had made contact with more people than we had the time to keep up with. The ridiculously time consuming nature of the entire process following Clair's legal battle gave a legitimate reason for some absences from one spot or another. Someone would say, "Hey, haven't seen you guys in a while. Thought you left us for dead." "Yeah, man, Professor's been dealing with all that court shit," we would explain. All would be well, "Yeah, they're fucked up ain't they." We weren't lying; it did pull us away from our research. But, rather than being a devastating blow to our relationships with participants, it allowed us to maintain relationships with them over long periods of time, when we were not able to dedicate large amounts of time to any one group.

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[24] If this surprises the reader, particularly since 911 operators never told him stop following the truck, all we can say is that it surprised us too. We also wish to emphasize that he never attempted to apprehend the driver, only to let police know the hit and run driver's whereabouts.

More importantly, those proceedings formed the basis of countless discussions and bonds of shared deviance. Clair's stories about being arrested and going through the court system to fight for his innocence allowed him to connect in a very real and in-depth way with our participants, the majority of whom had their own first-hand experiences with the criminal justice system. The street homeless were shocked and, in a way comforted, by the Clair's fate, as if it meant that the cops and courts can victimize anyone, not just poor black people. The story spread on the streets like wildfire. We would tell a couple people in one area and the next day, all the way across town, someone else would run up to Clair, "Professor! I heard they got you!" They joked with Clair about it, but they, more than anyone else in his life, understood that it was no joke. On occasion someone would put it rather bluntly, "That ain't right. They don't mess around at that jail down there.[25] But now you'll see what we go through."

Sharing other idiosyncrasies and embarrassing moments also personalized and humanized us in the eyes of our participants. This was particularly true for the street homeless. Wasserman's vegetarian diet was the subject of much amazement, discussion, and good-natured teasing. Clair's stories about the tribulations of raising teenage boys were always a source of laughter, as well as his in depth knowledge of gangster rap, with which our mostly African American population was continually impressed. As a single man at the start of the project, our homeless participants kept up with Wasserman's dating life and later his engagement and marriage. Clair was teased about his long skinny Capri 120 cigarettes, even to the point where no one would bum one. Talking about sports and sex comprised large portions of our discourse on the street.

All of this "small talk" served a very important purpose in that it formed real, interpersonal connections with our participants. They came to know our identities and biographies, just

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[25] Everyone seemed to agree that the county where Clair was arrested was the worst in the state.

as we came to know theirs. They kept track of Wasserman's engagement and marriage, his pro-

gress through graduate school. They followed Clair's children as they aged.

The value of small talk seems lost on many service providers and researchers. At a meet-

ing of homeless service providers who were discussing starting a "no-strings-attached" café for

the homeless, this became patently obvious. The proposed café was a response to a survey

where 20% of respondents had listed food as one of their needs. The goal was a place that would

be welcoming and friendly, a place were one did not have to enroll in a program or talk to a case

manager in exchange for services. The discussion and planning that followed the presentation of

this basic idea completely bastardized this vision. Most of the service providers in attendance

simply could not work their way out of their role of managing social-problem-people. Their

immediate reaction was to figure out how to get social workers in a position to "just talk" to

those that came to eat at this hypothetical café and how to "make available" social program in-

formation.

Wasserman thought that the discussion was leading far away from the initial, laudable vi-

sion, so he offered the following remark (quoted roughly from memory):

> My study population are those who don't use services, or at least not often. It
> would seem like they are, or they intersect with, this 20% that you are trying to
> feed. The treatment programs are an essential part of the overall effort and I have
> no negative comment about them whatsoever. But what I don't think you realize
> is that they are also what keep these particular people away from the services.
> Even if enrolling in a program or talking to a caseworker is not formally required,
> its presence creates a symbolic pressure and it puts people off. So if your goal
> here is specifically to feed these people, it will be compromised by the presence
> of those things even if they are not required.

Wasserman's remark was met with polite, but firm rejection. When dealing with any group of

people, whether researching or "serving" them, one cannot always "be on". People want and

need to be treated like people, not like cases. *Cases* are just objectified problems; *people* talk about sports and sex.

<div style="text-align: center;">Ethics in Ethnography</div>

Ethnographers often are in a precarious position. They do not enjoy a security of distance from their subject or structured protocol (see Geertz 2000). They must throw themselves into quite a bit of chaos to practice their craft. Moreover, they seek the secrets of culture, often among disadvantaged groups. The western imperialism of ethnography's beginnings largely has been eclipsed by the socially conscious researcher, but ethical questions remain endemic to ethnography by virtue of inescapable status and role differences between researcher and subject (Fine, Weis, Weseen, and Wong 2003). Such dynamics always carry exploitative potential, even where researchers intend to help (Lofland and Lofland 1995; see Arhem 1993 for a practical example; see Freire 1994 for discussion of helping as oppression; see Gramsci 1971 for discussion of academics as hegemony-producing elites). In our research as well, we encounter a variety of ethical questions some endemic to research itself, and some characteristic of researching the homeless. We consider these here because they frame how we approach research in general (a question of our methodological mindset) and how we approach our particular research situation (a pragmatic question of negotiating between the field and the academy). We address each of these in turn, using this section to transition from discussing our theoretical orientation (the academy) to dealing with our actual research (the field).

Many methodological problems double as ethical ones. First, if epistemology precludes the truth status of findings, one must be careful not to represent them as such. This would be tantamount to fabricating research. Our notion of concepts-as-real refutes this contention. Sec-

ond, that the researcher's presence alters the field of observation is problematic. If this is true

and the effect of presence on the field is significant, then reports from the field might be seen as

invalid. But the absence of a viable, ethical counter plan suggests that creates a dilemma. In

other words, only two alternatives are possible: 1) Do no research, 2) Do research in secret. We

reject the first from utilitarian considerations that on the whole research does more good than

harm; the second clearly violates the rights of the subjects. Instead, we mitigate the effect of

presence in various ways (see Access section below). In the end, this may not fully address the

problems endemic to the presence of the researcher. But while troublesome, it seems to be as

good as it gets.

Questions about interacting with particular kinds of populations raise other critical issues

(Fine et al. 2003; Lofland and Lofland 1995). Much research is aimed at oppressed populations.

However, researchers mostly are outsiders and often belong to elite groups and organizations.

They are professors at universities, often with decidedly comfortable lives. Access to oppressed

populations, who often are highly distrustful, must be carefully negotiated and usually remains

precarious (Harrington 2003; Lofland and Lofland 1995). The question becomes, to what extent

is access negotiated and to what extent is it coerced? Coercion is not always intended, but in

many cases the byproduct of circumstance. In our research, we bring food, toiletries, and various

supplies into the field. We do not make partaking in these supplies explicitly conditional on par-

ticipation in our research, but the implication is that these are products to be exchanged for par-

ticipation. On occasion, people have taken things and left without speaking to us. Others have

hung around and not participated in conversation. Clearly they were not compelled. However,

people most often stay and talk. Since we are giving to people in great need, have we uninten-

tionally coerced, if not all, at least some of them? We continue to struggle with this question;

our only reply has been our attempts to minimize the interpretation of our donations as exchange by trying to make it clear that we give with no-strings-attached.

In the end, we are always outsiders dealing with the intention of describing a subject to other outsider-elites (Fine et al. 2003). This raises questions about the ultimate potential effect of our research. We would like to think that our research produces benefits for our oppressed participants. Above all, our goal has always been to improve their lives (although our conception of what this means is more aligned with notions of liberation and self-determination than achievement of fixed ideals such as 'home ownership,' 'gainful employment,' etc). But by disseminating our findings about the street homeless to other outsider-elites, are we exposing them to the danger of more oppression. If we describe the migratory habits and community-forming practices of the street homeless, will the powers-that-be use this to thwart the establishment of homeless encampments? Local authorities do 'homeless sweeps' seemingly randomly. Will this aid in their efforts, further debasing the community building patterns on which the street homeless rely for physical and social-psychological resources (i.e. the sharing of food and clothes, referrals for temporary work, etc)? Again, we cannot allay our own fears. We hope and believe our work will benefit our participants (both homeless and non-homeless), but we cannot be certain that our well-intended work will not supply tools for further oppression. Again, we call attention to this for its own sake, not because we can offer any solution. Nietzsche surely never dreamed that his work would posthumously inspire the Nazi's. We cannot predict the future, but we worry about it.

There are a variety of ambiguities in our legal and ethical responsibilities related to the distinction and intersection of our roles as researchers, citizens, and fellow human beings. For example, it is clear that some of our participants were drug users. We knew who they were, who

the dealers were, and could tell when they would go buy and use drugs. They would disappear around a corner and come back incommunicably high on crack. Fifteen to twenty minutes later their high would dissipate and they would reengage the conversation. Putting our role as researcher first, this would not be troublesome. It is just another observation. As fellow human beings, especially with the ultimate goal of helping it is more troubling. We sometimes found ourselves encouraging them to be self-reflexive about their substance use and its underlying cause, but there is a fine line between concern and proselytizing, one which is all the more clear for "outsiders". As time wore on, we developed the type of relationships with some of them so that such conversations were seen as caring, rather than preaching, but our relationships with most made this a troublesome situation for us. Finally, as citizens, one might argue that we had an obligation to instantly call the police, since these activities were clearly illegal. This also would have ended our research, not to mention that, in our opinion, introducing the criminal justice system into the scene only would have made things worse for everyone.

Similarly, we occasionally gave money to those who asked. While not part of our official research protocol, at times one or another person would pull us aside and ask for a few dollars. We considered these moments to be effectively excused from our research protocol, as though we had instantaneously been transformed from researcher into some other, informal role. We considered giving money in these instances a matter of personal choice, not research protocol. Still, these instances raise ethical questions about knowledge and intention with which many people confronted by panhandlers struggle. For example, Wasserman once gave a participant two-dollars so that he could pay for the bus to take him to a job in the morning. It was also clear that this person used drugs, and it was certainly possible that he spent the two dollars I gave him on drugs. To what extent was I culpable?

Treating participants appropriately requires reflection; assumptions must be thought through. Early in the project, we went looking for one of our contacts who lived under a bridge. No one was in the camp when we arrived. "You want to get some establishing shots of their camp?" As soon as the question was posed, it hit us. Why had we thought even for a moment that this would be okay? Of course we were caught up in assumptions about what constituted public and private property. But the street homeless redefine public spaces as their own. Although this is contested by most of the rest of society, we had to understand this and respect it. Filming this public-made-private space would have been the equivalent of walking into someone's house unannounced and filming their home and possessions. People do not recognize this because social space is so neatly categorized. At Catchout Corner cars of middle class people will slow down as people take pictures of the men gathered there, like animals in a zoo. The men are deeply offended by this, but powerless to stop it. We had to make sure that our research did not objectify and intrude like those drive-by photographers.

These types of issues can be deeply personal. Ethical questions about doing ethnographic research are, to the researcher, ultimately questions about living a good life; moral quandaries are not left in the field. The centrality of the ethnographer makes ethnographic research itself a moral experience (Geertz 2000). While ethics has been wrangled by philosophy into an intellectual enterprise, one devoid of feeling, for those in the crosshairs of ethical questions, their emotional weight is quite real. Like us, most ethnographers, we are do-gooders walking an impossibly thin line between exposition and exploitation; what ultimately needs to be conveyed is that some questions have no answers (Fine et al. 2003). Are we just elitists meddling in the lives of oppressed people for our own self-interest? As homeless researchers, do we by definition have a vested interest in the existence of homelessness? Have we enabled addictive behavior by donat-

ing money or even food? Should we try to uphold the letter of the law or our research when we cannot do both? These are not questions that can be thought through with only intellect, but must be wrestled with at a deeper, more human level. The success of this section lies in the struggle over these questions not in their answers. We struggle with these questions, we dream about them, we argue over them, and in the end we do the best we can. Geertz (2000:40) writes:

> The professional ethic rests on the personal and draws its strength from it; we force ourselves to see out of a conviction that blindness—or illusion—cripples virtue as it cripples people. Detachment comes not from a failure to care, but from a kind of caring resilient enough to withstand an enormous tension between moral reaction and scientific observation, a tension which only grows as moral perception deepens and scientific understanding advances. The flight into scientism, or, on the other side, into subjectivism, is but a sign that the tension cannot any longer be borne, that nerve has failed and a choice has been made to suppress either one's humanity or one's rationality. These are the pathologies of science, not its norm.

Our Research in Practice

In this section we turn from underlying ontological and epistemological concerns to discuss our physical research activities, namely collecting and analyzing data. We structure this section in accordance with the way in which we naturally meet the issues while conducting research. That is, we must first select a research population, the parameters for which are wide. We then must gain entrance and maintain access to the research population. Finally, we must collect and then analyze the data we draw from the population. For our research, we do not move through these stages in a strictly linear fashion. We present them in this order because they must first occur in this order, but recognize that afterwards, we vacillate between them. In this section we first describe our sampling and data collection processes. Next we address access issues encountered in our research, and strategies employed to gain and maintain access. Finally, we discuss our analytic technique, applying our MIC generator to our actual data.

Sample and Data

By virtue of its predetermined hypotheses, quantitative research employs highly structured sampling techniques. Our research is antecedent to the derivation of testable hypotheses. Therefore, our sampling techniques ought to be structured by different criteria. Testing theory calls ideally for random sampling techniques; generating theory calls for theoretical sampling techniques. This means as concepts and theoretical propositions emerge from our research, we intentionally seek out participants who can elaborate those ideas. To aid in this process, we use a snowball sampling technique such that participants are asked to suggest future participants, sometimes those who specifically can speak to a particular salient issue.

Similarly, the narrow parameters of quantitative research call for a particular composition for research samples. For our research, the issue of "who counts" is virtually non-existent. Rather, anyone can be incorporated into our sample, because our data analysis procedures, specifically our conceptual analysis methodology, sorts information conceptually rather than by demographics. While a subsequent comparative analysis might show group differences in views of homelessness, these will emerge from the coding process rather than *a priori* structuring of the sample. General categories can be useful, but applied *post facto*. Our final analysis finds several general groups to be relevant, but not definitive. For example, some street homeless have previously attempted to use services, and most will do so again; distinctions between the street homeless and consistent service users are fluid as individuals move in and out of either loosely-defined group. But the street homeless have qualitatively different dispositions than those using the shelters, even if these may sometimes vacillate.

Nonetheless, while the organic nature of ethnographic fieldwork resists the delineation of sample size, we feel that some estimation can be useful, when understood to be contextualized by the qualitative nature of our research. Qualitative research, particularly of the unstructured-interview variety, yields qualitatively different data, even between respondents in the same study. In other words, a revolutionary insight could have been generated by a passing statement from someone we never formally interviewed or with whom we spent comparatively little time. Conversely, a formal interview or even recurrent contact may yield relatively little insight. Thus, our numbers should illustrate the breadth of study, but do not speak directly to the quality of our data. The latter is better judged by our findings.

Based on a review of our fieldnotes, we can identify 30 "focal points" for our research (Snow and Anderson 1993). Of these, 8 were street homeless gathering spots; 11 were homeless services of some kind, including shelters, soup kitchens, drug treatment, and psychiatric out-reach; 4 were focal points of authority, including a police precinct, the CAPS office (a separate security force in the downtown area), the city council, and also observations of CAPS and the police on the street; 3 were regular street feedings; 2 were neighborhood associations; and 2 were community forums where homelessness was discussed.

A review of our fieldnotes yields an estimated street homeless sample of 70, with whom we had direct, sustained contact. Of those, we had in depth or recurring contact with 34. That is, there were 34 street homeless people with whom we conducted in depth interviews or spent multiple sessions with in the field. Of the 34 with whom we had recurring contact, we estimate that we had dozen or more contacts with 18 of them. With many, we spent several consecutive days and nights.

Of the sheltered homeless, we had direct contact with 46, conducting 16 direct, in depth interviews. This does not include the numbers we observed eating at soup kitchens, particularly during our stays on the street when we joined them. We estimate that number to be in the hundreds. Additionally, at street feedings we observed hundreds of people, and while we did not necessarily have direct or sustained contact with them, we nonetheless observed them and listened to them. None of these are included in our street or sheltered homeless estimates, because it is impossible for us to decipher where they lived or whether they were homeless at all.

We estimate that we had direct contact with 55 service providers, conducting direct interviews or having in depth recurrent contact with 22 of them. This includes program directors and staff, but also volunteers. It also includes members of Food Not Bombs, who conduct street "picnics". Later we will discuss the ways in which they, and others with a radical approach, do not fit ideologically with typical service providers, but this is not problematic for our enumeration purposes here.

We estimate contact with at least 8 people we categorize as "authorities". This includes police officers, CAPS officers and their director, and a city council member.

Finally, we had in depth and recurrent contact with 10 other people who do not fit the above categories, but who have meaningful contact with the street homeless and therefore generated relevant data. These include a photographer who conducted a project which included homeless people, two graffiti artists who spend a great deal of time in train yards and have befriended many of the homeless there, three local homeless researchers, two active members of neighborhood associations who, in that capacity, were active in debates about homeless issues, and one non-homeless drug dealer who conducts his business at or near homeless gathering spots.

Our data was collected by a variety of means. Fieldnotes were recorded after each interview and field experience, even if encounters were filmed. Interviews and usable portions of film were transcribed and coded, as were collected media and selected literature. Because our methodology works through a coding process, similar to that of traditional GT, we need make no distinction in our findings between our fieldnotes and interview transcripts. Since emergent themes develop from the coding process, these two types of data can be seamlessly integrated in our analytic schema. Moreover, when compared with most other homeless research, we give comparatively little biographical narrative on our participants. This is intentional. We attempted to focus decidedly on uncovering conceptual themes and structures. Any mention of individual participants in our findings then, will be related to themes. Personification of homelessness with biographical narrative has a place in combating stereotypes and stigmas. But this is not our primary intent. This coding process is described later. In the next section we describe issues of accessing the population, a concern logically prior to analyzing data.

Access

Since ethnographic work requires negotiating environments that are foreign to the researcher, particular social skills are needed. One must gain the trust and acceptance of the participants in order to conduct one's research. Although most ethnographic texts describe particular process of accessing populations, very little has been written on access as an issue itself. Rather, the assumption seems to be that doing ethnographic work is a gift; one either has the social skills for it, or one does not. We reject this. While one's personality certainly aides in doing ethnographic work we find the assumption of 'innate ethnographic ability' to be unacceptably fatalistic. We contend that the ability to negotiate environments and do ethnographic research

can be taught. This is important not just for those who wish to do future ethnographic research, but also as a means of improving the skills of current researchers. Reflections about accessing our population of interest have had a dramatic effect on our subsequent interactions with them. Using ethnography as instructive can be done by explicating and codifying issues of access across a multitude of ethnographic studies, thereby building an access literature, which can serve as instructive for current and future ethnographers. Our primary aim in this section is to contribute our experiences to the building of this literature.

Additionally however, our experiences gaining and maintaining access framed by narrative accounts, introduce our substantive subject matter. Many of the concepts related to homelessness that emerge in our later analysis were brought to light as we negotiated access in the field. Thus, our second aim is to introduce the reader to our participants, just as we were introduced to them, that is through a series of negotiations which were sometimes implicit and sometimes explicit, sometimes welcoming and sometimes hostile.

Although an access literature currently is too sparse to even be considered existent, Harrington (2003) offers a meso-structure for analyzing participant-researcher interaction in ethnographic research. She organizes a number of access problems and solution techniques under two overarching theoretical frameworks: self-presentation and social psychology. First, both of these offer paths to transparency, to exposing the biography/bias of the researcher. Second, our research provides empirical evidence of these issues, which Harrington considers in theoretical terms (although she incorporates empirical accounts for individual issues, we use our research to span them). To accomplish our aims of 1) contributing to an access literature, and 2) giving introduction to our participants, we discuss our own access processes in light of these issues, touching first on power and previous approaches to the problems of access, and then use Har-

rington's suggested conceptual framework to illustrate a more complex and accurate picture of access issues. We ultimately show that explicating the symbolic underpinnings of our interaction with the street homeless yields meaningful substantive information.

Access as Process

First, we must clarify our concept of access. Popular perception tends to view access as a one-time hurdle. In other words, access is often confused with "entry" and used to represent some specific moment in time, where researchers break down barriers to a population and move from outside to inside the social space (Harrington 2003:599). Instead, gaining and then maintaining access is an ongoing process of negotiation. A subject's acceptance of a researcher is not a moment in time, but a seemingly infinite gradient where social distance constantly shrinks or expands. Access is unfolded and unstable. A researcher may feel very close to a subject and believe they are getting relatively honest interaction, and then move closer to that subject, thus uncovering information that previously was convincingly concealed. Similarly, a researcher initially may be very close to a subject and, then later, the subject may begin to erect barriers, increasing the distance between themselves and the researcher. Initial contact with a group is certainly important, first impressions always are, but initial access success in no way guarantees later success, although interactions do become more stable as identities of both researcher and subject become increasingly concrete over time.

Power as Diffuse

Common interpretations of the interactive dynamic between researcher and subject (for example, those of institutional review boards) conceptualize power as solely belonging to the

researcher (Harrington 2003). After all, in most instances, the researcher is more educated than the population that he or she investigates. Further, the researcher is privy to all sorts of "behind-the-scenes" knowledge, ranging from their own hidden intentions and opinions to theories and literature on intellectualized topics that the subject lives out unconsciously. This sort of knowledge often must be concealed from the subject in an effort to "keep them honest." For example, deinstitutionalization is a commonly suggested explanation for the rise in homelessness since the early 1970s. This hypothesis essentially suggests that the cutting of funding for state mental hospitals has left increasing numbers of schizophrenics wandering the streets. More recent literature has provided evidence that this more likely reflects perception than reality. Critics argue that while many of the most visible homeless are mentally ill, homelessness largely results from structural conditions rather than individual pathologies such as mental illness. But informing our participants of the theory, or the criticism, could certainly affect what they say to us. If we ask the question, "Why are people homeless?" we wish to elicit an answer that is consummate with their own experiences and, thus, specifically not informed by literature. So in some ways we hide our knowledge from them. Therefore, the standard logic goes, since knowledge is power, it largely, if not entirely, belongs to the researcher.

Of course, this is an insufficient and elitist view of knowledge. While researchers may possess one kind of knowledge, they certainly lack some sort of substantive understanding about the research area. If they had such understanding they would have no reason to conduct research in the first place. Understanding proves subtler; it does not reduce to knowledge. Secondly, power does not come solely from knowledge, at least in the field, and is not the sole domain of researchers. Field researchers are keenly aware that participants have a great deal of control over issues of access (Harrington 2003). Research participants can restrict access or deny it all to-

gether. Further, individual subjects control the degree to which they are open and honest with a researcher throughout the research experience. Frustrations of fieldworkers often are the result of their own powerlessness in the researcher-subject interaction.

An example from our own research illustrates both access as an ongoing process and the power of the subject. After many months of fieldwork at a local homeless gathering spot called Catchout Corner, we were pleased with the level of acceptance we had achieved. We were always welcomed warmly when we showed up to the corner. But our visits had always been on Sunday afternoons, and when we entered the field on a Thursday, and on the first day of the month (the day on which government checks are issued), we met a very different atmosphere. Unknown to us, a small, but powerful, group of drug dealers conducted business at Catchout during the week. Because they worked in a nearby park on the weekends, we had never encountered them before. There was an immediate and palpable tension. Some of the homeless men, who were fond of us, were also customers of these dealers. The dealers angrily, although not openly, wanted us to leave, since they felt our presence jeopardized their business. A networked series of side-conversations resulted in one of the homeless men, with whom we were fairly close, suggesting that we should leave. As consolation, a few of the other men invited us to their camp to spend the night and we took them up on their offer.

On that day we were presented quite explicitly with an access issue. After we left, we immediately began to think through the situation and how to handle it. We left because we did not want to create conflict, which could have been damaging to our research and also dangerous. However, the drug dealers were not our population of interest and we felt no ethical obligation to respect their boundaries. If asking us to leave had come from the homeless men themselves, the situation would have been radically different, but they were exceedingly apologetic and felt ter-

rible about the whole thing. Even though the homeless men had not wanted us to leave, we worried about our credibility in their eyes, given that we had lost this power struggle with the dealers. We decided that we needed to assert ourselves in order to protect our reputation, something that is exceedingly important on the street. So later that night we walked back to the corner and went over and talked to the group, including the drug dealers who had made us leave a few hours earlier. This was a gamble and there was immediate tension. We mitigated that tension by telling everyone that we were walking to the store for some food, and just wanted to say hello. This way, it was clear to them that we were not going to stay, not interested in conflict, but that the dealers had not gotten rid of us, and that we were not afraid.

The next day we went back to the corner and sat down with the group. Again, there was uncomfortable tension, but this time no one asked us to leave. Instead, it was the dealers who walked off the lot and spent the day under the adjacent viaduct. The homeless men were torn as to whom to sit with, but they split their time between the dealers and us. This was awkward, but it made it clear to us that we had become more welcomed and respected than just a day earlier. Our gambit had worked and we had gained some respect by showing that we were not afraid. Some more brazen men, who had not been there the day before, immediately apologized for the previous days incident. A man named Hammer, in particular, was furious that we had been asked to leave. He stated, "This is *our* corner. [The drug dealers] don't stay here, and they don't get to say who can be here." He went so far as to later confront one of the dealers, nicknamed Teenager, when Teenager took a bottle of water from the community stash. It was a confrontation clearly for our benefit. Hammer is a powerful force on the corner, intelligent and physically dominating. That day he blankly told us, "That bullshit won't ever happen again, not when I'm

here." Despite also being a customer, Hammer sat with us all day, often reasserting his refusal to let the dealers control the corner.

In this one twenty-four hour period our access contracted and expanded based on our self-presentation. Had we fully acquiesced, we likely would have lost a great deal of respect and easily could have compromised our access altogether. Being conscious and rationally approaching this access crisis, however, allowed us to turn it into something positive. For many weeks the incident was a hot topic of discussion both in our absence and presence. We gained integrity by not being afraid; people told us that. We gained trust by showing a level of commitment that they did not expect us to have. These gains culminated several months later, when the main drug dealer walked up to the group during one of our visits and said, "I'm not shaking anyone's hand but Professor's [Clair's nickname]." It was a clear sign of respect and acceptance. Power was not entirely in our hands; in real terms it was not ours at all. But our presentation allowed us to gain acceptance among those that held the power, the homeless and the drug dealers. There was not a finite moment when this occurred, it was predicated by months of research, compromised the day we were asked to leave, and rebuilt that night, the next day, and for many months after.

Access and the Camera

Complications of access for the filmmaker vary depending on the participants. For in-digenous cultures, which do not cognize the implications of audio-visual media, e.g. the broad-casting-to-millions potential, the camera may be less threatening. However, the mystery of the technology may make it more threatening (although the exportation of western media has given formerly isolated cultures experience with this media, so this may have become a moot point al-

together). For the participants in our study, filming impacts access in both positive and negative ways.

All of our participants are from the United States and clearly familiar with the basics of audio-visual media. For many, the camera was a threatening presence, physically and symbolically (see Clifford 1983). For some homeless, who have open arrest warrants or for various reasons do not want to be found, the camera represented the potential of being recognized by those from whom they are hiding. Others exhibited a more general discomfort with having their picture taken. They often would speak on camera so long as their image was not in the frame. Many service providers shared this general discomfort, but seemed to feel professionally compelled to overcome it, whereas the homeless person uncomfortable with the camera would simply refuse to be on film.

However, many of our participants, rather than feeling constrained by or imposed on by the presence of the camera, were drawn to it. Many of the homeless used it as a means of expression, to communicate with a world from which they felt cut off. Often, we would arrive on the corner and be greeted with, "Get out the camera Jason, I got something to say!" Beyond using the camera for personal catharsis, some homeless sought the camera out of social conscience. Many believe that our film would shed light on aspects of their lives to which the public and traditional service providers were ignorant. Our participants often argued, at length about whether we would accomplish anything meaningful with our project. Some believed we would and felt compelled to tell their story for what seemed to be motivation beyond their own self-interest. Others thought we were wasting our time with our study, but agreed to be filmed as a favor; they considered it an indulgence.

For many service providers, educating the public is implicitly in their job description. Their agreement to be filmed stemmed from educational and potential fundraising considerations. They also typically seem to view us as allies, especially early in the project before we formulated critical ideas about the way many services operated.

Traditional Approaches to Access

Harrington (2003) first discusses five traditional approaches to access and then integrates them into a single social psychological framework. The five traditional approaches all emphasize important considerations and problems in the researcher-participant relationship. In this section we will summarize these traditional approaches emphasizing some insufficiencies in each and sometimes providing examples from our own research to illustrate the negotiation mechanisms at work. The five approaches are "common sense," anecdotes, checklist, role-playing, and exchange. Following Harrington (2003), we then integrate these under the broader framework of social psychology, emphasizing the continued negotiation of identity and access. Using this broader framework allows us to challenge the assumption that differences such as race and class predominantly work against the researcher, asserting that these can be successfully turned into positive attributes in the ongoing negotiation process. While Harrington acknowledges this, we attempt to develop the idea.

Gaining access in ethnographic work is viewed as a talent. Those engaged in ethnographic work, particularly those who work in precarious circumstances, often hear comments like, "I could never do what you do." The implication is that an ethnographer is a special type of "people person," someone who simply has a gift for negotiating their way around foreign environments. However, even for the most talented researcher, negotiating access requires careful,

ongoing consideration and effort. This appeal to some innate natural ability underlies the "common sense" approach to access. Here, researchers conceptualize access in the research setting as "an extension of everyday social skills" (Harrington 2003:600). This idea leaves much up to raw talent and is less than instructive. How then do we know if we have the talent? How can those who do improve their skills? How can one researcher instructively communicate their experiences to other researchers? The search for answers that organize the practices of access compels us beyond the idea of having a gift.

Anecdotal approaches to access are incrementally better than "common sense" models. Here, researchers describe their own access experiences; they display them for others, with the implication that they contain some instructive content. Clearly this is useful, but not in any formalized way. Exactly what content is salient is a matter of interpretation since these narrative access stories are event-organized, rather than idea-organized. Anecdotal approaches may contain the needed principles that organize access processes, but they are not made apparent.

The checklist approach denotes attempts of researchers to create a thematic synthesis from a variety of anecdotal accounts. Certainly this responds to the insufficiencies emphasized above, but Harrington notes, "Although this move toward greater generality is helpful, it has primarily produced checklists or formulas as opposed to general strategies or theory-based approaches" (2003:601). Thus, while this approach responds to one need, that of formality, it does this to the exclusion of the beneficial capacity of the two above approaches, fluidity. While "common sense" and anecdotal approaches are instructively problematic, they have the benefit of being adaptable. Every research situation is different. Since the research environment is determined by an infinitely complex set of factors—e.g. the researcher and attendant qualities, the participants and attendant qualities, the interaction of these two things, the research space,

broader political and economic contexts, etc—rigid checklists may not sufficiently provide answers throughout a particular access process. While we are left wanting formality with the "common sense" and anecdotal approaches, conversely, we are left wanting retention of fluidity with the checklist approach.

The role-playing approach begins to answer our paradox of ethnographic methodology: to be both formal and fluid (Stryker 1957, 1962; Yoels, Clair, and Allman 1993). Here, researchers have emphasized the multifaceted nature of fieldwork, pointing out that the researchers must be able to assume and work within and between many different roles. Harrington (2003) notes that this is not always the autonomous decision of the researcher, but instead, that participants frequently define the researcher's role. On one hand, while it is clear to the homeless men in our study that we are researchers and they are our informants, the opposite sometimes is true. Knowing that we speak to a number of people about homelessness, such as local politicians, police, and service providers, the men at Catchout Corner often use us as informants. For example, after we interviewed a local cop whose jurisdiction included Catchout, the men quizzed us thoroughly about what he had said. Pressure from local authorities in the form of warrant sweeps and general harassment is cyclical, flaring up and dying down. In addition to a general curiosity about what the police officer man might say to us, the men were using us to gauge what kind of "mood" the cop was in, giving them some indication as to what to expect from him. At times, we have been the source of conflict and at others we have mediated conflict. Sometimes they have counseled us in our lives and research, and at other times they seek our counsel on a variety of personal and social issues. Ultimately, the role-playing approach illustrates the fluidity of the researcher-participant dynamic. However, the researcher often is confined to reacting to and within the role that they are given, rather than getting to choose roles for themselves.

The final approach is exchange, where, "…gaining access depends on researchers giving something to the people they are studying" (Harrington 2003:602). First inclinations might be to define this in material terms, where researchers offer some sort of physical payment in exchange for access. As Harrington notes, this often complicates matters. Our own research illustrates this nicely. Some early trips to Catchout we paid participants five-dollars for a film interview. Off-camera conversations, particularly during our tenuous overnight excursion (described above), elicited a re-negotiation of this policy. Some of the guys, even those who were willing to be on camera, pointed out that paying people for interviews was unfair to those who did not want to be on camera. Since Catchout belonged to everyone, then everyone should benefit from our access to the Corner. We were told that paying some people and not others was creating a mild hostility within the group and towards us. We subsequently negotiated an exchange model that was fair to all parties. From then on, we have brought food and supplies to be unconditionally distributed.

Most researcher-participant exchange is not material and this is no less true in our own case. Giving five-dollars to some of the men symbolically represented the exploitation of the others. As this was just as much their corner as it was those who were willing to be on film, they were being used without getting the same benefit. This was divisive. But providing unconditional food and supplies (e.g. water, blankets, socks, toothbrushes, etc) has improved our standing with everyone in the group. Our trips to Catchout have become like miniature picnics, with everyone participating to whatever extent they are comfortable, without feeling required to engage in exchange. We give to everyone, those we know and do not know, taking no part in how supplies are divided and distributed, something the men autonomously direct on their own. Sali-

ent issues in the exchange model include material and non-material meanings of exchange and the negotiation of what is exchanged and with whom.

Social Identity and Self-Presentation: Bridges for Access Theorizing

Harrington proposes two concepts that fall within a broader symbolic interaction tradition which offer promise for constructing theories of access (a formalizing process) while respecting the complexities of these interactions. "…Social identity theory addresses the 'why' of identity negotiation, while self-presentation theory looks at the 'how' of these interactions" (Harrington 2003:604). Certainly this is no small task. The discipline of sociology has long been divided between creating formalized theoretical propositions, which necessitates pairing down complexities into simple statements of tendency and fleshing out the complexities of social behavior. The former has been the domain of quantitative approaches, the latter of qualitative ones. Often this has been a disciplinary dispute, a question about the nature of the sociologists' craft. But Harrington (2003) refuses to believe that we cannot have our cake and eat it too. Thus, she uses the typology of social identity and self-presentation to create a "meso-structure" that can accomplish this seemingly contradictory task.

Within the symbolic interactionist framework, social identity refers to a multi-faceted composition of a person, where identity is embedded in a variety of collective and individual behaviors (See Stone 1981, 1984; Lindesmith, Strauss, and Denzin 1999). Within this web of relationships, one's identity is variable in two ways. In the first, others' perceptions determine how they view the identity of an actor. The actor's behaviors then are colored by the lens of the perceived identity that these others have. So we are limited in our control of our identities; they are, in part, impressed upon us by other people. But in the second part of the process we retain some

control. Given an environment and the presence of other actors, we adjust our*selves* in relation to our situations and the other actors involved. So self-presentation is linked with social identity in that it reflects the part of our identity that we can control (see Goffman 1959, 1963). These two concepts, taken together, indeed provide a structure that maintains the complexities of inter-actions. Thus discussions of access processes guided by this framework should tend to be more formalized, given that they would be conceptually grounded and referential. Harrington (2003) provides a number of "regularities", grounded in this meso-structure. Our final task in this section is to provide evidence of these from our own research, building the formalized access literature.

Regularity #1: "*When ethnographers approach a research site, they will be defined in terms of social identity categories salient to participants*" (Harrington 2003:607).

This certainly is true in our research for several different groups. Our identities as researchers from the local University have proved particularly relevant in different ways. For example, since the University hospital is the place where "mentally ill" homeless people are forcibly taken when the police determine that they are a danger to themselves or others, we encountered some trepidation and avoidance when we first presented ourselves at Catchout Corner as researchers from the University. What we thought would be an identity advantage was in reality something to be overcome among the homeless (see Horowitz 1986). But this was certainly not the case among the various service providers and city officials with whom we spoke (see Adler, Adler, and Rochford 1986). As one might imagine, University credentials were exceedingly helpful, in these situations. In fact, in addition to our own, we nearly always initiated contact

through other professors, thereby adding credentials to our identity by affiliation. Among a third group our University credentials were entirely irrelevant. Members of Food Not Bombs, an anarchic organization dedicated to promoting peace and community through a variety of actions, including feeding people in public spaces, were uninterested one way or another in our institutional affiliation. Relevant characteristics for them predominantly rested on Wasserman's history of involvement in the local underground music scene, a symbol of acceptable motivations and integrity uncompromised by institutional constraints. These three populations illustrate various approaches to identity. While our University affiliation is just one characteristic out of many at play, the population largely determined the nature of that piece of our identity: positive, negative, or irrelevant.

Regularity #2: *Ethnographers gain access to information to the extent that they are categorized as sharing a valued social identity with the participants or as enhancing that identity through their research"* (Harrington 2003:609).

Harrington derives this from the following propositions, "…those categorized as familiar or similar to the group receive the group's trust, cooperation, and support (Hogg and Abrams 1990). Those labeled as unfamiliar, different, or unsympathetic to the group's identity are likely to be treated with suspicion and hostility…" (Harrington 2003:609). Certainly this is often the case. For example, our race and class was a hurdle to overcome with the men at Catchout. With only one exception, every man at Catchout is African American. "Potato Water", the only welcome white man, told us once that it took him three years of hanging around to gain acceptance as a white man. Another man once said something like, "You guys are great. We love having

you around. If you weren't white, it'd be perfect." Our dress, our vehicles, our education were

initially obstacles because they were differences.

These hurdles gradually were overcome and similarities became more salient (see Hopper

2003). Our own deviance was of particular interest at Catchout. The men always asked us if we

had ever done any drugs and seemed to come alive most when conversation would focus on in-

stances of deviance in our own lives. There was clearly a connection being made. Our ability to

be honest about our pasts facilitated a dynamic of trust and the men became increasingly honest

about their own lives. In keeping with Harrington's second regularity, it was common ground

that facilitated this increased access.

However, after a certain level of trust had been gained, and a high level of access granted,

differences seemed to become a positive thing. For example, we had been granted a relatively

high degree of access to the behaviors and thoughts of the men at Catchout. We began to get the

impression that there was nothing they would say to each other that they would also not say to

us. But the opposite was not true. In other words, the men became willing to say things to us

that they would not say to the others (Arnold 2004). On the street, a tough image is very impor-

tant (see Anderson 1999). Weaknesses in this image might be exploited or at least present prob-

lems with the others. But this type of self-presentation did not always characterize private con-

versations we had. Away from the group, the men confessed feelings about things that would

have been taken as weakness by the group. Our counsel was sometimes sought in private mat-

ters and our opinions on some topics carried more weight than those of the other men (although

our opinions on certain other topics carried much less weight). Clearly our identity as educated

outsiders was sometimes a hurdle, particularly at early stages in the access process, but other

times it allowed us access to a fuller vision of many of these men, it led us beyond the presentation they gave within the general group dynamic.

Regularity #3: *"Ethnographers' identity claims must be validated by participants in order for researchers to gain access to information"* (Harrington 2003:611).

An ethnographer cannot simply select an identity; the group must validate it. While we attempted an authentic presentation of self in a number of ways—past deviance, interests in music, self-awareness of our privilege, as anti-authoritarian—these were not automatically accepted as authentic in the eyes of the group. Various instances seem to signal these things for the homeless men. This mostly took place through the accumulation of minor events that illustrated our authenticity in these matters. For example, a song might come on the radio, which we would know, illustrating that we indeed knew about the things, which we claimed to know about. As our level of comfort and acceptance increased, voicing different opinions became a sign of authenticity. For example, a man, nicknamed Jesus, once posited that God had a plan for everyone and that the solution to homelessness could only come from God's will. Having attained a level of acceptance that allowed for it, Wasserman disagreed with him, and asserted that individuals should be able to control their own fate and that often there were socially constructed barriers to doing this. A pleasant discussion ensued, ending with Jesus retaining his position, but remarking that Wasserman had, "given him a lot to think about." In the midst of discussions, acquiescence can interfere with authenticity. We have adopted a strategy of polite honesty and appear to be seen as authentic as a result.

However, while retaining authenticity requires exposing your own opinions even when the participant might disagree, being too forceful in this can result in quick rejection. This was clearly evidenced when we attempted to bring another researcher into the field. Feeling like we had established a good deal of trust, we decided that to increase our time in the field, it would be beneficial to have another member on the research team. We selected a graduate student who had expressed an interest in the population and in doing ethnography. Of added benefit was that he was a young, African American male. However, during his first visit with the group he began challenging the men and forcibly asserting his opinions about their lives. One man named L.A., for example, talked about how he was asked by the Coalition of the Homeless, to speak to the City Council concerning some proposed vagrancy legislation. He had decided not to go because he was only going to be given three minutes and, "Three minutes isn't enough time for me to tell those son-of-a-bitches what I think about 'em." Our new researcher immediately asserted in a forcible tone, "You still have to *try*." L.A.'s reaction was very hostile, "I don't have to do nothin' but get my kids into school this week!" he screamed. He was clearly offended by this stranger's imposition of what was right for him. The researcher we had invited clearly had come with an activist rather than interested attitude toward the men and they violently resented his leap to the former without being grounded in the latter. Had the same statement come from us, it might not have been received with such hostility given the identity groundwork that came before it. As a result, this was the one and only outing for our would-be team member.

Regularity #4: *"The more that ethnographers' social identities differ from those of participants, the more likely that access will involve the use of insider informants or deception as self-presentation strategies"* (Harrington 2003:612).

While again we agree with this proposition, we feel that the issue of difference is more complex. Difference indeed must be overcome and this might entail strategies of deception or insider informants. But it also might entail using similarities to overcome differences as we describe above. Further, differences are not wholly negative, and can be or become positive attributes in the research setting. Given this, we propose a rephrasing of Harrington's regularity number 4:

Identity differences can be positive or negative, and are negotiated through a variety of strategies including the use of deception, insider informants, the use of similarities to counterbalance difference, or the transforming of difference into advantage.

This indicates the complexity of difference but is still attentive to the control that the researcher retains in mitigating the negative effects of their differences from the researched group.

Concluding Access

Ethnographic work could certainly benefit from the formalization of theories regarding access processes. The relegating of ethnographic work to the domain of talent seems wholly insufficient, at least when it comes to thinking and writing about the dominant issues of ethnographic research. Formalized theories of access, however, run the risk of oversimplification. Within a symbolic interaction framework, and specifically drawing on robust concepts of social identity and self-presentation, Harrington (2003) gives ethnographers a formal grounding that allows the appropriate latitude. We have added our own evidence to her meso-structure. We

also have suggested an alteration to her fourth proposition, feeling that it oversimplified the issue of difference in the research setting. Evidence from our fieldwork indicates that while differences can certainly present hurdles, they also can be beneficial. Further, we suggest that while mitigating differences might include deception and insider informants, a third and perhaps preferable, strategy involves highlighting areas of sameness. Focusing on similarities provides an authentic way around the negative implications of difference, which would certainly yield positive results for access. In any event, formalizing access processes stands as a work in progress.

Formalized Complexity: Analysis of Our Data

Longstanding epistemological tension between positivism and relativism has managed to lodge itself as the fundamental difference between quantitative and qualitative methodology. This is despite the fact that 1) there is nothing convincingly deductive or concrete about quantitative methodology, or at least nothing that distinguishes it from qualitative methodology and 2) both quantitative and qualitative methods can be undertaken with good success and make important contributions within a non-positivist framework, or at least a fundamentally modified positivist framework (see Abbott 2001; Kincaid 1996, 2000; Longino 1990). We go a step further by arguing (above) for a non-naïve realism, which turns the postmodern critique on its head by asserting that concepts are real. With this as an ontological foundation, our conceptual analysis methodology, MIC, allows for appropriate fluidity of concepts and posits useful, though artificial of its distinguished levels of cognition.

Typically, quantitative methodology is professed as positivist, as real science, as formalized and concrete. Contrary to this, qualitative methodology is seen as wholly interpretive, as an empirical extension of the humanities, as individualized and fluid. While qualitative researchers

seem to agree that they have been marginalized by positivism, the dominance of the hard science model has caused varied reactions. At times, qualitative research has tended to aspire to the science model, to attempt to formalize its findings, ironically often by quantifying its data. At other times, qualitative researchers have eschewed positivist models so forcibly that they have reached a near total level of separateness, read ostracism, from sociology major.

But beyond the largely semantic epistemological dispute, lies (pejorative) questions of validity, questions about how much faith we can have in qualitative methods. Are these findings mere opinions or can we 'trust' them? Today, both quantitative and qualitative researchers, or at least a middle-ground intersection of the two, increasingly recognize that the positivism/relativism split is overly simplistic and that, properly considered, it is a largely irrelevant consideration in assessing questions of what we might call "soft validity". Two reasons are typically offered for this. First, contextualism does not preclude research from being considered meaningful and valuable. Contexts can be rather large, and both quantitative and qualitative research can be properly limited, yet still of interest given the wide parameters of most social phenomenon. Secondly, there is increasing recognition that both quantitative and qualitative methods ultimately employ inductive, rather than deductive logic in assessing causality and the correspondence of measures to reality (construct validity). We add to this the notion that concepts are random or fleeting, and that they can be formal objects of analysis, particularly when the goal of the analysis is to generate theory.

In this section, we give detail to our analytic process and also tie our analytic technique to the well-established GT literature.

Data Analysis: Synthesizing Grounded Theory and MIC

There is a bit of sociological folklore about C. Wright Mills that goes something like this:

Upon publication of *The Power Elite*, a sociologist friend of Mills published a scathing critique of his work. The average scholar would be heart-broken; these are the kinds of things that end longstanding friendships in academia. Being an established force in the discipline, Mills certainly would have been in a position to do battle. Instead he replied with a letter containing only one sentence: "How can I make it better?"

We do not know if this story is true. We tell it to our students as if it is, and would certainly like to believe it because it is so inspiring. But regardless of whether it is fact or fiction, clearly it is instructive. To be actively intellectual means to resist circling one's wagons, to instead work actively toward new ideas all of the time. This is easier said than done, but it is certainly something for which to aim. GT is a hotly contested field. This is a shame and we aim our innovations toward those who wish to be creative rather than dogmatic on recognition that the basis of intellectualism is that no proposition is beyond critique, no idea beyond improvement. We join Bryant (2002), Charmaz (2006), and Clarke (2005) in feeling that the basics of the grounded theory framework can be merged with new analytic methodology that will continue to generate creatively diverse studies, acknowledging that how the grounded theory guidelines and assumptions are used is not a neutral process. We explain more about our own innovations below.

In this section we illustrate links between GT our previously described fractal concept methodology and MIC generator. Our methodology operates in much the same way as GT, by using data coding processes, which allow concepts to emerge from data, but it also allows conceptual *structures* to emerge from an explicit basis found in the ontological interconnection of the levels of cognition. We are cautious that the "discoverers" and leading proponents of GT, particularly Glaser, will be skeptical of our ability to synthesize these two approaches. This is because GT rests on the notion that the researcher *not* fit data into preconceived categories, but

allow the data itself to determine the categories. Since MIC identifies four general levels of cognition, we are cautious that some would argue that it is incompatible with any claims we make of "being grounded". We will argue that MIC provides all-encompassing "concept-kinds," not substantive concepts of the sort that GT eschews in advance.

Ultimately, however, if this is not convincing we will accept that perhaps this is not pure GT, but a stronger composite method, as we feel that our fractal concept methodology an MIC generator add holistic possibilities that are indispensable. Ultimately the name of the method is irrelevant. Glaser and Strauss (1967:8) would seemingly concur, writing, "Our suggestions for systematizing should not curb anyone's creativity for generating theory; in contrast to the ways of verification, they should encourage it." And later, "Our principal aim is to stimulate other theorists to codify and publish their *own* methods for generating theory" (Glaser and Strauss 1967:8).

We next discuss the coding and theory generating processes of GT, the same processes which we use in our analysis. We then argue that ours is a grounded theory approach despite our use of an *a priori* ontology.

Grounded Theory Overview

GT was "discovered" by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and first described in their foundational work, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. While Glaser (2002) is adamant that GT applies to any kind of data, qualitative researchers have been particularly receptive to it. The GT method is ideal for our research goals and our population of interest for two reasons. First, while there has been a good deal of literature produced on the general problem of homelessness, research typically has dealt with sheltered populations and regular service users, as these groups

are easier to access. The street homeless as a separate subpopulation are less researched and less understood. This is particularly problematic, as they seem significantly different in many ways. The street homeless are most likely to refuse (traditional) services and often most in need of help. As the goal of GT is to generate theory and we have population for which theory is lacking, GT is ideal for our project.

Secondly, qualitative research is faced with the pressing issue of formalization, as described above. GT provides formalization to empirical research such as ours by systematizing the process of conceptualization. Thus, GT seems particularly well suited for addressing the challenges facing qualitative researchers wishing to formalize their research practices without aspiring to positivist models. Criticisms of qualitative research as flimsy and unscientific do not affect GT since the GT is concerned with the production of theory rather than the verification of data accuracy, a concern central to both standard qualitative and quantitative analysis (Glaser 2002; Glaser and Strauss 1967). Furthermore, concerns about the accuracy of qualitative work result from the implicitness (invisibility) of processes of conceptualization and the fact that researcher bias affects these processes (we might note, that is equally problematic for quantitative work, although at different stages of research). Thus, while not concerned with the verification of hypotheses that precede the data, questions of conceptualization might still plague GT, since it ultimately rests on conceptualizations defined or interpreted by the individual researcher.

But the coding process of GT makes processes of conceptualization visible, something which neither standard qualitative nor quantitative methodologies do. While the individual preconceptions of the researcher perhaps can never be eliminated, GT allows for an explicit, rather than implicit, process of conceptualization. Although all research ultimately rests on an underlying process of conceptualization, most never explicate this process and many researchers them-

selves probably remain unconscious of their own preconceptions. Even where this is discussed, it is never formalized. Prevailing thought seems to be that formal, structured analysis of conceptualization, that is thinking about thinking, is the domain of heady theory (the kind often shackled with the "postmodern" stigma) and not of much use in actual research. This is why there is such a disjunction between generalized theory (what most would call grand or meta-theory) and research (Charmaz 2006; Glaser and Strauss 1967). Glaser and Strauss (1967) essentially point out that all theory is grounded in something. Most is grounded in the subconscious and implicit experiences, culture, and predispositions of the researcher. GT proper simply seeks to make the foundations of theory (concepts) explicit by systematically deriving them from actual data.

There is a clear distinction between GT and other models of qualitative analysis. Glaser (2002) responds to the lumping of GT in with other techniques of qualitative data analysis. Standard qualitative techniques, like quantitative techniques, are largely concerned with accurate representation and the testing of data against hypotheses derived from specific theory (not like the "meta-theory" described above). Since GT generates theory from the data, rather than testing data against the theory, verification is irrelevant because it is circular (Dey 1999). In other words, verification would mean nothing because in GT the very theory, against which data would be tested, would have come from that same data. Glaser (2002) rightly objects to the unconscious lumping together of GT and other qualitative analysis techniques, because they have fundamentally different purposes.

However, Glaser and some other GT proponents have tended to underestimate the extent to which GT escapes the problems posed by researcher bias. While GT provides transparency of the researcher's process of conceptualization, ultimately it seems naïve to believe that the re-

searcher's biography, disposition, and experiences do not affect the data (Wacquant 2002:1481 refers to this as the "epistemological fairytale of grounded theory"; see also Burawoy 1991).

Charmaz asserts that GT contains both positivistic elements and interpretive elements in that it uses systematic techniques (positivist) to explore the construction of meanings (interpretivist). Of course, this is not positivist in the true sense of the word, but something closer to what philosophers of science might call contextual objectivity (Logino 1990; Kincaid 1996, 1998). In other words, the researcher still operates under subjective assumptions, but works systematically within that framework (see also Agar 1999 and Agar's 2004 analogy of the ski slope). Most recognize that quantitative methods also work within a contextual objectivist framework (Logino 1990; Kincaid 1996, 1998).

Grounded theory essentially is a process of coding data, the then grouping those codes into concepts in an increasingly hierarchical fashion. Ultimately theoretical models emerge, where concepts are arranged into theoretical propositions. In GT, everything begins with the data.

In traditional quantitative research, data must be uniform; everyone must answer the same questions and be provided the same set of response options, in order that the researcher can aggregate and compare the data. Qualitative research techniques often are less structured, using open-ended interviews. And while what is considered legitimate data in traditional qualitative research is more flexible, different types of data tend to be used in different ways. For example, open-ended interviews might be buttressed by a content analysis of media, but these data pools are approached separately and retain their separateness in the analytic process. The first step in the GT process is a line-by-line coding of data. Since interview transcripts, field notes, and any

sort of media all can be coded, GT allows multiple types of data to be seamlessly integrated into a single data set.

GT thrives on "rich" data because it does not exclude *a priori* substantive concepts that may present in the data (Charmaz 2006; Dey 1999; Glaser and Strauss 1967). This means that emotions, researcher impressions, body language, and all sorts of things that are excluded from standard analyses retain importance in GT. This is particularly important since standard research has tended to focus on concrete, traditionally recognized, concepts extant in previous literature or explicitly communicated in the interview (things such as depression, poverty, healthcare access, etc). GT allows the researcher to delve into non-verbal communications, emotions and feelings embedded in the tone of a response, and any number of unstated things. These count as data in GT, because verification is irrelevant and the systematic coding process will naturally determine the salience of concepts.

While standard methodological approaches are singularly linear, i.e. data is collected and then analysis performed, GT method is multi-linear. This means that data is collected and analyzed, and then more data is collected in order to pursue emerging themes. This process is repeated until no new conceptual information is emerging from the data, what has been called "saturation" (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Conceptual themes are pursued intentionally by focusing or altering questions in subsequent interviews and by theoretically sampling new respondents.

Initial coding is done "line by line" (Charmaz 2006). This essentially means breaking down the data and identifying concepts embedded within each sentence. The process of coding involves defining what is present in the data. Charmaz (2006) offers the simple general guide of making sure your codes are helping you understand what data are indicating. As line-by-line coding proceeds recurring concepts will illustrate "focused codes" (Charmaz 2006). Focused

codes represent concepts illuminated in the initial coding process, which the researcher feels most accurately explain the recurring themes that are beginning to emerge from the data. In GT, data driven themes emerge through a process of "constant comparison." (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Essentially everything is compared with everything. Statements within an interview are compared with each other and with other interviews, new data is compared with older data, conceptual categories derived from some data are compared with other data directly, and with the conceptual categories derived from that data, and so on (Charmaz 2006; see also Clarke (2005) for her unique focus on situational, social and positional mapping processes).

Evaluation of concepts that emerge in the GT process rests in their ability to explain the data, i.e. how well they work. The repeated codes that emerge from initial line-by-line coding lead the researcher toward "focused coding," where categories become the focus of the coding process (Charmaz 2006). However, this does not mean that these categories become *a priori* concepts for subsequently collected data. Instead, new data is checked against these conceptual categories. Unlike standard methodologies, GT deals with discrepancies between data and concepts by modifying the conceptual scheme, rather than dismissing or explaining away non-fitting data. There is no such thing as an outlier in GT. Rather, concepts, and the larger conceptual scheme, are constantly improved by new data or new analysis of older data. Glaser and Strauss (1967:22) further suggest that this process of continually synthesizing data and concepts ought to be instructive for one's own work, as well as guiding interaction between professionals. They write, "If each debunker thought about the potential value of comparative analysis, instead of satisfying his urge to "put down" a colleague, he would realize that he has merely posed another comparative datum for generating another theoretical property or category." Clearly we agree; this is the very thrust the synthesis which we present below.

As focused coding proceeds, the researcher engages in a memo-writing process. Writing memos allows the researcher to flesh out concepts that are emerging from the data. Memos are written in narrative form and are essentially brainstorming on conceptual categories where the researchers expound on emergent themes and link together concepts (Charmaz 2006). Memo writing further allows the researcher to create relationships between concepts in the data, ultimately developing a conceptual scheme, which proposes various relationships between concepts. Thus, through these processes, a theoretical model emerges organically from the data.

Using MIC for Analysis

MIC is a successful generator in our fractal concept analysis because it illuminates the holistic ontological structure embedded in observed phenomena. It provides a way to systematically differentiate and integrate in the same observational moment. To illustrate this, we provide a simplistic example of coding from our own fieldnotes on the homeless (Table 2). The levels are color coded, static is blue, dynamic is green, evaluative is red, and self/identity is yellow:

As one can see, the four levels of MIC naturally emerge in discourse. This is because they are rooted in a basic framework of kinds of human cognition, rather than presupposed substantive concepts. While we can easily glean substantive conceptual content from this excerpt without using MIC's analytic framework, our intention here is simply to illustrate how MIC bridges differentiating and integrating practices. At the static and dynamic levels, components and processes of the observations described here are laid out. Whereas a solely differentiating practice ("pure science") would stop here, there are evaluative and identity implications contained in these components. By looking for the value and identity concepts that emerge from

Table 2: MIC Coding of Fieldnotes

Codes	2-22-04 Catchout Corner – Except from Fieldnotes
Male, African American, addiction, poverty, space/neighborhood, treatment programs Cycle of problems Addiction and homelessness are a back and forth not a straight path. Poverty complicates recovery People's help also hurts Fatigue/exhaustion of cycle Embarrassment, self-esteem Compromised self	Then, another AA man came up and started talking. He said a number of remarkable things. He talked at length about being trapped in the cycle of addiction and homelessness. The cycle consisted it seems of 1) a drug / alcohol abuse problem endemic to the circumstance of homelessness; 2) the process of seeking help; 3) the (in his opinion, inadequate) treatment programs which consist of a) the intensive part which lasts only 30 days and b) the transitional housing part, which the man disliked because he was surrounded by other addicts and living in a house in the middle of the "dope neighborhoods"; 4) this leads to relapse and then you wind up back on the street. The man also talked mentioned that sometimes people walked by and handed him a dollar, saying, "That's embarrassing, that doesn't make me feel like a man. I want to work and be a productive member of society. I just need help." He seemed particularly emotional and fatigued by his circumstances.

these differentiated components we can come to a whole conceptual vision of the observation. The static and dynamic pieces do not stand alone, but they are important. Likewise, the evaluative and identity concepts do not spring from thin air, but naturally emerge from the differentiated components. Together, these concepts, interlinked in a cognitive framework, form a whole vision of the observed phenomenon.

While this short excerpt provides a simple example, as data is amassed conceptual structure becomes less penetrable. MIC's cognitive framework allows for structured analysis. MIC, therefore, not only adds ontological information to the conceptualization process, but it adds transparency to the theory building process where these individual pieces are assembled into a picture or the world. Throughout our analysis this framework will overlay our observations to

systematically structure theoretical propositions—i.e. proposed conceptual relationships. Using

MIC as the generator for fractal concept models allows us to span the conceptual content of our

individual data with that at more macro levels of scale; we can systematically locate our individ-

ual conceptual observations in cultural conceptual contexts.

In previous ethnographic traditions, epistemological foundations went hand-in-hand with

social theoretical orientations. The point at which research was located on the spectrum between

interpretivism and positivism correlated strongly with whether it had a structural-functionalist,

conflict, symbolic interactionist, or post-structuralist theoretical predisposition. Similarly, our

ontological and epistemological orientation described above leads to a predisposition toward so-

cial theory that finds an intersection of various traditions to be most appropriate. In the next sec-

tion we move from epistemological to theoretical considerations.

Justification of Synthesis

GT rests on the notion that concepts emerge from the data; the researcher's role is to code

data into substantive conceptual statements. But MIC illustrates that concepts are ontologically

different. Understanding the *kind* of concept that is embedded in the data (MIC), as well as

framing the information in a useful conceptual phrase (GT) allows, more information to be en-

capsulated in the researchers coding scheme. The researcher is better able to see epistemological

connections between various concepts by recognizing that their ontological differences entail

connections (i.e. objects are set in to motion and these processes reflect values or evoke feel-

ings). In other words our MIC generator can see conceptual structure, not just conceptual pieces

(codes). We expect that GT proponents will be skeptical since GT resists any *a priori* concep-

tual designations. However, we feel that there are number of considerations which justify our synthesis of GT and MIC.

First, as we have mentioned, all research rests on epistemological foundations, which the researcher implicitly or explicitly carries with them. Our MIC generator simply makes the epistemological foundations explicit and formal, while at the same time avoiding the trappings of positivist and relativist disputes. Most scholars recognize that there is no way to truly escape researcher bias in the coding process. But MIC can provide some additional transparency, by linking the researcher into a holistic epistemological framework in which to operate. In other words, everything is conceptual and it is impossible to approach data *tabula rasa*. But MIC makes this issue less problematic. While GT provides an explicit way to conceptualize substantive concepts, MIC provides a transparent way to conceptualize concept-kinds.

Secondly, the ontological categories proposed by MIC are not the same as the substantive concepts that GT proponents eschew in advance. Using MIC epistemology does not affect the substantive content of the concepts used to define the data. Rather, it takes the codes that are selected by the researcher and adds additional ontological information by delineating what *kind* of concept it is. What proponents of GT have objected to is approaching the data with *substantive* concepts (what we might call content concepts). MIC does not provide conceptual substance (content), but rather concept-kinds (form). The researcher is still able to approach MIC forms without a priori conceptual substance.

Most importantly, MIC adds structure that organizes and bridges the different kinds of concepts embedded in data. The strength of GT is that it transparently derives concepts directly from data. Thus, these concepts overcome the problem of subjectivity in this conceptualization process. But GT provides no explicit method for linking these concepts together in a model. At

the point at which the grounded theorist begins to relate their explicitly derived concepts to each other, they are returned to the very interpretivist world they condemn. MIC solves this problem by recognizing that concepts are ontologically different, but also inextricably linked together in that their combined differences form a holistic picture of the world. Thus, MIC allows us to perceive structure in the data (and in large amounts of that data) in a way that GT on its own must leave to the disposition of the researcher.

Our final justification for a synthesis between GT and MIC rests on a simple criterion: Does it work and how well? Glaser and Strauss (1967) originally evaluated GT on this phenomenological ideal and we think it is a good one. Since MIC provides a holistic ontology that enriches GT by allowing the researcher to distinguish the concept-kinds and perceive their structural relationships that emerge from the data it clearly provides the researcher with additional insights. Since gaining insight is the ultimate goal of the methodology, and MIC provides additional and complementary insights to those that emerge from GT processes, it is difficult for us to see how merging GT and MIC together is a bad thing.

Conclusion

In this section, we have laid out our methodological approach. By reframing the realist-interpretivist dispute, we have ontologically re-established concepts as viable objects of analysis. This is a crucial step since in the following two chapters we do conceptual analysis. Using MIC as a generator, we can locate conceptual structures, where different kinds of concepts are linked together. Our fractal concept methodology takes MIC to be the generator. This means we can observe MIC concept structures at various levels of scale, and move between higher and lower levels of conceptual abstraction, a process known as iteration and catiteration. Finally, we have

detailed the ways we accessed our study population, and shown briefly how MIC interfaces with our ethnographic data. This should be a sufficient basis for understanding the MIC fractals we produce in chapter 5. In the next chapter we detail the themes that emerged from our research. Essentially, our findings are the thematically organized codes from our data. While these themes are presented in narrative fashion typical of ethnographic research, Chapter 5 takes these as its basis builds these into formal fractal concept models.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to present a thematically organized account of that which

we learned from the homeless and others. In the next chapter we will build off this narrative ex-

position to develop formal conceptual structures using the methodology previously described.

We hope to create a picture that can convey the richness and depth of our field experiences.

This chapter will have two parts, which follow the general way in which homelessness is

conceptualized. Part one will detail "the problem". Whether liberal or conservative, Americans

almost exclusively see homelessness as a social problem. We hope that our characterization

moves the reader beyond that conceptualization. This is not to say that they need to reject it;

homelessness is, in one sense, a social problem. However, as the anarchist literature in chapter 2

suggests, being limited to this notion denies the richness and complexity of the phenomenon and

the people enmeshed in it. It clouds our ability to observe and more importantly it shuts off

whole sets potential suggestions about how society should react to homelessness.

Part two of this chapter will address "the solution(s)". A variety of tacks are taken in an

effort to stamp out homelessness. We outline several ways in which society deals with the

homeless, comparing and contrasting various models of service provision and identify core prob-

lematics with some of these models.

The problem/solution framework shows the insufficient way in which homelessness is

seen and engaged in American society. We employ that structure specifically to highlight this

shortcoming. Our description of "the problem" will not always sound problematic. Our descrip-

tion of "the solution" will illustrate that often not much is solved. Contradiction and complexity are at the core of social life. Homelessness is no exception.

Findings Part I: "The Problem"

Description

Who are the Homeless?

"Who are the homeless?" This was our most routine question, a sliver of consistency in our unstructured interview protocol. Most often this would elicit a list of causes of homelessness, not a definition of who qualified for the label. "The homeless are substance abusers, the mentally ill, people who have lost their jobs, had a serious life crisis, have lost their families, victims of domestic violence." This betrays the pervasive way in which homelessness is constructed as a social problem, but it skips a more basic crucial step. That is, who is homeless, by definition?

The answer to this question is ambiguous and contested. A lot of people "double-up" in apartments and they sometimes are considered homeless, for example by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). At Catchout Corner men would congregate to get temporary jobs. Some of them had homes and came to the corner solely for work. Some of them had homes and still occasionally slept under the bridge for any number of reasons. For example, they may have had a fight with their spouse or they may have had an early job arranged and didn't have a ride in the morning so they just stayed the night. But other men at Catchout were fixtures. They were always there or nearby. This core group held our research focus, but many, less-definitively homeless people were part of the sub-culture of the streets and served as valuable informants. In the end, what mattered was getting authentic, first-hand knowledge, not

where one slept at night and how often. We leave definitions of that sort to HUD and those that do counts of the homeless. For our purposes, the homeless are a group who routinely live on the streets or in temporary homes, such as shelters.

While they may sometimes stay in low-cost hotels when they can afford to do so, and even sometimes cycle through the service programs at local shelters, the street homeless art those who routinely stay on the streets or in urban camps. This group is often tagged as "chronically homeless" by researchers and service providers as they tend to stay homeless for long periods of time; periods measured in years, not days or weeks. Simply put, the street homeless are that sub-set of homeless people who resist or altogether refuse stay at the shelters.

Those people who won't go to the shelters. During our initial interviews with homeless service providers and experts, we noticed a curious aspect in their explanations of the street homeless.   If asked whether the homeless generally were all mentally ill drug addicts, service providers would indignantly respond by noting that this was not the case. They would herald the normality of the homeless and list the myriad of other causes for their plight. In the foreground of their consciousness, they resist the stigmas that people attach to the homeless. But a curious thing happened when we asked them about the *street homeless* in particular. They would mostly admit not having a good explanation, but they often would venture suggestions. Specifically, they would assert that the street homeless were paranoid due to mental illness and therefore feared being around other people, or that they did not come in because they could not do drugs or drink in the shelters (see also Hopper 2003). Our street homeless participants found the latter explanation particularly insufficient. A man named Lockett noted plainly, "I've smoked crack at the Firehouse." In addition, we were struck by a deeper irony. The service providers resisted the

stigmatic notions of homelessness in general (or, more cynically, for those homeless who come directly under their care), but tended to repeat and reinforce those stigmas for the street homeless. The homeless were not all mentally ill, drug addicts, but the street homeless (probably) were.

However, even from our initial impressions of the street homeless, this did not fit. When asked why they did not want to go to the shelters, they would rattle off a standard list of quite rational explanations. One man named James described:

> There's too many diseases and germs, and where you sleep at there's no ventilation. And you don't know who's cooking the food with HIV, Tuberculosis, AIDS, none of that. And your in there, sleeping around a hundred guys, coughin', sneezin', fartin', all of that, all through the night. Uh uh; that ain't me. I'd rather sleep in a box where I know the only germ I'm going to catch is my own germ. But you got those that love Jimmie Hale. Me? It ain't nothing but a racket to me.

In addition, people commonly referred to the issue of safety. Being around strangers, some of who were unstable in various ways, in a stressful environment, simply made them feel unsafe. By contrast on the streets, they could choose where they slept and whom they were around. They could remain relatively hidden and in the proximity of friends.

While the service providers were stymied by the idea that someone would choose the streets over the shelters, we began to become sympathetic to that idea. It occurred to both of us that we, too, would rather stay on the street than the shelter. We had spent nights on the street and it was comparatively uncomfortable to our routines, but not scary or threatening. We suggested all of this to a shelter director, Steve, who rightly challenged our assumption that we would prefer the streets. "Well, you can't say that until you've stayed in the shelter." He was right; we had jumped the gun.

We got permission from him to stay in the shelter. So that we did not take a bed from someone who needed one, he declared an inclement weather day, which means that the shelter

will take in people even after all of the beds are full. He promised not to tell the staff and it was clear when we overheard their confusion about why he had declared inclement weather procedures on such a beautiful spring day that he had kept his promise. He was particularly interested in our report anyway and we promised to give him a full account.

Despite Steve's implicit hope, our preference for the streets over the shelters only increased as a result of our stay at the shelter and the accounts from the street homeless were solidified as accurate. While there, we stayed apart and had no contact with each other, in an effort to cover more ground and avoid attention; not many friends check into the shelter together. Waiting outside we both saw a guy stash what appeared to be drugs (the cellophane wrapper is a give-a-way) between his legs. Moments later a car pulled up front and the driver leaned down and mimicked the motions of lighting a crack pipe to Wasserman, an offer of sale. Moments after that a man clutching a paper bag full of sample prescription medicines was forcibly escorted out of the building and three police cars instantly swarmed in. Jason later found out that he had threatened an 18 year-old man waiting to check-in, saying, "I'll gnaw your fuckin' face off." He collapsed outside and was loaded into an ambulance to be taken for a mental evaluation. Our stress levels were high and we had not even checked-in.

About an hour later, at dinner, Clair overheard several men at his table sizing up someone as an undercover cop. "Look at his eyes; he's too clean, never done any real drugs." They asked Clair, "Hey Bigman, you think that guy is a undercover cop?" To Clair's surprise, they were talking about Wasserman.[26] They proceeded to claim that, if he was a cop, that they were going to stab him in the neck. One of the men later came to Clair and pointed out his bunk when eve-

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[26] Its interesting to note that while they mistakenly thought Wasserman was a cop, they were correct that we was not homeless and was an outsider with an ulterior motive. This echoes Rosenhan's (1973) experience where the mental patient's recognized that the researchers did not belong, whereas the hospital staff was not so insightful.

ryone went upstairs to bed. Obviously, the issue of safety that we had heard from the street homeless became very real to us at that point.

More generally, the disconnect between the characterization of the street homeless asserted by service providers and the impressions we were getting from the street homeless themselves, became markedly clear. Progressive-minded service providers, who generally would seem to resist stigmatic conceptions of homelessness, had very stigmatizing views of the street homeless. For them, to choose to stay on the street rather than in the shelter was not rational, and could only be explained by mental illness or addiction, both of which cause people to act irrationally. What we found on the street were people with quite rational explanations for their resistance to the shelters. With our stay in the shelter, we found our own preferences decidedly aligned with that supposedly irrational group.

Hopper (1987) suggests that "inhuman" conditions at the shelters kept people on the street in NYC during the 1980's and Mathieu (1993) notes their decrepit physical conditions. The shelter we stayed in was not inhuman in terms of the facilities or the staff. In fact, it was fairly well run by these standards. Nonetheless, even this well-run facility reflected Arnold's (2004:2) observation that, "Many shelters and agencies…are disorganized and pathological. Of course, these terms are often reserved for the homeless, not 'us'."

This all contradicts the notion that mental illness or addiction explain why the street homeless refuse or resist going to shelters and, therefore, ultimately gets at the heart of existence of street homelessness, which is a condition essentially defined by not going to a shelter. The street homeless might still be addicts and mentally ill, even if those do not explain their disdain for shelters.

Addicts and crazy people. Any number and combination of circumstances and behaviors can cause homelessness. In chapter two we outlined popular conceptions, particularly mental illness and addiction. While these statistically are prevalent, research design and measurement problems cloud the issue, statistical limitations cannot specify causality, and it often is unclear what types of mental illness are being measured.

Although, given the qualitative nature of our research, we cannot resolve these methodological issues, our participants shed light on the problematic ways in which mental illness and addiction have become inextricably intertwined with the concept of homelessness. The street homeless resist the conceptualization of their situation as being defined by addiction or mental illness, whereas those in treatment programs (must) concede to it (see Lyon-Callo 2000). This is not to say that they are in denial about their individual problems; where appropriate, most readily admit having substance abuse problems and that they struggle with anger or depression. (Those with severe mental illnesses mostly stayed clear of us because of our institutional affiliation). However, when it was suggested to them that addiction was the cause of their homelessness, or that addiction treatment was the solution, the response was some variation of how a man nicknamed Hammer put it:

> I know I've got problems, but that treatment ain't for me. My number one problem is a job. They want to come around and give you all this treatment, how about finding some jobs? I'm not going to treatment, to do it their way, but if they came down here and said "Hey you want to come get this job?" I'd be like, "Yeah, let's go do that!" They have the wrong services. I mean, give a man a fighting chance. Give me a job first and I'll work with you on rest.

In this, one can see, not just a focus on economic circumstances as primary, but also notions of retaining autonomy. He clearly expresses resistance to "their way" and concedes only to work *with* the service providers, and then only after he has some power and control in his own life, in the form of employment.

> I don't want all that, I just want to work. You want to come around and work me like a Hebrew slave, I'll do the work, but just give me my money. You get my back, give me my money and leave me alone. Give me what I earn and I'll worry about how I spend it. That's how I see it. –Jeff

These notions are representative of the predominant attitude of the street homeless toward the service providers' treatment programs and the general construction of homelessness as an addiction problem. Most importantly, this runs counter to the embedded logic of addiction treatment programs that steadfastly hold that anything less than a full admission of addiction as the root of one's problems constitutes denial. Our experience was that few would deny that addiction was problematic for them, and even a significant contributor to keeping them on the streets. But the street homeless typically would refuse to allow this to be the sole issue. They just as steadfastly held to the idea that economic circumstances were primary. Catchout corner, they would remind us, is a work block. "We come here to work and what we need are jobs."

This was not the case among those homeless people we interviewed who were staying in shelters. Certainly there is some selectivity operating. It is legitimate to assume that addiction is more likely to be a core problem for those people who are enrolled in addiction programs. Ideally, that is why they are there. But the attitudinal difference between the sheltered and street homeless still is notable.

The homeless men in the shelters would readily commit to the idea that addiction is the root cause of both their own homelessness and homelessness in general. In a test of sorts, we tried to steer conversations toward structural economic conditions. While there was sympathy for those explanations, it was interesting that without fail the sheltered homeless would return to the idea that their own choices, and in particular, their addiction, was the cause of their homelessness. It typically would echo what one man said:

> Yeah, it's hard. You can't get a job that pays anything; you owe a lot of money. It's real easy to fall through the cracks. <pause> But I have to take responsibility for my own situation and actions. I made those choices [those to drink or do drugs].

A few times during one interview in particular, if someone in the group spent too long talking about structural economic circumstances, and another member would remind them to "take ownership".

While selectivity certainly is at work, there seems also to be a socialization process. The typical Alcoholics Anonymous model of addiction treatment employed by the shelters requires the initial step of "admitting that *you* have a problem". Since treatment cannot proceed without this admission, it is the lynchpin. Structural explanations of homelessness threaten this notion and so being in the shelters requires letting go of those standpoints. Lyon-Callo (2000) illustrates the shelter socialization process that he observed from working within a homeless shelter. Our research confirms his from the other side. The street homeless, more often than not, tend to be people unwilling to let go of structural explanations for their situation.

Moreover, our participants directly call into question the issue of causality for both mental illness and addiction. Echoing Conley (1996), our participants tended to report that their addictions have worsened since becoming homeless and in several particular ways. Moreover, many report developing addictions to new, harder drugs after becoming homeless. For example, crack is prevalent on the street. Drug dealers often work off the same corners on which the homeless congregate. Exposure to drugs is a condition of being homeless and seems to significantly contribute to the level and type of addiction.

Mental illness also is equally a likely outcome of living on the street. As noted, a distinction needs to be made between types of mental illness. We can easily see how depression can result from being homeless. If any of us found ourselves suddenly living under a bridge, having

lost all of our possessions, and many of our family and social ties, we might easily become depressed, even severely.

While homelessness cannot cause in a physiological sense more severe conditions such as schizophrenia, it certainly can exacerbate such conditions. The symptoms of schizophrenia—delusions, paranoia, etc—can be triggered by stressful situations, and few circumstances are as pervasively and continuously stressful as being homeless. Moreover, the delivery of services is particularly problematic for homeless people with these sorts of debilitating mental conditions. For many the effects of mental illness can be mitigated with medication. However, the homeless encounter structural barriers to getting that medication and getting it consistently.

Most cannot afford medication. Access to services which might provide such medication require a person to think linearly. For many being unable to think linearly is part and parcel to having a mental illness. To get services, one must consciously aim at the end of getting medication and then put in order the several steps needed to get it. Often this requires going to government agencies or other institutions such as shelters, which might assist, but for a person experiencing paranoia, and particularly that of the sort directed at institutions (such as the University hospital), this is easier said than done. Even if one can successfully negotiate the institutional bureaucracy taking the medication consistently and getting more medication when one's supply runs out thrusts the mentally ill person repeatedly into that linear paradigm.

The point here is two-fold. The condition of being homeless can, in fact, cause or trigger mental illness. For environmentally stimulated conditions, such as many cases of depression, this is self-evident. But for physiological conditions it also is true. The stressful nature of homelessness can trigger psychosis. Moreover, management of mental illness is structured and institutionalized such that it can be nearly impossible for the mentally ill homeless person to get aid.

Not only does the model of service provision require the homeless person to go to the services, but also it requires a series of ordered steps, forms, interviews, etc, which are difficult for a mentally ill person to execute.[27] For the mentally ill person, getting off the streets is analogous to getting out of a straight jacket. A sane person is able to get out of a straight jacket; it simply requires that certain moves be done in a certain order. However, since mentally ill people often cannot order their thoughts and actions, the jacket can effectively restrain them. The environment of the streets and the structure of services form a straight jacket for the mentally ill homeless.

Our participants described the above quite clearly:

> You got to be strong out here, mentally. I see people over time just going crazy. Their normal at first and then after a while they just lose it. Like they're not there anymore. –LarryAA

> I feel bad for Mike. There's a dozen of us real people right here for him to talk to, but he's got a dozen people talking in his head. I'm surprised he's staying around since you guys are from [the university]. He hates [the university]. One time, he walked by here with an arm full of bricks and went over to one of those [university] buildings and started breaking their windows out. He said they were hitting a button in there that was making his arm hurt. –Potato Water

These two quotes represent the two main points: The streets can make you crazy and the structure of institutions can keep you that way.

Family. Most of our participants had a great deal of family strain in their biographies, and often it directly preceded their entry onto the streets. Most prominent was the death of a loved one.

Jayson was one of our most intriguing contacts. He was highly organized, having built a two-room shack in a wooded island between two train lines. In it he had a bed, reclining chair,

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[27] See Rowe (1999) for a discussion of outreach workers and their encounters with the street homeless. Also, Failer (2002) does a good job covering the depth of mental illness issues.

and built-in shelves that housed spices and cooking supplies. The camp that he founded had access to water and they would take a modified showerhead and clip it onto a chest-high water faucet at the back of a building to take showers. Jayson had a battery powered TV, a radio, and made it a point to fold his laundered clothes and keep them in a dresser. He had a seasonal job and lived in the camp during the off-months. Jayson also had a bachelor's degree in agriculture. He did not like to talk about it, and mentioned it to Clair once, but all the other men relayed to us that his wife and infant daughter had been killed in a car accident and that had basically sent him over the edge. He also had strained relations with his family, and as far as we could tell had no contact with them.

Wayne lived in the same camp and said he had become homeless after his father died. He admitted that he had an "elbow problem" as he made a drinking motion. He used drugs in his adolescence, but had largely stopped except for marijuana. His mother and father both died within a short time frame; Wayne was particularly close with his father. "I just kind of couldn't deal with it anymore. I started coming out here and eventually just stayed."

Ed lives not far away from Jayson and Wayne. "My wife died and I just started drinking, trying to grieve it all out," he explained.

These same types of stories were repeated over and over. Lawton Higgs, a local pastor with a congregation he estimates to be 50% homeless put these stories in cultural context:

> Most American males do not know how to do anything in crisis except get drunk or get high. And so some kind of death, tragedy or difficulty then they get drunk or start using drugs. Then they are caught and they never deal with the root problem.

Many of our participants were estranged from their families in some way. A man nicknamed Waffle House described at length that his family did not want him around, alluding to the fact that his addiction had caused a rift. In a particularly emotional moment, Earnest, an ordinar-

ily stoic, elder man at Catchout talked about his feelings of abandonment as tears rolled down his cheeks:

> Wasserman: <filming> "Is there anything else you want to say to anyone who might watch this?"
>
> Earnest: <looking into the camera> "You tell 'em that if I had a house, I wouldn't let my family be out here like this. You tell 'em that.

Many maintained some contact with their families, even having amicable relationships, but even then they told stories of past conflict. Potato Water described how the Pastor kicked him out of the local church and, in turn, his religious father kicked him out of the house. At the age of 14, his parents dropped him off at the YMCA. This didn't launch his extended stay on the street; an Aunt picked him up about a week later and he lived with her until he joined the military at age 17. Nonetheless, this type of family strain was common. He still talked to his family on holidays and visited them a few times, but as he explained, "We just don't see eye to eye on things. Their real religious, their church is kind of like a cult, and that's fine for them, but it's not me."

Often, family strains were embedded in poverty. Nearly all of our street homeless participants grew up poor. A large proportion of them lived in government housing, others in extremely indigent neighborhoods. This environment can add to family strain and break down of social support particularly in light of the fact that regulations exist about who, and how many people, can live in each unit of government housing. For some, even if their families would be willing to house them, doing so means risking losing their home altogether.

A discussion of childhood with a man named Mike, who had established a well-organized camp under an interstate viaduct, yielded some personal insights. Mike grew up in a rural area in a house with no running water and dirt floors. It occurred to us, that the trials of a street home-

less existence are relative. For those of us who grew up in middle-class homes, living under a bridge is a radical departure from daily life, an existence deprived of countless comforts that we take for granted. For Mike, the distance between that bridge and normal life was a lot shorter.

Health. It will come as no surprise that the homeless experience disproportionately more health problems than the average person. Nutrition, lack of access to healthcare, and problematic health behaviors all contribute to this, and are not only endemic to homelessness, but to poverty in general. The street homeless, however, face additional complications. Most of the homeless work, but the types of work that they do are physically taxing, something compounded by inadequate nutrition. Most of them get injured on jobs with some degree of regularity, but have no recourse since they work under the table. The temporary labor services are no solution, since the work is equally difficult and the sack lunch provided (for a fee) is calorically deficient for the types of work being performed. Moreover, there is speculation (amongst the street homeless, advocates like Higgs, and service providers alike) that these agencies actually give preference to people who have been drinking, or that they know will test positive for substances so that, in the event of an injury, the company will not have to pay. Of course, we have no way to substantiate this.

Chronic illnesses are prevalent. For example, many of the street homeless reported having diabetes and injured diabetics do not heal well. A man named Lockett once showed us his cut-up knee, saying that he had been injured on a job.

> They wanted to take me to the hospital, but I was like noooo. Just give me my money. I'm diabetic so it's hard for it to heal, but it's doing okay. The doctor told me that if I was going to drink then I should just not take my medicine so that's what I do. I guess I'm lucky to be alive, but God is good. –Lockett

Acute illnesses also are prevalent. Exposure during the winter means almost everyone on the street nearly always has flu-like symptoms.

Injuries and illness also are problematic because they interfere with ones ability to work. LarryAA badly hurt his foot once and could barely walk. He therefore could not work for several weeks. While the others on the corner helped him to some extent, his circumstances became fairly dire and his mood reflected it.

Other indicators suggest ongoing problems particularly nutritional ones. When the men would take off their shoes, their feet would betray their hard lives. Yellowed toenails, gnarled toes, calluses and blisters. Their feet were the most obvious casualties of hard work and poor diets.

Jobs. Perhaps the most broadly popular concept of the homeless among the lay public is that they are lazy people who do not want to work. Statistics disprove this, and our research finds it utterly laughable. In an interview with two homeless researchers in Birmingham they noted that the average homeless person in a 1995 survey worked 30 hours a week. "[High rates of depression] make that statistic even more startling" one added. For most people, getting up for work everyday is difficult enough. To work at the kinds of jobs that the street homeless do, while living in those conditions, is nearly inconceivable.

When work trucks pulled up to Catchout Corner there was a startling first-come-first-serve rush to get the job. Before we would even know what was happening, a throng of homeless men would be literally running toward a potential employer. The laziness concept was overturned early.

Upon hearing that the homeless actually work, most people inevitably ask, "Then why are they still homeless." The answer partly lies in the nature of the work. Some of the street homeless use temporary services. The process is as follows: Show up at 5:30 a.m. to enter your name in the lottery. *If* your name is drawn at 7:30 a.m., then you get to work that day. You are taken by van to the job site and then only then are you "on the clock". This means that you have 2.5 hours invested in the day before you have even made a dime. Moreover, you are charged five dollars for transportation and a sack lunch. So by the time you begin to get paid, you actually are five dollars in the hole. Because of the demand, jobs typically pay minimum wage. Without a bank account, checks are cashed for an additional fee. Most reports are that if you get work three out of five days, you have had a good week. Estimates suggest an average net pay of thirty dollars, not quite enough for a single night at the cheapest single occupancy hotel which costs thirty-five dollars.

To avoid this exploitation (and most of the street homeless consciously see it as exploitation and avoid it at all costs), independent work blocks have emerged. While illegal immigrants have recently brought this method of employment back into the national spotlight, the poor and homeless have been working this way for countless decades, most famously in the labor camps of the Great Depression.

While they claim to make more money by working independently, we were not sure if this was the case. In the end, while their hourly pay was greater the jobs were often shorter. Moreover, they face additional risks. Many had stories about being physically assaulted by people who had picked them up for work. In one of the most shocking a man, nicknamed Jesus for his intense religious faith, recounted being picked up for a job:

> This guy picked me up and drove me way out into the woods. He told me to get out and unload the tires out of the back of the truck. While I was doin' it he got

out of the truck and walked up the path a ways and was messin' with something. He came back and had his hand cupped. He came up to me and it was knife. He cut me pretty good, but I took off runnin through the woods. Eventually I came up on a construction site and they took me to the hospital. Not a day goes by I don't look at this scar <showing us his enormous scar> and thank God to be alive. He killed a guy a week later and got caught.

While we have no way to check the veracity of the story, several other people later confirmed that it was true. Even if it is exaggerated, or fabricated altogether, it serves as a definite expression of the dangers faced by the type of work they perform.

Almost all of them regularly got stiffed for their money or shorted at the end of the day.

A guy will pick you up on Monday and say he's got five days of work and that he'll pay you on Friday. So you work all week and then on Friday he never shows to pick you up. I stopped doing that. You gotta pay me everyday. –Potato Water

People would talk about being dropped off in other parts of town and not taken back to Catchout corner after the job was done. The point is that the homeless are victimized in their attempts to work, whether legally exploited by temporary labor services, or stolen from and physically assaulted when they gain jobs on their own. Moreover, the homeless have little recourse when they are victimized, as the police and the public openly repudiate them.

Hustling is another way that the homeless work. Most people do not consider this a job, but it has all the essential characteristics. It takes time, energy, talent, and produces a profit. By and large the street homeless did not engage in serious criminal activity. They sometimes escorted customers to drug dealers or ran drugs from the dealers to the cars, but most did not and the dealers themselves were not homeless. Instead the street homeless engaged in minor cons. For example, when the Olympics were in Atlanta in 1996, some soccer games were played in Birmingham. As is typical, the city of Birmingham issued one-way bus tickets to any homeless

people who would take them. While this predated our study, we asked them about it. "Yeah, most of us just took them down to the bus station and sold them. Got about forty dollars."

Another time, a local music festival staged in a lot adjacent to Catchout Corner provided opportunity to make some money. Part of the field was designated as parking for the concert-goers so some of the men from Catchout decided to charge five dollars to all the cars entering the lot. The police eventually caught them. Some of them got away while others had to return the money to complainants.

Perhaps the most common legal way to earn extra money is to sell blood plasma (Snow and Anderson (1993) discuss this as well). Donations can be made twice a week for a total of forty dollars (Fifteen for the first donation, and twenty-five for the second). Almost all of the street homeless "donate" twice a week, every week, something that likely will have ramifications for their health. Lawton Higgs drew out the irony, "These hospitals around here couldn't operate without a blood supply. The homeless have no healthcare, but they supply the blood for these hospitals. Birmingham is literally living on the blood of the homeless."

Whether formal or informal, legal or illegal, the homeless in general, and street homeless in particular, engage in various forms of work. But the type of work that they do exposes them to various risks. The physical nature of the work exacerbates poor dietary practices, and leads often to injuries, which are inadequately treated. The exploitative nature of the labor services mean many are unwilling to use them and therefore face being victimized physically or financially by strangers who offer them jobs.

The Criminal Justice System. Homeless is predicated largely by the collusion of structural conditions and acute events (as discussed in chapter 2). In other words, someone who has

always been poor encounters some sort of life crisis with which they cannot cope, given their environment and social position. Encounters with the criminal justice system account for a portion of these acute events. Getting put in jail, even for relatively minor offences is expensive in a variety of ways. Even when attorneys are provided, court costs and fines can be difficult to pay, and unresolved, they eventually result in more jail time. But more than that there is collateral damage to one's life. Spending time in jail usually means losing your job.

Jeff was the driver of a car when his friends stole a case of beer. They were arrested and Jeff ended up spending 60 days in jail; he likely could not pay the fines that would be the normal judgment for such a minor offense. During his short incarceration he lost his job, his apartment, and his car. In a city without reliable public transportation, all three of these must be maintained at the same time. Like juggling three balls, if one loses their home, job, *or* car, they likely will lose all three. Jeff has been on the streets for seven years. A hard worker, he manages to get steady, informal jobs sometimes for consecutive months and by the time of this writing had worked his way into living in a shabby single room occupancy motel. For him, the criminal justice system represents that acute event which immediately precedes his homelessness.

Moreover, once someone becomes homeless, breaking the law is nearly impossible to avoid. In chapter two, we discussed vagrancy laws and the effective criminalization of being homeless. For the purposes of this section it is sufficient to say that being homeless is nearly equivalent to being vagrant and naturally entails the violation of all sorts of "quality of life" ordinances. For a homeless person to stay on private property is trespassing, while for them to stay on public property is vagrancy. They literally cannot exist as homeless without breaking one law or another. Additionally, since most cities do not have public restrooms, the homeless are forced to urinate and defecate in public places. Citations for this carry fines that they cannot pay. In

turn, these unpaid fines escalate and eventually result in warrants and more jail time. The homeless also are at greater risk for arrest for public intoxication. Whereas the general public is able to confine their intoxicated behavior to private homes and businesses, the homeless are exposed in that same behavior (see Waldron 2000 for a discussion of homelessness as private life forced into the public sphere). Public intoxication was perhaps the most frequent offense among our participants.

It should be clear at this point that the criminal justice system is a particularly problematic institution for the homeless. Often by virtue of being homeless they have broken the law and their inability to afford the penalties results in the escalation of originally minor offenses. Complicating this cycle is the fact that having open warrants keeps many homeless people from seeking legitimate jobs, homes, and even enrolling in treatment programs. Among our participants several refused to be on camera for the explicit reason that they had open warrants and did not want to be found. For these people staying out of jail can mean staying on the streets.

God is good. Despite the idea that the homeless are spiritually corrupt, a notion betrayed by religiously driven shelters and service organizations who focus their efforts at saving homeless souls, the homeless are an astonishingly religious group. This was no less true of the street homeless, who largely held fatalistic beliefs about God's control of the universe and over their own lives.

We frequently heard the homeless say things like "When God's ready to lift me out of this, then that's when it will happen." Other times, descriptions of hardships will be concluded with a disclaimer, "but God is good, I can't complain."

In some cases, religious fatalism directly confronted our research intentions. We were often asked what we hoped to accomplish with our research and film. Our answer was usually some variation of, "We hope to show people who you are and what your life is like, to show people that you're not just a bunch of bums." Often this was unsatisfactory and would be followed, "But what do you think that will *do*?" A focus on practicality was common. This was more difficult, but we would suggest various practical improvements to which we hoped to contribute. Some of our participants were positive about these ideas, others were cynical, and in several cases they would respond by asserting, "Can't nobody change nothing out here except God."

Their religious practices were fairly standard. They talked about praying and going to church. Many read the bible regularly. When one man named Shakey was in the hospital and reportedly near death, the men from Catchout visited him, gathered around his bed, and prayed over him. Several attributed his recovery to God.

While nearly all of them were religious and most went to church regularly, they were not especially receptive to various church groups that came out to their various gathering spots to proselytize. In a particularly shocking (to us, not to them) example, a woman calling herself Mama Reatha pulled up to Catchout and proclaimed that she had food. The men at Catchout had already eaten, but they welcomed her. She began to preach and tell the men that they needed to find Jesus. She claimed that they needed to "turn from their wicked ways". In a particularly illuminating exchange she challenged a man nicknamed Knucklehead:

Knucklehead:	You think I don't want to get off these streets?
Mama Reatha:	But you need to accept Jesus.
Knucklehead:	I've accepted God.
Mama Reatha:	Then why haven't you gotten up?
Knucklehead:	God's got a plan for everybody.
Mama Reatha:	But he gives you a choice son. He gives you a choice to

	turn from your drinking and your crack cocaine.
Knucklehead:	<shocked> Who says I do crack cocaine?
Mama Reatha:	I can see it all over you; he's given me the power of discernment.

Here we see a great deal about the religiosity of the homeless. They have fatalistic notions about *God's* control of the universe, but directly resist the control of religious *people*. As Mama Reatha attempted to finish with a group prayer and rendition of "Amazing Grace," she tried to wake up Lockett, who appeared to have been sleeping in a chair through the whole thing. He made a swatting motion and muttered, "Go on… leave me alone." When she left he "woke up" and we asked him what he thought about her:

> People come out here all the time and try to get you to pray. When I pray its between me and God. I learned a long time ago, I pray when I want to, I don't pray because they want me to. If I go to heaven or I go to hell… it's between me and God.

This speaks to an interesting apparent contradiction. The street homeless have deeply fatalistic religious beliefs, but at the same time with an intensely autonomous spirit. There are several ways to drive this toward consistency—its not difficult to understand resistance to man's control mechanisms and a belief in the righteousness of God's—but not all contradictions need to be resolved. Human life is full of them. In the street homeless religious fatalism amongst a group who fervently clings to personal freedom is not difficult to accept.

Religious belief among the homeless also parallels, historically, that of the poor. When Marx said, "Religion is the opiate of the masses," he meant that the belief that God is wholly good and in total control of the universe manifested as acceptance of economic injustice among the poor. After all, poverty and homelessness in the fatalist world are given reason and meaning by the notion that they must result from God's will and infinite wisdom. While different in many ways, the sheltered and street homeless widely share an acceptance of the notion that God is

good. In various service programs the idea that God is good is explicitly reinforced. Several times at both street feedings and also during a stay in the shelter we watched as the homeless were lead in a religious cheer by an enthusiastic volunteer, "God is Good, and he's good all the time!"

While often this was reiterated by the homeless themselves, when led in the cheer by volunteers, their enthusiasm was lacking. They would murmur the refrains, but clearly lacked the heartfelt energy that the providers were looking for. Again, the idea that God is always good, a natural law notion that entails one see every life circumstance and event as legitimate, was common among the homeless themselves, but their ethos changed under the directorship of preachers, volunteers, and service providers. We suggest this is directly the result of the value they place on their own autonomy

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In this section, we have given a broad, sweeping description of the street homeless, contrasting them at times with their sheltered counterparts. Where we have touched on service providers and other groups who engage the homeless, we have been intentionally limited, as we will return to examine these groups in more detail in part two of this chapter. It should be clear up to this point that the street homeless are desperately poor people holding tight to a sense of autonomy. Rather than corrupt souls, they are religious. Rather than lazy, they work hard. Rather than being retreatist, they are reactionaries to a variety of life events and family strains. Rather than seeking to commit crimes, they live as criminals by sheer virtue of being homeless. Rather than taking the "easy way out," they have been thrust into an extremely difficult environment.

In the next section, we address the environment of the street homeless, the ways in which they organize their camps and the ecological circumstances, which contribute to and highlight the condition in which they live.

Dynamics

Concrete Islands: Homelessness in Urban Environments

In the novel *Concrete Island* by J. G. Ballard (1973) an ordinary businessman is driving along a busy road, having ordinary thoughts, when he crashes through a retaining wall and finds himself marooned in a large drainage ditch between three busy city streets, a concrete island. Due to injury and the inability of other drivers, as oblivious as he formerly was, to see him, he descends into madness while trapped in his "new" environment, a place that he drove by every-day without noticing. Ballard's point is to illuminate the ways in which urban ecology frames what we can see, our recognized environment. The busy drivers are physically able to see into the ditch, but they have been conditioned not to notice. The crisis of the main character opens up worlds unseen to the rest of us caught up the humdrum of everyday life.

The connection to the street homeless is not difficult to see. In chapter 1 we noted our first research insight that the homeless are everywhere. Of course, we all see the eccentric people who yell at phantoms and who look decidedly like the homeless image that we have. These people force themselves into our sight, but are ultimately a very small proportion of the home-less. These "tragic caricatures of homelessness" are not representative of the hundreds of home-less who are not so eccentric, but still live within our midst (Liebow 1993:2). The question then is how can we not be noticing? The notion that the homeless are everywhere has the status of a

revelation, illustrating that environments are engineered physically and socially to prevent such recognition (see Bickford (2000) for more on the "architecture of citizenship").

Wasserman read Ballard's book around 1999 and never spent much time thinking about it. It did not resonate until around 2003 when we were driving in the car with one of our participants, James. We were taking him from his camp on the north side of the city to a gas station on the south side so he could get carwash supplies (his primary form of work is to wash cars). When during our interview that day James had estimated there were about 60 to 80 people living around the tracks, I thought he surely had to be exaggerating. But as we crossed the bridge over the train tracks which delineate the north and south sides of the city, the same bridge under which James lived, he began to point out the various camps we could see from the elevated vantage point. It was remarkable. We had driven and even walked over that bridge for years, but for some reason had never seen all of the tarps and tents of the homeless that lived on the banks of that locomotive river. It was as if they materialized right in front of us as James pointed them out.

The homeless remain relatively hidden. This is a mutually beneficial relationship. Society does not want to see the homeless and most often they don't want to be seen by society. But the limits of the urban landscape and economic patterns of gentrification increasingly violate the symbiosis that emerged from postwar urban flight. As the wealthy repopulate urban areas, the homeless increasingly have their environments assaulted.

In this section we describe the environments in which the street homeless live. These reflect their strong sense of autonomy, a rugged individualism not unlike that of American icons of the old west. The environment they create for themselves also illuminates their relationships to each other and their sense of community. And on a broader scale the urban environment in

which the street homeless reside is a field of conflict, one on which the homeless nearly always lose.

Ecology and irony. Sometimes insight is not the product of long reflection or intense thought. Sometimes it strikes like lightening if one is simply willing to allow their environment to work on their mind. Our first day in the field was one such experience. We have described those initial meetings with homeless people, but our initial immersion into the homeless environment was no less educational. In hindsight, it was a mistake to bring the camera on that first visit; it was presumptuous and additionally intrusive when our surprise arrival was already an intrusion. Since it clearly made the men nervous, Wasserman waited for the introductory conversations to simmer down and made himself, and the camera, scarce. I took the camera up onto the train tracks that run just north of the Catchout lot intending to kill time and hopefully lessen the tension for Clair and the homeless men on whom we had just made the research equivalent of a cold call.

Wasserman began to take stock shots of the skyline, the empty field, the train tracks, graffiti covered buildings, etc. By definition, stock shots lack significant meaning, and we had not anticipated finding much. But shooting film forces a person to directly engage what is in front of them, to consider and reflect on it in ways not explored by the casual observer. Several ecological ironies occurred to us.

Wasserman set the camera directly on rail of the train line and pulled the zoom back and then pushed it forward. As he watched through the viewfinder, a switch—a place where the tracks diverge—was coming in and out of the frame. We saw this as a clear metaphor for the life course of anyone, and especially the homeless whose biographies always shed light on their con-

dition. We began to think about our limited vision of people. We like to look just at the switch, not the whole track. But the pre-homeless identity and life story of our participants is no less real than the fact that they are presently homeless.

Trains have always provided a backdrop to homelessness. Train riding hobo adventurers, bums on the rod, have been replaced with economically disfranchised static homeless, but the train is still there. The practical reason is that the train company owns the property around the tracks. It is too large an area to be policed by them (although they make sporadic attempts), but still not the jurisdiction of the city or the state. This gives tentative cover to the homeless. But there is a symbolic aspect and one not just the product of our own minds. Our participants nearly all spoke romantically of the train. "I love those trains, man," Wasserman once told one of our participants, Jayson, while we were staying in his camp. He understood, "I do to. There's something about them. I can't hardly sleep anymore if I'm away from 'em." People who hop freight trains talk about the excitement of limitless possibility; trains represent a course unfinished. Perhaps in a way, the reverence of the homeless for the trains echoes that of their hobo ancestors. It is clear that many see their lives fading into the horizon somewhere far away from where they now live. When asked if they ever saw themselves getting off the streets, nearly all of our participants said yes. They see their lives on a course, one switch sent them into homelessness, and another in the future will take them out of it.

The second revelation born of ecology that occurred that first day was by no means novel. It is obvious that urban centers bring the wealthiest people in proximity to those most poor (see for example Bickford 2000; Gibson 2004; Kyle 2005). Towering skyscrapers with powerful corporate logos loom ever visible over homeless camps. Some of our stock shots started with close-ups of these buildings and as the shot pulled back, more and more poverty and

desolation entered the frame. People, ourselves included, are fond or saying that urban flight and the decline of the manufacturing sector left little job opportunity in city centers. But we should be more specific. There still are lots of jobs there, predominantly of two kinds. There are high-paying professional jobs and low-paying jobs in fast food restaurants which serve the highly paid professionals who do not have time to go home for lunch. After five o'clock, when the professional workday is done, all of the restaurants are closed because there is no one to serve. Our city is eerily empty at night. While this provides the homeless with desired solitude, it is something that is eroding.

Gentrification is a problem that major cities like New York have been dealing with for many decades (see Hopper 1987, 2003; Mathieu 1993). For smaller cities, slower on the change curve and with populations that are only now making suburban sprawl problematic for commuters, the redevelopment of city centers is a more recent phenomenon. Operation New Birmingham is our local version of city redevelopment. Like other cities, it largely entails the remodeling of old downtown buildings into trendy post-modern lofts, replete with exposed ductwork and concrete floors. We have been torn in our general approval; progressive minded people are between a rock and a hard place. For someone disapproving of suburban sprawl, the redevelopment of these ghost-town city centers is a welcomed changed. But the collateral effect on the poor is unacceptable.

In Birmingham entire housing projects and at least one homeless shelter have so far been swept under the glacier of urban renovation. More directly relevant here, is that the homeless are becoming more visible and while this would ideally invigorate activism on their behalf, it has instead produced class conflict. Downtown lofts overlook the train tracks and, in turn, the homeless encampments that pepper the area. Complaints about the homeless have skyrocketed and

people readily admit that they simply do not like to see homeless people when they look out their windows. As we suggested in chapter two, the homeless are psychological miasmas, offenders of middle-class sensibilities, a threat to quality of life (see also Kyle 2005; Phelan et al. 1997; Waldron 2000).

As more lofts are developed and upscale bars and restaurants opened in repopulated areas, the homeless are under increasing scrutiny. As complaints file into the police and city council the response has been to randomly do "sweeps" of areas with high concentrations of homeless.

On more than a few occasions, we would show up to a standard gathering spot to find that it had been completely cleared of all furniture and any other indicators of human life. We would begin to drive around looking for the homeless men, and nearly always would happen upon, or be flagged down by, someone we knew who would fill us in. "Everyone's at the camp. We can't be at Catchout after six o'clock anymore." "Why?" "That's just what [the police officer] said. I don't know; I don't mess with 'em." Prohibitions on being in this or that spot would last several weeks and then fade. The homeless had learned not to question them; they would simply "move along" and wait it out.

Getting shuffled around was the best possible outcome for the homeless. At other times, city workers would show up accompanied by police to take all of their possessions. In the more favorable of these occurrences, they would be given some time to gather things they did not want to get taken to the city dump. After salvaging what they could, a city worker would take a Bobcat (a mini-bulldozer) and collect their mattresses, tents, boxes, blankets, and anything else they could not carry with them. These incidents were spawned by complaints, but also by city events such as local festivals. We showed up at Catchout once, a day after the Mercedes Marathon, to

find that they had been totally cleaned out. This was our first encounter with a sweep and we were noticeably angry about it.

The homeless men took it all in stride, a testament to the pervasiveness of their fatalism. "Its alright, we'll get more stuff," one would say. "Someone will come by here with some mattresses and some pallets to burn. We'll be alright," they were calm to a man. The immediate injustice of taking the few simple possessions of homeless people in order to sanitize the image of a city aside (see Arnold 2004), there is a deeper effect of the gentrification-caused assault on homeless encampments. Completely powerless against the forces of the police, business, wealthy loft residents, and local government, the homeless' only defense is their fatalistic attitude. In the same collective breath, society will sweep away homeless camps and wonder why the homeless do not take more initiative to get themselves off the street. Aside from taking the things they have managed to accumulate, the fatalism produced is the diametric opposite of such initiative. The absence of a sense of mastery, that is the belief that one is in control of one's own life, should not seem so confusing to the very people who contribute to the fatalism of the homeless.

Shifts in urban ecology which bring together the wealthy and the homeless yield more than a symbolic representation of the growing economic gap in the United States. Gentrification contributes directly to the problems that the homeless encounter, in both a physical and psychological sense. They lose what little they have, and are left with no option but to throw up their hands and accept life as it comes. Politicians and the public feel put-upon by the homeless, but indeed reap what they sow in the form of people who, in defense of their own sanity, have to stop caring. Que cera cera.

Homeless camps and high-class tramps. Our first months of research were limited to short stints at Catchout Corner and few other random places. But our first stay on the streets necessarily opened doors. In chapter three we described our process of negotiating access and our particularly important conflict with the drug dealers. As a kind gesture as well as an effort to protect us, we were invited by Potato Water and Jeff to stay at their camp. After being asked to leave, we attempted a face-saving exit and headed to the camp, which was about four blocks away.

Homeless camps are segregated in various ways, including race and class. Some camps are nearly all white, others nearly all black. There is some mingling during the day, and no overt dislike of each other, but the divisions were clear. Moreover some camps are much nicer than others, and the nicer ones, not by coincidence, tended to attract less attention from the authorities. This added to their ability to create stability. At least partly because they are left relatively undisturbed, the camps that are largely white are able to become more established and comfortable. By contrast, Catchout Corner was populated nearly entirely by African Americans and was, as noted, routinely "swept up" by the city.

While some people stayed at Catchout full time, most retired to various, more private places to sleep. At times Catchout displayed some organization, a fire pit and barbeque rack, boxes with blankets off to the side, and chairs organized around a wooden-spool table, but none of this prepared us for the level of organization we found on our arrival at the 2nd Avenue camp. It was located under the interstate bordered by train tracks to the north and a stone company to the east. It was surrounded on all sides by a fence and entrance required climbing onto a shopping cart and stepping over the fence onto stacks of rubber composite rolls used in construction

of some sort. This was difficult by design. Strangers did not wander into this camp and its residents repeatedly noted that this was how they wanted it.

Regulating membership and visitors was a common practice, illustrated keenly when a stranger would approach. Years later, when a man walked into Jayson's camp claiming that he knew Potato Water, Jayson was visibly irritated at the intrusion, obviously protective of the boundaries of the camp. Potato Water knew this and flatly rejected the stranger. "Man, I've seen you around, but I don't *know* you!" "See you later," Jayson indicated that the guy needed to immediately leave and he did.

But despite the deterrents of its exterior the 2nd Avenue Camp was an amazing sight on the inside. As we walked to the center of the camp, we saw a man in his mid-thirties reclined on his bed, snacking on a freshly popped bag of popcorn, watching TV, and drinking a beer. This was the first time we met Jayson, whom was previously mentioned and would eventually establish his own camp on the other side of town. We introduced ourselves and he was reservedly friendly. It was understandable, he had worked all day and we two strangers had lumbered right into his otherwise relaxing evening.

We were struck by the normality. Aside from walls and a roof, the camp was an organized and decorated home. The owner of the stone company had run a one-hundred foot extension cord out to them. It was a mutually beneficial exchange; they got power, she got built in security. They even had her phone number in case of emergency. She also left an exterior bathroom door unlocked and allowed them to use it at night. The camp was organized around a fire pit, surrounded by a living room with chairs and a couch, a TV stand and TV. In the "kitchen" on the far west side of the camp there was a microwave, crock pot, and barbeque grill, along with a prep table, dishes, pots, and pans. Individual "bedrooms" were located off to the sides. Jayson

had a dresser with folded clothes and a laundry bag hanging off to the side; that night we noticed as he put away his clean clothes. At the other end of side of the camp, the oldest, but not the most senior resident, Wendell, had his possessions stored in a shopping cart at the end of his couch-bed. The other men had tents or tarps converted into tents. Jeff had made four walls out of crates and fixed a tarp over them as a ceiling. He had all of his supplies and possession organized in his room. Later that night we remarked to Potato Water how impressed we were with the camp. "Shit yeah. We may be tramps, but we're high class tramps!" he represented with an air of pride.

Shortly after we arrived, Mike returned from his job doing maintenance at a nearby park. He was friendly towards us and told us to go ahead and set up our tent, pointing out, as we began, that we had picked a bad spot, directly under drainage holes in the highway where water would poor in when it rained. He motioned for us to set up closer to Jeff's hut. When we expressed hesitance to crowd Jeff, Mike replied, "Well I say its okay and that's all that matters. I've been here the longest. I brought in Potato Water, and he brought in Jeff and Jayson."

Seniority in the camp makes for a very real hierarchy among the residents. Overall, things work in a very communal fashion, but in any dispute, seniority garners influence. This was the case in all the camps and gathering spots. Having been there the longest, and especially having invited others into the community, elevated one's status. Jayson's situation clearly illustrated the process. While on the bottom rung at the 2nd Avenue Camp, after he left and established his own camp, he became the clear leader. Whereas Potato Water had invited Jayson into the 2nd Avenue Camp, and so was "over" him in that environment, the opposite was true when Jayson invited Potato Water into his new camp.

It's important to keep in mind that this hierarchy remained informal and without much real power. Native American and African tribes often organized around a similar hierarchy where the elders and the chief have symbolic power, but not such that they wield a great deal of ostensible control over the lives of the others. This kind of power dynamic is not needed in small societies with agreed upon codes and it is likewise not needed in the homeless camps. Enforcing the rules becomes unnecessary when everyone largely agrees to and obeys them without coercion.

Camps and work corners had explicit rules, which were not often violated. Women were not allowed at the 2nd Ave. Camp or at Catchout. There were exceptions when females would pass by and stop in, but the residents were not terribly friendly or welcoming. They gave various explanations. Lockett noted, "Most of the women that come around here are working [like us] but they're doing a different kind of work, if you know what I mean. We don't need that kind of heat around here." Others would say more generally, "Women just cause conflicts. People will get to fighting; they take stuff but don't give nothing."

While drugs were plentiful and only thinly disguised at Catchout, hard drugs were banned at the 2nd Avenue camp. Crack was especially forbidden, again on the idea that it brought unneeded attention from the authorities and caused conflict within the camp. Rules such as this were easier to establish and maintain since the population of the camp was relatively controlled both physically and socially. The boundaries of Catchout were more permeable, and it was more difficult to regulate who came in, and thus, what they did.

Ultimately, the 2nd Avenue Camp was reduced to shambles after a sweep where people were, for a relatively long period, forbidden to sleep at Catchout Corner at night. In the midst of this emergency, refugees from Catchout were allowed into the 2nd Avenue Camp, and its organi-

zation and order dissipated within months. All of the residents, except for Jeff, left the camp. Wendell began to draw Social Security and pay room and board at some hostel-like establishment. Jayson moved across town and established another highly organized camp and took Potato Water with him. The area under the bridge became the nighttime sleeping spot for the men from Catchout Corner, and eventually, in two separate but likely connected incidents, both the stone company and the entire contents of the camp were burned to ashes.

The patterns of movement run parallel to those of ordinary neighborhoods. As lower class minorities begin to move into certain areas, white people move out and find new middle and upper middle class areas. Likewise, as nicer homeless neighborhoods deteriorate, the founding residents leave and lower class people move in. It is difficult to sense any consciously racist motivations, but the pattern is unmistakable.

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Homelessness is defined, in part, by environment. The structure of the urban environment creates conflicts between the homeless and local governments, authorities, and middle and upper middle class people who are repopulating the formerly abandoned refuge of the urban landscape. From this conflict comes instability for the homeless as the see their homes and possessions routinely swept away. This is mitigated by the organization and stability that the homeless create for themselves as they develop and maintain urban campsites, which often resemble normal homes in their organization, structure, rules, and even amenities. However, despite their many successes, pressures from authorities typically win-out and stable camp environments are thrown back into chaos. In the end, the ecology of homelessness is a search for stability in the midst of encroaching storms of chaos.

Relationships among the Homeless

In the previous section we discussed the way in which urban environments relate to homelessness and contribute to phenomenon connected with it such as fatalism. Here we address the relationships of the homeless to each other. In one conversation with a homeless researcher, he noted, in defense of the shelters, "There's no community on the streets." We found this to be wholly incorrect. There was a rich community with normative patterns, folklore, a lexicon, and with structured relationships, based not only on aforementioned status of seniority, but on exchange and in service to the maintenance of the community.

Competitive cooperation: sharing, hoarding, and regulating. From the beginning we always arrived at homeless camps and gathering spots with arm loads of donations. We regularly would bring food, socks, cigarettes, and toiletries. When we came across them, or when friends, family, and colleagues donated to us, we also brought batteries, clothes, shoes, sleeping bags, tents, mattresses, chairs, radios, televisions, or whatever else we could get our hands on that our participants would want or need. One of our first observations was that our donations were not a free-for-all, but distributed rationally, based on negotiation and need. By and large, there was an ethic of sharing and of taking only what one needed.

The process was interesting. People would begin to sift through the donations and as they selected an item, typically would issue a justifying statement, with a partly rhetorical quality, but which seemed at the same time directed at the entire group. Someone would take socks and say, "Yeah, I need these, mine got holes in them." They were also aware of the needs of others. Someone would say something like, "I don't need a blanket, but Mike does. Mike!

Come get this blanket." Other times we entrusted people to deliver our donations to others who needed them. Our follow-up showed that they did. If people arrived after donations were divided up, people would generally give them parts of their share. For example, if someone had taken two pairs of socks, they would give one to the person just arriving.

People generally did not take things they did not need. The consumption ideology of Western culture might suggest that people with nothing are willing to take anything. That this was not the case suggests a parallel to nomadic cultures with pre-institutional economies where material desires were attenuated, perhaps because possessions were seen as burdensome (see Sahlins 1972). The homeless face difficulty storing possessions safely. Those with camps do to some extent, but even they get robbed and cleaned out by the city. Others must carry what they own on their back, and like other nomadic people, they simply do not want to carry anything they do not need.

However, before Marxists get too excited, the ethic of sharing was not totally pervasive. Hoarding regularly took place as well; social life is full of contradiction. On our early visits we remained oblivious to the practice; on the surface everyone professed to share and attempted to keep up the appearance. As time progressed, however, we began to notice that some people would use slight-of-hand to take more than their "fair share". Whether or not one hoarded depended both on personality and current conditions. Certain people were known for hoarding and those new to the communities sometimes did so. Other times hoarding seemed to occur when work was slow and times desperate.

Jeff was the quintessential hoarder. As we became more aware, we would watch as he subtly slipped things into his pockets and he often would make off with an impressive haul. He was quite skilled in the slight-of-hand technique. Someone would ask Jeff to pass him a granola

bar and in a swift motion he would pick up two, sliding one into his pocket and passing the other. Through much iteration he would fill all his pockets. When it was dark, he would walk over to the stash of donations and visibly take a reasonable amount while slyly tossing other things into the wooded area. He would later go pick them up. Other people were less adept, and therefore less successful at hoarding. A pile of donations we brought to a camp once were carried in and set down by some of our regular participants. When they came back to the car to help with the rest some new, unfamiliar people began grabbing armfuls of donations and running off. Some stopped and returned them after the more senior residents instructed them to do so.

We thought a lot about our obligations regarding the distribution of our donations and talked at length about it between ourselves and with some of our participants. We certainly did not like to see certain people taking more than their share, while those who, by virtue of their meekness or commitment to the sharing ethic, came up short. But in the end, we decided that the distribution of goods was a community function, and something they needed to work out for themselves. We encouraged those with a dedication to equal distribution to take more initiative in the distribution, and this successfully mitigated the hoarding, although it did not eliminate it. Openly trying to take control of distribution was a serious offense called "regulating".

True to the notion of freedom and autonomy, those who tried to put themselves in control of how goods were distributed were deeply and openly resented. This was not always unwarranted. Early on, Jeff sometimes would place himself in charge of distribution. This was certainly a self-serving move on his part. Other times, someone would do so in a sincere effort to prevent hoarding. LarryAA and Big E were particularly good at this. Both made every effort at fairness and kept open records of who took what. But underlying motivation did little to buffer one against the criticism. Being a regulator meant that one was subverting the equality and

autonomy on the corner, trying to be in charge not only of the donated objects, but of the other people. As street homeless tend to resist the control of institutions, it should not be surprising that they typically resisted any semblance of control by other street homeless people. Someone with seniority could get away with doing it to newer people, but other veterans would not stand for it.

The dual practice of sharing and hoarding speaks to a broader ethos. Life on the streets is at once cooperative and competitive. This is certainly related to current conditions. When there is a lot of work, people are willing to pass on a job so that someone else can have it. When work is scarce, they race for the stopped trucks and push and shove to win out even against their friends. This is not really surprising. Most of us would likely act this way, giving when we can, taking when we need. The point again is to retain the complexity of vision when seeing the social phenomenon of street homelessness. It is not as cutthroat as most would envision, but retains a definite communal ethic. But the street homeless are not transcendent personalities wholly given over to cooperation and community (see Wacquant 2002). Rather, they are like the rest of us. We might call it benign self-interest. That is, most Americans share amongst their friends and communities (defined in social, but certainly not geographic terms), but they do not do so when they perceive that their own needs are not met. In the latter circumstance, nearly all of us look out for "number one".

Protectors and connectors. Community relationships, of course, extend beyond the exchange and distribution of goods, i.e. economy. Depending on personality, the street homeless played various political roles in their communities. We have already touched on how ones status was related to seniority, and that those most senior had elevated, though not total, authority

within their community. But these were not the only political roles and not necessarily even primary ones. Naturally, authority for even the most senior person did not amount to much actual control amongst a group that so pervasively eschews authority. Rather than a structured establishment, individual people tended to fill various needed roles that served the maintenance of the community. In this section we discuss two of those roles, as we have deemed them: protectors and connectors.

A key political function of community is the security of its members. This notion can be traced back as far as political philosophy itself. From the ancient Greeks, through enlightenment thinkers such as Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, the formation of community has been considered fundamental to human existence, at least of any length or value. Contrary to the perception that the street homeless have become lost in an urban "state of nature", communal relationships engender security for members, albeit a more tentative version than most of us experience. Key to this security are protectors who physically and/or rhetorically mitigate threats and conflicts.

Protectors, as the name implies, interject themselves on behalf of others. Within communities on the street the strong take care of the weak. James lived under a bridge, but in close proximity to expensive lofts. To make money, he washes cars for the residents and various professionals who work on Morris Avenue, a redeveloped historic street. James is something of a character and knows nearly everyone in the area by name. He cheerily calls out "hellos" to people walking by, and typically they smile and politely respond. During our first interview with him, we quickly noticed how people would walk by, see us filming him, and smile or chuckle as though to say, "That James is always into something." It is his strong personality that allows him frequently to fill the protector role. When we asked him if he has any contact with the other

homeless people around the area he replied, "I go and check on 'em a lot. They get hassled all the time. I go see if they need anything."

We benefited personally from those who fill protector roles. The day after our altercation with the drug dealers (see chapter 3), we returned to Catchout Corner in a passive defiance to being run off. A man named Hammer had heard of the previous nights events and came and sat with us. This was no small gesture since sides clearly had formed when the drug dealers moved under the bridge. Hammer is a powerful man, large and intimidating, a former boxer and he was incensed that we had been asked to leave the corner. He made this quite clear:

> This isn't their corner. They don't live here; they go home at night. This is our corner. Ya'll ain't never got to leave again. That bullshit won't ever happen again as long as I'm here. Ain't nothing going to happen like that. I won't let it.

As we noted, everything worked out in the end with all of this, but Hammer's reaction, and more than that, his *ability* to react, is worth noting. When one of the dealers went over to get a bottle of water from the community stash, Hammer confronted him about his right to take it. Hammer and James are clear examples of protectors on the street. Whereas James' power is charismatic, Hammer's is both physical and psychological. Both use their respective personal resources to defend the community in various ways.

While Hammer and James are clear protector personalities, nearly everyone would, at one time or another, play a protector role. Men in the camps and on the corner would mediate conflicts between others simply by interjecting rhetorically. Sometimes we would be the fulcrum for the mediator who would settle down simmering conflict by saying something like, "Ya'll knock it off. We've got company." Other times a mediator would interject between two verbal combatants by re-explaining their respective positions to the other, in terms which might not be so offensive, or by paradigmatically shifting the whole conversation. A heated discussion of race

and religion, centering on whether Jesus was black, was mediated by Ced who asserted that race did not even exist, but that, "they made all that shit up anyway." Wasserman later remarked to Clair that Foucault must be smiling from beyond the grave.

The physical authority or rhetorical suasion of protectors maintained social ties within the community, but ties between various communities in different locations around the city also were important. These ties were maintained by people we might call "connectors", a term we take from Malcolm Gladwell's (2002) popular book, *The Tipping Point*.

As in all urban cities, various neighborhood pockets have a different character and attract different types of people. One area will be known as the trendy area, another a working class neighborhood, another a high-class residential area. Street homeless communities reflect the similar patterns. Catchout Corner was decidedly a place to get labor, whereas the camps further east along the train tracks were nicer and more secluded, having an almost suburban quality. Five Points South is an area of the city known for nightlife and dining. True to this, the street homeless who gathered and lived in the area were more often younger. Squatters and punk rock train hoppers usually will be found in this area.

Information was passed around by people who were able to move from one group to another and it seemed that everyone always knew what was going on outside their circles. For example, we could show up at Catchout and someone would say, "Yeah I hear you went to Jayson's camp a couple of days ago." These locations were several miles apart and residents of one were rarely present at another. In fact, most residents of one community were not welcomed into other communities for reasons previously described. Still there were certain personalities who were able to move between communities.

Potato Water was a clear example of a connector. We first met him at Catchout Corner where he immediately stuck out as the only white man. He confirmed this as an anomaly, "It took me three years to get fully accepted out here as a white man." This was perhaps what enabled him to connect communities. Before it got taken over, mostly white men populated the 2nd Avenue Camp. Potato Water was the only one of them who went to Catchout to get work. (Potato Water eventually brought Jeff into the camp who was an African American who caught work at Catchout). Because of Potato Water, the men from Catchout began to visit the camp to watch sporting events for other activities. As we have discussed, this led ultimately to the demise of the camp, but it also gave refuge to the men from Catchout during the period they were banned from sleeping at the Corner.

Jayson was another connector. During a stay at his camp, Wasserman walked with him to a park about ten blocks away where a church was feeding. It was like walking with a politician. The path took them by one mission and through the east end of the downtown area where the sidewalks were peppered with dozens of homeless people. Jayson knew nearly all of them by name. As we walked he would talk to people, not only saying hello, but also asking something specific. "Did you get that job the other day?" or teasing them, "Look at this guy, he's causing trouble. I'm going to call the cops to come pick you up again." He shook more than half a dozen hands as they passed the mission. When they arrived at the park, Jayson had to make rounds before we settled into a card game. He introduced Wasserman to everyone and Wasserman was immediately accepted as legitimate. When unconnected, like during our shelter stay, we were the objects of suspicion, possible cops. By being connected to Jayson, Wasserman suddenly had lots of friends. We doubt that if Wasserman had shown up with someone lacking

that connector-personality he would have been so well received. It was not only that Jayson knew a lot of people, it was that he knew about them and, in turn, they liked and respected him.

While not the focus of this chapter, it is worth mention that the notion of connectors amounts to more than a taxonomic classification. As Gladwell (2002) points out, those distributing information could benefit from recognizing and targeting these types of people. Gladwell focuses on advertising, but this would hold true for public health initiatives and other campaigns designed to target groups difficult to penetrate. The hypothesis is that spreading any message is more effective when targeted at a smaller group of the right kind of people, rather than a mass audience.

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There is most definitely a community on the streets. Relationships are guided by behavioral codes and actively maintained in different ways and by people serving different roles. Not only are the street homeless engaged in a network of relationships within their own small groups, but different groups maintain relationships with each other through connectors. Perhaps the general failure to recognize the sophistication of street homeless communities stems from a conceptual linkage of community and institution. After all, to talk of the somewhat nebulous roles that the street homeless fill in service to the community as political positions likely has a hint of (intended) contradiction for the average reader. Certainly, there are not elected leaders and formalized structures within or among homeless communities on the street (there are within various treatment programs for the homeless, where senior members are given leadership positions). But the lack of institutional formality on the street should not cloud the issue. There are clear and

observable community relationships among the street homeless, and moreover, they are quite sophisticated.

All of us are members of non-institutionalized communities. When we go to dinner with friends, usually there is no one in charge, no real penalty for being late, no mandate about what to order, and no requirement for showing up at all. But we all still are able to maintain these sorts of groups. Moreover, within these groups, people fill various roles as needed. The connector of the group might be the person who calls everyone; the protector will complain to the management about bad service or will mediate a heated political discussion. Street homeless communities can best be understood as similar informal groups, only the maintenance of these types of friendship-communities becomes more consequential, because they depend on the friendship-community more than the rest of us, who draw on other resources, e.g. financial, institutional, familial, etc.

The notion of street homeless communities as consequential friendship networks further is supported by the way in which relationships are maintained between the street homeless and those who are able to get off the street. While we lost personal contact with him, reports were that Lockett eventually left the streets, got married, and acquired a relatively stable job. The men at Catchout Corner told us that he still comes down and spends time with them. LarryAA noted, "He comes by and hangs with the fellas, helps us out when he can, you know. He knows this is where he came from. The corner helped him out and now he helps out the corner."

Relationships with Institutions

The street homeless develop relationships with each other that largely are beneficial for them. But they also are enmeshed in a variety of relationships with institutions, in spite of their

implicit or explicit attempts to disengage. In this section we characterize the strained relation-

ships of our street homeless participants to society, including service providers and the sheltered

homeless, local government and business, and the general public. While part two of this chapter

will deal in more detail with service providers, governments, and businesses, this section will

focus on delineating the street homeless perspective of these institutions, with some unavoidable

overlap.

Frequent flyers and the lookout. 'Street homeless' is a nebulous category. Nearly all of

our participants had been to various shelter programs, and some of them cycled on and off the

streets on their own. Rather than a definitive life condition, it is indicative of attitude. Nonethe-

less, its important to note that several our participants tried various programs during our study.

Big E has been the most successful. He went to the shelter after getting sick and going to the

hospital. He told us that his hospital stay gave him a chance to reflect on his life and when he

got back on the streets, he decided he "couldn't do it anymore".

We followed Big E through the various stages of his recovery. Having been on the

streets for seven years, he adapted to the structured treatment programs surprisingly well. It ap-

peared to us that those most successful in the shelter were those who became homeless for only a

brief period of time, but never adjusted to the lifestyle or became thoroughly fatalistic. Big E

was something of an exception in this regard, perhaps an archetype for the value of hitting rock

bottom. The street homeless sometimes refer to the treatment programs as, "going through the

steps," a representation of the linearity of that system and also an accurate one. Big E spent

about four weeks in the shelter, attending meetings and counseling there until he was admitted to

a twenty-eight-day intensive drug treatment facility. True to form, the treatment facility was lo-

cated in a poor neighborhood with a fairly substantial drug problem. Nonetheless, Big E excelled and was eventually elected leader of his wing. From there he went back to the shelter for a period and then into transitional housing. He eventually began volunteering at the shelter one day a week and at our last contact was getting set up with disability for his Lupus. Big E remained in good spirits through all the shifting around and he met the challenges at every stage. His trajectory gave us the opportunity to observe the continuum of care model that most shelters today employ to varying degrees.

When we interviewed Big E during treatment, he repeatedly conceptualized homelessness as an addiction problem. Lyon-Callo's (2000) work, and also our experience, suggests a socialization process within the shelter treatment programs that leads to this. But looking back through our earlier interviews and two years worth of field notes with Big E before he went to "the steps" suggests an additional consideration (one which does not negate the idea of socialization). Unlike most of the others on the street, Big E had always conceptualized homelessness as an addiction problem, even before he went to the shelter. This was true to his experience. This seems to be no coincidence and his surely aided in his decision to go to treatment and his ultimate success. Big E also noted how frustrating it could be to live in such crowded conditions and under so many restrictions; one had to be humble and passive to go to treatment. "You have to give in to it," he said.

As we have discussed, the street homeless generally have an extremely negative opinion of the shelters. Despite this, when someone from the community decided to go to a treatment program, the others were generally supportive.

The shelter where Big E began "the steps" is located only about four blocks from Catch-out Corner and after he entered treatment, he still visited the corner to see his friends during free

time. Like Lockett, his ties to the community did not end when someone got off the streets. And while this seemed like flirting with temptation, Big E told us that he was always going to be around drugs and he had to learn how to live sober in that environment. Moreover, the men at Catchout, rather than being resentful and predatorily tempting, encouraged him in his efforts. When Big E walked up to the circle, nearly everyone there gave him at least a dollar, which they called "a lookout." This was a normative practice intended to help the person going through treatment, since they could not go through the program and work at the same time.

The day we watched all of the men "lookout" for Big E, Ced was uncharacteristically rough with him. Ced and Big E are cousins and had been close friends on the street. So we were quite surprised when Ced was rude and even openly aggressive towards Big E that day. "Get the fuck out of here man." Ced would push him a little and play-fight, but he seemed only to be half-joking. A few days later during an interview at the shelter, we asked Big E about it. "Ced was just looking out for me. He cares about me; we're like brothers. He didn't want me down around there cause he don't want me to mess up." Later in the interview, Ced walked up. His manner was totally different towards Big E and he confirmed that this was how he felt.

Among other shelter staff and residents, those that were not willing to "give in to it" were criticized (see also Lyon-Callo 2000). One outreach worker for a shelter, himself a former homeless-addict, told us that his job was to persuade people to come in to the shelter. True to his biography, he saw addiction as the central issue. Using medicalized rhetoric, the outreach worker explained, "Some want to compromise, but the disease is so powerful, it keeps them out there, it keeps them caught up." He also referred to those homeless people who only come to the shelter for basic services and do not enroll in long-term treatment programs as "Frequent Flyers". This was a term we heard a few times. Despite the relative support by the street homeless for

people "going through the steps," those in the shelters, residents and staff alike, seem to take of-

fense to those who did not conform.

"They're people too": government and business. We have already discussed that the

homeless get "cleaned out" by the city and that most often this is the direct result of complaints

lodged by businesses and wealthy loft-residents, many of whom have returned to the city center

after a five decade absence. The street homeless generally deal with their direct losses by adopt-

ing a fatalistic attitude. What choice do they have? But their opinions about local government

and businesses are surprisingly diverse. We might expect that oppressed, disfranchised people

who routinely have their possessions taken away would resent the culpable powers. To be sure,

many do. Sometimes we would encounter someone in a near-rage over an incident. A cop once

detained a man named Tim, and by Tim's account treated him poorly, because he had earlier

been walking with a man who later caused some disturbance. Tim was livid about it and im-

plored Wasserman to film him telling the story. The camera was clearly an outlet for his anger.

Tim also noted distinct ironies about the way the street homeless were treated by the city.

"They got parks over there where they give you bags and a little trash can so you can let your

dog take a shit. Why don't they have any public bathrooms for us to use? They don't care about

us as much as they care about dogs."

But just as often we heard a more understanding perspective. "They're people too, just

have a different way of looking at things," they would say, in various formulations, about a po-

lice officer who had hassled them, or about the city councilman who was pushing vagrancy legis-

lation, or the gas station attendant that banned someone for taking too long to select a snack.

These estimations contained a hint of fatalism and also a logic that suggested that if they wished

to have their way of life as street homeless validated, to be left alone and not hassled, then they could not deem another's way of life and opinions invalid, even if they did not agree with them.

Fear and loathing: the general public and the street homeless. Just as our participants were quite aware of how the city and businesses felt about them, they were keenly aware of how they were seen by the general public. A common question we asked during formal interview sessions was, "What do you think that the people in the suburbs think about you guys?" It was not something they had to ponder: bums, dangerous, filthy, rats, no good, and so on. It also was common for them to note that most of those who would judge them are only a few paychecks away from being homeless themselves. This was a statistic that we heard from researchers and service providers as well, although true to form, the street homeless tended to conceive it as an example of grace, rather than a function of economy.

Perhaps the most interesting indication of the ways in which the public sees the street homeless was the "rubbernecking" of those driving by Catchout Corner. Cars would approach and see a group of homeless men sitting in a circle, sometimes around a fire. The occupants of the car would come to a near stop sometimes, as they stared in awe. Sometimes cars would go by and then turn around and make another pass in order to take it all in. Several times people would take photographs from their car windows. Potato Water said of this:

> I don't like it when people come by and look <he demonstrated with a crooned neck and bug-wide eyes> and take pictures. You feel like an animal at the zoo. And then sometimes a car will slow down to look and the guys will run out to it and the people will get scared and speed off. Man, those guys are just looking for work.

Most of us would likely feel intruded upon if a stranger took our picture in public, much less if it happened routinely. At least when people intrude on celebrities in this way it is because they

revere them. Imagine if people continually took photographs of us because the thought we were pitiful and pathetic (Snow and Anderson (1993) make a similar observation). The psychological effect would have to be damaging, especially over a matter of weeks, months, years, and sometimes decades.

While there are lots of panhandlers in certain areas of the city, many panhandlers are not homeless and most homeless do not panhandle. The public mostly fails to make this distinction and lumps the two together as they complain about the inconvenience. The morning after our first night staying on the streets, Clair was sitting on the sidewalk resting, and a woman came by, handed him a dollar, and walked away. He naturally was a bit shocked. His initial reaction was to clarify for the person that he was not homeless. While he later realized that this was the natural impression he was giving off, having not bathed, sitting on the street with his backpack, the shame he felt in that first moment is important. Even when thoroughly conscious of the structural causes of homelessness and sympathetic to the idea that the homeless are victims, the homeless stigma is pervasive and it infects all of us at a subconscious level. Waffle House talked of similar feelings, "People come up and hand me a dollar. That's embarrassing. That doesn't make me feel like a man. I want to work. I just need some help."

Intrusive judgments conveyed by the public at places like Catchout Corner were slightly less overt than at areas like Five Points. This is to be expected, since Catchout is relatively out of the way. As a central locale for restaurants, bars, and various shops, the public and the street homeless come into more direct contact there. Panhandlers are prevalent in Five Points. The public's lumping together of the homeless and panhandlers, when combined with the intense hatred of the latter, works to the disadvantage of the homeless. We will later discuss in detail the response to the homeless by businesses, and those in Five Points will factor in heavily. Here, it

is enough to say that the homeless face intense pressure and harassment from the police at the behest of businesses and in the interests of their clientele. This is the partial result of the failure to distinguish the street homeless from panhandlers, since the seemingly is the primary nuisance.

However, most of the homeless do not beg. Early on we were occasionally asked for various things when we approached a spot, even Catchout Corner. But we never saw them approach strangers on the street, so even when we did get asked for things, it was qualitatively different than panhandling; we had approached them, not the other way around. Many homeless openly refused to beg. A man at the shelter made an interesting observation, "If I was a beggar I wouldn't be homeless. Part of my problem is that I can't ask for help." A street homeless man named Tim further pointed out, "I can't stand being told no. So I don't beg, I just get what I can for myself."

The homeless are keenly aware of the way that the general public sees them. Not only do they clearly know the general negative stigmas, but also they know specific misconceptions that the public holds, such as the idea that they are all beggars who won't work. These are not benign recognitions; they cause real feelings in the homeless, real damage to their self-concept and their relationships to the rest of society. Society wants the homeless to "pull it together", to get off the streets and reintegrate themselves. However, like punching someone in the face and asking him or her to be your friend at the same time, we chastise the street homeless for withdrawing from society and then stigmatize and ostracize them.

Evaluative

You've Gotta Laugh to Keep from Cryin': An Evaluation of Life on the Streets

Social life is a web of contradicting thoughts and feelings. We felt safer on the streets than in the shelter, but we saw drugs, guns, and fighting their too. The homeless men speak of a peace of mind on the streets, but nearly all of them would prefer to leave, and when they do, they talk about missing it. Society tells the homeless to "get some initiative," but then renders them even more powerless as they sweep away their possessions, leaving utter fatalism as the only alternative to insanity. The homeless speak of a multitude of hardships on the streets, but also of laughter and joy. As a man named Ed put it, "You've gotta laugh to keep from cryin'."

In this section we finish our description of the street homeless by discussing the evaluative qualities of life on the street. These often are polar opposites. Feelings of danger and security, boredom and excitement, emotional pain and psychological peace, all of these define the life of the street homeless. Additionally, we will discuss our feelings as we attempted to experience living on the street. While we cannot approximate things like the feeling of being trapped there, others aspects, such as the physical exhaustion and boredom, became perceptible in very robust ways.

"He'll be sorry about it tomorrow, but tonight he'll shoot you." There is a mood on the streets and it is palpable. It appeared to us to be related to environmental circumstances. After the stone company that supplied their power burned down, the 2nd Avenue Camp was left without power and was overcrowded because of the prohibition on sleeping at Catchout. Work had been scarce because of the rainy weather and when we arrived with food, socks, and toiletries we could sense tension and desperation. Normally, while always appreciative, our donations were

met with a rather casual interest. The street homeless are not typically starving or without clothes. On this particular night they clamored for the food and ate as though they had not eaten in a long time. They were agitated, though not unfriendly, and spoke about how things were "getting tough". The streets were in a bad mood.

Volatility is endemic to street homelessness. It ebbs and flows with the environmental conditions. When the mood on the streets is bad, things are more strained and tempers quicker to flare. This was not the characteristic of particular people, but rather any given person at the wrong particular time. This is not difficult to understand; not many of us are totally immune to stress. We each have a breaking point and the stressful nature of living on the street likely would get the better of any of us. Potato Water talked about the dangers of street homelessness, "All of us are good people. But any one of us… you catch the wrong person at the wrong time, it can be bad."

Physical altercations actually were rare and we saw relatively few of the purported incidences ourselves. Most squabbles were often brotherly in nature, quickly resolved with friendships in tact. Moreover, physical fights rarely erupted from heated arguments because no one really wanted to fight. It seems generally recognized by the street homeless that life on the streets is dangerous enough without fighting each other. Conflicts would reach a pinnacle where a fight seemed imminent, but rather than boil over, they would reach a turning point where the parties would begin carefully working their way out of the conflict. This took skill because reputation is an important protective veil on the street.

However, on a few occasions we heard about, and in a handful of cases, saw conflicts taken to that next level. Jeff once slapped Potato Water for touching his wine, knocking him back onto the couch. Another time a man nicknamed LA got into an altercation with the man

nicknamed Jesus. LA claimed he was going to go get a gun, but never returned. In the most sensational story, Jeff once shot at Larry, but the two had made up by the time we next saw them.

Again, such incidents were few and far between. Still there seemed to be several predictors of actual physical violence. While volatility and intense arguing were the purview of any of the homeless men, especially under the right conditions, the regulars, save a few, mostly avoided physical violence. New people to the corner were far more aggressive. They acted like they had something to prove. For example, there was a large gathering including several new men around the fire one night. As we mingled about a relatively short new man began talking to Clair, who, as a former college football offensive lineman, is rather formidable in size. "I wanna fight you Big Man." He seemed only to be half-joking and being new we could only take him seriously. "Why?" Clair asked him. "The way I figure it, as big as you are, if I can whip you I'll get some respect out here." As this same exchange repeated itself a few times we became increasingly less sure that he was joking. Eventually, two senior members, Hammer and Ced, let the man know that fighting Clair was not an option and he abandoned the issue. But whether joking or not, the idea clearly holds that reputation on the street garners respect and security. Ironically, however, those without it are more of a threat because they likely are trying to get it.

While new people are overly aggressive, they either calm down and settle in, or they are not around very long. More often than not, the street homeless are victims of violence. Nearly all of them have stories about being attacked. Potato Water described being mugged:

> About six months ago, I was walking over there by the park and two of them came up behind me. One hit me in the back of the head with a bottle. The other was going in my pocket before I even hit the ground. Got three dollars from me. Three dollars! I'd have given it to them rather than get hit in the head. They didn't have to do that.

The effect of the volatility on the homeless themselves deserves comment. When convicted felons are first incarcerated they describe a process of having to become tough and even violent in order to defend themselves, both from direct attacks and to minimize the extent to which they are targeted. Living on the street seems to be a similar experience in this regard.

Jeff once got into an altercation with Ced and left to get his gun. When he returned and brandished the weapon, Ced calmly sat in his chair and said, "Go ahead and shoot then motherfucker." One of the most respected people on the corner, Ced is something of a legend for these sorts of displays. Never threatening toward us, either by action or character, we asked Ced about some of the stories we had been told, and he just smiled and deflected our inquiry. True or not, Ced knew the value of his reputation and encouraged it. Jeff ultimately pocketed the pistol and rode away on his bike.

Later, Clair remarked to Ced that he was not really worried about Jeff shooting anyone. After all, we knew Jeff well at that point and he had been very kind and open towards us. Ced corrected him, "You should be worried. Jeff doesn't want to shoot anyone and he'll be sorry about it tomorrow, but tonight he'll shoot you." The point was clear: Anyone in the wrong circumstances and the wrong frame of mind is dangerous.

Volatility in its many forms and from many directions is something that permeates life on the streets, a feeling of total safety is never warranted, and such a constant stress surely wears on the psyche of the street homeless.

Stealing time: coping with boredom. In the movie *Office Space* the main character dreams of quitting his job and literally doing nothing. After being hypnotized into complete ambivalence toward the job he despises and skipping work the next day, he tells his friend with a

confirmed enthusiasm, "I did nothing. I did nothing and it was everything that I thought it could be." But as the adage goes: Be careful what you wish for. The street homeless are confronted with hours upon hours of idle time. The human psyche was not built for such deprivation. Boredom is a problematic condition that often is absent from discussions of homelessness, and most certainly homeless research. But it should not be underestimated in its significance for the street homeless. For many of the sheltered homeless, daily activities, workshops, and various therapeutic groups fill days and mitigate the effect of boredom. For the street homeless, passing time becomes something of an art.

If any of us made a list of the things that we do to pass the time, outside of work, which did not cost any money, we likely would have short lists. Normal life consists of working to make money and filling the rest of the time spending that money in various ways. Without these two things, time becomes a difficult obstacle. Some of us may occasionally go sit in a park and enjoy a quiet moment, but these are brief periods of respite from what we normally do, and few of us, if honest, would trade our daily activities for a total absence of them. We may say we hate school or the daily grind of our jobs, but mostly we mean we want other things to do; no one wants to do nothing.

As noted, work for the street homeless do is sporadic. This yields a great deal of unoccupied time. Passing the idle time takes various forms, some of which, like drinking, routinely are attached to the concept of homelessness, although without any conscious recognition of the role of boredom. Here we draw out two implications of boredom, its connection to the "missing initiative" of the street homeless and its connection to substance use and the way it might exacerbate addiction.

A popular sociological concept is that of habitus (Bourdieu 1990). This is the notion that our actions largely are motivated by sub-conscious habits that we have learned through our social life. In other words, we move through our lives mostly without conscious direction. For example, most people will wake up on Monday morning, brush their teeth, and go to work. They likely will not wake up, ponder all of their options, the costs and benefits of not brushing their teeth or skipping work, and rationally decide whether to do those things. Neither do we rationally think-through most other things that we do. Our daily lives come to have a basic routine and we mostly go along with that routine each day.

Part of becoming homeless is the obliteration of routine. The things that motivate, in a sub-conscious way, most of what we do are no longer in place and no longer compel us through our daily motions. While most of us represent the daily structure of our lives as something of a "grind," we tend to underestimate the positive effects this has on our psyche. We do not have to plan out each move we make, and our minds are occupied with the tasks of our routine. The effect of the absence of these on one's psyche surely is significant. Durkheim used the term anomie to indicate a breaking of social ties. They can include ties to ones daily life, which keep us from becoming lost in our own minds. Most of the street homeless often experience a disintegration of ties to people, but nearly all of them also experience the break down of daily structure.

Not coincidentally, it was an interview with a psychologist that first illustrated the role of boredom. In hindsight it seems obvious, but in the face of the many sensational problems endemic to homelessness—crack, violence, sleeping under bridges and in bushes—boredom does not immediately rank as significant. The psychologist put it plainly, "I don't think you realize how boring homelessness can be if you don't have a job to go to, if you don't have a home to maintain, what do you do with those big chunks of time?"

The absence of things to do appears to manifest in several behaviors. The street homeless spend a great deal of time sitting and talking with each other. They develop clear communities this way. They play cards and tell stories. Most become quite skilled storytellers, who have what might almost be considered performative routines. Having, ourselves, spent a great deal of time sitting and talking with them, we heard many stories repeated. Interestingly, they changed very little, but seemed to be codified and have rehearsed punch lines. They were not intentionally doing an act; they had just spent so much time sitting around talking and telling stories, that they had unconsciously developed these various bits.

The most creative appeared to be the most successful at filling the days. Jayson clearly was the most organized and creative personality we met on the street. His daily activities included searching for copper along the train tracks which could be recycled, dumpster diving for materials and working on the infrastructure of the camp, and playing horseshoes, and hitting golf balls into the open spaces along the train tracks. The other members of his camp partook in some of these as well, but for them and most other street homeless, a primary coping mechanism was drinking.

In prison, taking long naps is a coping strategy referred to as "stealing time". In sleep, one's consciousness is freed from the prison environment. We never heard this term on the street, but it fits in several ways. For many of the street homeless drinking or drug use, rather than sleeping, was a way to steal time. They did not offer this explanation but it was indicated in several ways. During our stay on the streets Potato Water tried to catch work one morning. Unsuccessful, he noted that he might as well get drunk, and he did. This was a common practice. Substance use would be delayed in hopes of getting work, but in the absence of work, it became

something to do. For most of the street homeless, drinking and drug use would be readily set aside for the opportunity to go work.

Regardless of how directly substance use was a tool to pass the time, boredom is clearly the enemy of sobriety. Anyone who has quit smoking or even eating sweets knows that the most dangerous times for relapse are those when you have nothing to keep you busy. When Wasserman quit smoking, he began to write and exercise, not because those were especially beneficial, but simply because they passed the time and kept his mind occupied. But sobriety for the street homeless might be a difficult accomplishment in part because of the sheer number of hours that they have to fill.

Laughter and joy. A researcher we interviewed noted an irony of the homeless, "They are in the midst of a depressing situation, but they are not depressing people." To the contrary, they typically are colorful storytellers and jokesters who pass the time by talking about sports and women and teasing each other good-heartedly. James put it succinctly, "Don't get me wrong, there's a lot of good times on the streets, a lot of laughin'." Nothing exemplifies this somewhat surprising feature of street homeless life more than when they would throw parties. Those settled into camps, would host get-togethers for particular events such as birthdays. Before they lost power at the 2nd Avenue camp, everyone would get together to watch the Super Bowl or the Auburn-Alabama rivalry game.

Joking with and teasing each other was a constant source of entertainment and most of the guys were very funny people, probably, in part, from practice (the same reason they are mostly good storytellers). They teased us too. Wasserman is a vegetarian and has a lot of tattoos. These were fodder for much good-natured ribbing. Clair was teased about his size, his tri-

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als and tribulations raising three sons, his feminine cigarettes, and most especially his run-in with the law.

The Values of the Street Homeless

Street homelessness may not produce any particular value orientations. At best, it builds on those already instilled. But there are some interesting and observable tendencies. The thrust of this section, therefore, is not to identify those values that are the domain of the street home-less, but rather to describe particular valuative themes that they hold in common with society. This should not imply any uniformity, but rather ought to counter the expectations of liberal aca-demics, like us, who dream that class-consciousness produces liberation ideologies.

The Southeastern United States is predominantly conservative religiously, politically, and socially. While stigmatized and ostracized from society, the street homeless in the region still tend to reflect these same ideals. It is somewhat difficult to reconcile the way that the conserva-tive ideologies of the American South seem directly antithetical to the destitute circumstances and freedom-infused ethos of the street homeless. But this historically has been the case with oppressed peoples. Freire (1994) notes that the parameters of the world are defined by the privi-leged and the oppressed tend to work within the very framework that oppresses them. History, especially in the South, is punctuated by examples. In Alabama, wealthy politicians representing the privileged once used race to keep poor whites and poor blacks from voting together in an un-defeatable political block. Today they use religion to subdue the recognition of economic needs. The poor vote against their economic interests in astounding numbers. While they mostly do not vote, the street homeless reflect this same pattern, holding ideologies, which ostensibly counter their own interests.

Politics make strange bedfellows, including those without beds. At a recent dinner, the historian Alan Kraut reminded us that class-consciousness has always been a liberal dream and never much of a social reality. The street homeless are no different than many of the poor who hold socially and politically conservative ideologies. Their position on the U.S. war in Iraq was a good indicator. There were some who railed against the war. A man nicknamed Junior once commented, "We need money here, we got starving people here. You're gonna go blow up a country and then spend billions of dollars to rebuild it. Then whad'ya blow it up for?" But these sorts of protests were in the minority. By and large, the street homeless were deeply offended by 9/11 and thought that war was a just response. LarryAA put it, "You got to go over there and bomb 'em or they'll think they can just come over here and do whatever they want." Many of the homeless are veterans and like most veterans, supported the war.

The street homeless tended to be very patriotic, in general. Their estimation was not unlike most Americans, "We've got problems, but this is still the greatest country on earth." While the street homeless were more likely than their sheltered counterparts to talk about structural economic problems as the cause of their homelessness, this did not seem to infect their opinion of the United States. With very capitalist ideologies, most did not seem to feel like they were owed anything. At his camp one day a train rolled by carrying hundreds of tanks, millions of dollars of military equipment. We asked Potato Water if we could film him standing in front of it since he had been in the army. "Marines!" he corrected us with the typical *semper fi* pride. He stood there, a homeless man in his military jacket, with the military industrial complex literally right behind him. We asked how he felt about it all, noting that we found it ironic. He did

not. "I don't feel like they owe me anything or nothin'. I mean I've gotten some benefits from it; I can go to the V.A. for medical stuff, so that's nice, but I don't think I'm owed."

The fatalism we have asserted is tied to religion certainly bleeds over into their assessment of political structures. Political cynicism was not in opposition to the idea that the U.S. is the greatest country on earth. They loved their country, but hated their government, as the cliché goes. The street homeless typically see no hope for using political structures for solving social problems. Big E once said about the prospect, "Only thing that will work is for Jesus to come down and change some hearts." They tended to separate political structures from civic opinion. Politics is ineffective because it is hopelessly corrupt, again an opinion widely shared. Hammer once half-jokingly said, "I like George Bush, man. He's a straight-up crook. He does it right in the open. The rest of them hide about it."

From a class perspective, the patriotism and pro-capitalist ideology of the street homeless is perplexing. But because we find the issue of class so important, academic social scientists tend to forget that most people do not, even the poor; the view is good from the cheap seats. However, since freedom and autonomy is central to the street homeless, the notions of American individualism which are culturally tied to American democracy and capitalism make the irrelevance of class among the street homeless more understandable. The street homeless eschew shelters and other social services and they thereby bear closer resemblance those post-agrarian hobo-homeless than do their sheltered counterparts. Likewise, they are intensely individualistic. This plays out quite clearly in their political opinions where they have no hope or aspirations for help from government and in the ways that they reflect classic American ideals and patriotism.

Moreover, individualist values are inherent in their views of homelessness, especially of other homeless people. While they tended to recognize their own homelessness as the result of

political-economy, the idea of choice also was prevalent. Many of the street homeless held that they had chosen to be on the street, that their homelessness is their own fault, and more so that others' homelessness was their own fault. It seems appropriate to point out again that the notion of structural displacement would seem to preclude the notion of homelessness as a choice. But not only is social life punctuated by these sorts of contradictions, social scientists as renowned as Weber and Bourdieu, have pointed out that choice and chance both are critical.

Ced was the most ardent supporter of the choice perspective, to the extent that he had a hard time coming to terms with our presence as researchers. He clearly liked us as people, but when it came to our research, he would continually ask, "What do you want to know?" with a tone insinuating that there was, in fact, nothing there to discover. Ced would tell us, "There's nothing special about it out here." Once, after listening to a group of people talk about not being able to find jobs or make a living wage, he said to us, "That's all bullshit. We put ourselves out here." While Ced tolerated us, it took a couple of years before we ultimately came to terms, when he agreed that, at very least, social structures could make it easier or more difficult to get off the streets.

We also encountered a lot of discursive separating of oneself from "them" (this echoes Snow and Anderson 1987). Potato Water and his camp-mate Wayne were a clear example. In an interview they noted that, unlike them, a lot of homeless people were lazy and did not want to work. "We try to go out and work everyday, but there's a lot of 'em that don't do nothing all day." While they both were hard workers, our experience had been that this was true of nearly all of the street homeless. Freire's notion of taking on the oppressor mentality seems clearly to fit. Rather than the recognition of their common interest, the street homeless often replicated the

stigmatic, judgmental views of the general public. The victims of stigma sometimes directed the same judgments at other homeless people.

Racist victims of racism. Similar to the street homeless tendency toward conservatism despite being stigmatized by socially conservative ideologies, racism also ironically is manifest. As a condition intertwined with poverty, the overwhelming majority of the homeless, especially of the street homeless, and most especially of those in the South, are African American (LaGory et al. 2005 report a homeless population in Birmingham that is 67.6% African American). Race and poverty are related in infinite complexity, but there is widespread agreement, that racism both historical and contemporary, contributes to the disproportionately high representation of African Americans in the lowest socioeconomic stratum (Arnold 2004). Thinking rationally, then, one would expect that the street homeless would oppose racism. However, like class, race historically has not been a strong buffer against racism. Likewise, the street homeless tend to hold racist ideologies, which are particularly directed at Mexican immigrants.

In the late 1960's black power activists like Stokely Carmichael began to frame American racism in radically different terms than previous civil rights leaders had. Whereas Martin Luther King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), along with early incarnations of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), focused on the notion of racial difference as the foundation of racism, Carmichael and others drew on Marxist philosophy to suggest an economic impetus for racism. Disfranchised African Americans, they suggested, provided an alternative labor source, which helped keep wages for white laborers low, since they could easily be replaced. Similarly, economic conflict seems to drive the racism that the street homeless direct at Mexican immigrants.

At the time of this writing, illegal immigration is a one of the most heated issues on the U.S. political landscape. Political conservatives rail against illegal immigrants, often arguing that they take jobs away from Americans. A common and convincing response to this assertion has been that the types of jobs that illegal immigrants are performing are those, which most Americans will not do. This argument holds for the average American, but it breaks down for the street homeless. The way in which they gain employment and the types of jobs that they typically perform are the same as those of illegal immigrants, who form their own catch-out corners around urban areas. Thus, while most complaining about immigrants stealing jobs has no merit, the street homeless represent an exception. They perhaps are the only group experiencing bona fide economic consequences of immigrant labor.

While they certainly betray racist tendencies toward Mexican immigrants, the street homeless also make explicit economic arguments. They quite consciously argue that immigrant labor undermines both their ability to get work and the earning power they command. James put it clearly, "Catchout Corner used to be a jumpin' spot, 'til all the Mexicans got here. Now their ain't no jobs 'cause the Mexicans work cheaper." Others railed against the idea that illegal immigrants are given preference to native-born Americans, such as themselves. "We was born and raised here, and they're gonna go hire someone that just got here?" Larry put it passionately. They blamed both employers and also the government by virtue of not effectively stopping illegal immigration labor. In short, the street homeless are typically racist victims of racism.

Religion and the apocalyptic cosmology of the Deep South. Like southern society in general, nearly everything was infused with religious ideology and discourse. We have discussed previ-

ously how religion contributes to fatalism. Here we discuss the broader role of religion in coloring the life of the street homeless.

Like poor people in general, and especially those in the South, religion plays a central role, both personally and socially. The street homeless find validation in their religious ideals. The street homeless frequently cited various tenets, like the idea that ones reward lies in heaven, that the meek will inherit the earth, and biblical references to Jesus' ministry to the poor and undesirable. It is notable that institutionalized religious groups, including those that volunteer at shelters and come to the streets to preach, reinforce these. For worldly bystanders, this seems counterproductive. The religious ideals of the street homeless tend to justify, or at least trivialize, their poverty. But for the street homeless, it also seems to have a soothing effect. Social activists all have experienced to varying extents the maddening effect of injustice. That injustice is so pervasively a part of the street homeless condition that perhaps the pacifying religiosity that they hold serves as respite, as a psychological buffer for inexplicable forces of unimaginable unfairness.

Religious imagery also pervaded discourse on non-religious subjects. An angels-and-demons framework often defined discussions of provocative issues. Crack was referred to in these terms. Even hardcore addicts would talk about it as a demon, noting that the "Devil got a hold" of them. LA described it, "It's like inhaling demons into your lungs." These types of fantastic themes could become quite exaggerated. While high, Hammer was especially prone to espousing the idea of life as a war with demons and that to survive one had to be a "spiritually pure warrior." Hammer also spoke of seeing demons. One might attribute this to schizophrenia, or drug induced paranoid psychosis, but it never came off that way. Many people immersed in traditional Southern religion speak the same way. Hammer never interacted with the demons, never

exhibited any unexplained behavior, and never seemed "out of his mind" other than those periods where he was high on crack. Rather, like most of the others, whether drug users or not, his explanations of the world tended to be framed by apocalyptic religious themes, characteristic of the South, especially the poor South. We might compare this phenomenon to the use of hallucinogenic drugs by various indigenous populations in North and South America. Peyote or mescaline induced visions are not wholly the products of the drugs, but rather moments built on pervasive cultural ideologies and current social circumstances (see Baer et al. 2003). Religion gives order to an ostensibly chaotic world, from volcanoes and hurricanes to the viciousness of European conquerors. Similarly, the street homeless partly interpret the (from their perspective) inexplicable inequality in society, of which they are the victims, by drawing on Judeo-Christian religious themes, spoken with an apocalyptic Southern twang.

The hegemonic religious ideologies serve to legitimate the condition of the homeless. But just as religious themes framed other aspects of street homeless life, they somewhat ironically also did so for the issue of personal freedom and autonomy. We have previously described our attempt to integrate a new research partner into the field. This produced disaster when he took a proselytizing posture toward the men at Catchout. His most heated exchange was with a man named LA, the man whom had been invited to speak to the city council about homelessness. He declined when he was told he would only have three minutes and noted that it wouldn't do any good. The new researcher told him that he "still had to try," and LA responded quite angrily, "I ain't got to do nothing this week but make sure my kids get into school!" He went on to say, "You ain't gonna use that devil psychology on me." LA was particularly politically minded and he clearly meant to condemn the ideology of the establishment, which he felt our novice was

pressing on him. But the use of the word "devil" is not coincidental. This was a typical way to construct those things, which they conceived of as opposing their freedom.

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Street homelessness is a life of both pain and joy, of simultaneous peace and unrest. The intellectual urge to explain and classify should not undermine those complexities. The street homeless sometimes are macho and stoic and at other times emotional. They speak of past joys and past regrets and of both happiness and sadness. The street homeless decidedly are not a depressing group of people. They are real human beings in a situation that any of us would find depressing. It is a testament to their strength and resilience that they manage to find and appreciate the positive aspects of an existence that most of us could not even imagine.

Values and feelings often are overlooked in sociological assessments, or at least they are flattened into measurable variables. As sociology has become more positivistic, abstractions of this sort are seen as less tenable, and as a discipline we tend to focus on more ostensible factors such as demographic information and behavior. But we know also that actions are predicated by beliefs, values, and feelings. Understanding street homelessness requires that we develop a good conceptual grasp of their values and feelings. Our examination of these has shown that, as in so many other respects, the street homeless are not much different than the rest of us. Like the rest of society, they tend to be patriotic and bigoted, reflect the culturally infused religious beliefs of the broader social context, and most especially, like other Americans, they hold tight to the values of freedom, autonomy, and cowboy-style individualism.

In the fourth and final section of Part I, we deal with the notion of identity. The street homeless engage in identity management as they attempt retain a sense of self in an environment,

which often opposes it (see also Snow and Anderson 1987). We will conclude with some thematic notions of identity, which help explain the resistance of the street homeless to shelters and other service programs.

Identity and Self

Identity is a difficult concept to pin-down. We all employ various identities in various situations. To draw on Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical conceptualization, we act out different roles in the different plays in which we have been cast. But not all roles are equal. We each have a master status, that is, one of our roles is more prominent that the others, and typically becomes the most definitive component of who we are in the eyes of others and also in one's own estimation of self. Some of us have more than one prominent role, and for most of us, our master status(es) is not terribly confining, but rather benign. We are a professor, doctor, father, mother, artist, etc. There is nothing particularly bothersome about these, save for the occasional crisis where one attempts to shift roles. But when master status goes hand-in-hand with stigma, one's entire life is permeated by an oppressive identity conception, in the eyes of others and also of one's own. The homeless in general and the street homeless in particular are in this latter situation. "Homeless" is a master status which trumps all other identities in society's estimation and for those who, often out of necessity, come to embrace the role.

But it would be wholly insufficient to allow the notion of "the role" to encapsulate our discussion of the concept of "self". We act out various roles, drawing on various different identities, but social scientists should not be content with the idea that one's "self" is just the combination of these. In this section we describe ways in which identity plays out among the street homeless, for example, ways in which they manage the imposed stigmas (see also Snow and

Anderson 1987). But we also discuss an underlying notion of the self, which is not encapsulated

by any combination of fixed identities, but rather is an innate, although often suppressed, func-

tion of human agency and creativity. As already discussed, the street homeless are centrally fo-

cused on the issue of freedom and autonomy, and while the popular conception is that they are

the most broken subgroup among a generally broken group of people, we will consider that resis-

tance to shelters and other mechanisms of institutional control might represent a more robustly

developed sense of self.

Identity Management

We have previously discussed the importance of recognizing that homelessness repre-

sents only one period on the life-trajectory of a person; it is one switch on a long track. It is a

simple, but crucial, insight that the homeless have non-homeless pasts. Becoming homeless

represents an all-out assault on one's identity. One goes, often quite suddenly, from being a per-

son with a set of socially acceptable identities, to being "homeless," an identity that trumps, if

not obliterates, all others. We have already described the way in which some of the street home-

less maintain contact with their families. Beyond drawing social support from family, maintain-

ing these contacts also can be seen as an effort to retain ones pre-homeless identity. Family,

more than anyone else, can see one's whole life when they form identity conceptions of us.

Lockett gave a clear indication of the importance of family in the formation and maintenance of

non-homeless identity. "I've been out here a long time, but I never felt homeless until my Mama

passed. I didn't stay with her, but I always felt like I had a home until she passed."

Another way in which one managed and resisted the stigmatic homeless identity was the

practice of giving gifts. We brought many donations over the course of our research, and they

were always appreciative. But they often quite consciously avoided being seen solely as takers.

Of course, from our perspective, the knowledge that they shared with us was exchange enough.

Many of them came to accept this, but others insisted on giving us things, taking pride when they

did. When Wasserman had forgotten a hat on a particularly sunny day in the open field at

Catchout, a sure way to get sunburned, Knucklehead gave him one to wear. When we left,

Wasserman went to return the hat, but Knucklehead insisted that he keep it. Over the next sev-

eral years, Knucklehead asked on several occasions if he ever wore it; it clearly was an important

gesture. During another stay in Jayson and Potato Water's camp, hospitality came partly in the

form of a departing gift for each Wasserman and Clair. Another time, a man we had met in the

2nd Avenue camp—who had since gotten off the streets when his disability aid finally came

through—was at Five Points selling handcrafted games. Recognizing Clair, he insisted that Clair

accept one of the games as a gift, noting that we had been kind to him when he was homeless.

Another particularly memorable instance occurred when we stopped at Catchout on our way to

check into the shelter. Teasing us about how bad our shelter stay was going to be, Lockett went

to the store and brought back two large bottles of water, saying that we would be glad we had

them (he was right). When we tried to pay him for them, he refused our money, saying, "Just

remember, that's Catchout water." He gave the gift on behalf of the entire community.

There were countless instances of gift giving. The connection to identity runs through

American capitalist notions, particularly the stigma attached to receiving charity. There is a cul-

turally induced guilt and shame attached to taking something that one did not perceptively earn

in some way. To many of our participant's thinking, they did not earn our donations, although to

ours they earned more than we could give. Giving gifts was a way to return the balance, to

stave-off the feelings of shame associated with being a "charity case". This may be particularly

important among the street homeless who place particular value on their individual ability to work and earn.

We also have previously mentioned the way in which some of the street homeless also would invoke stigmatic conceptions of others (see also Snow and Anderson 1987). In one sense this reflects the valuative ideals that they hold, those notions of choice and laziness directed at others but not themselves. But in another sense, this was a means of separating oneself from a stigmatized group. Once as we drove a man from Catchout to the 2nd Avenue camp he said to us without any prompting on the subject, "Yeah man, I'm not like those guys over there." The idea that other street homeless people were somehow morally corrupt in ways that did not apply to oneself was a common means of validating ones identity in the face of the homeless stigma.

Characters

Most of our street homeless participants could be accurately described as "characters". Here we mean to use the pejorative sense of the term and also feel inclined to note the crucial distinction between the notion of being a "character" and that of being a "caricature" (Liebow 1993:2). The latter is an objectified version of identity. The former, we use in a positive sense; a "character" is an upbeat, charismatic, extrovert. As mentioned, the street homeless tend to be great storytellers, funny, and charismatic. They are enmeshed in very difficult circumstances and certainly are not content with that condition. But neither are they wholly defeated by it. When we would show up in the field we nearly always were met with a jovial welcome.

We began this chapter by identifying the basic reasons why the street homeless resist going to the shelters. While perhaps not much of an academic assessment, the fact that the street homeless tend to be "characters", may be the best explanation of their choice of the streets,

which has seemed inexplicable to experts and service providers. To survive in the shelter, one must be subdued and introverted. Not keeping to oneself can be downright dangerous. When Wasserman was suspected of being a cop, one of the primary reasons was that he was "looking around too much." During a stay at Jayson and Potato Water's camp, we had planned to go eat dinner at a shelter with Wayne and another camp resident named Russell. In the midst of pleasant, jovial conversation Wayne and Russell left separately and without announcement. When we got through the line at the shelter and got our food, Wasserman went and sat with Wayne, but noticed that he was no longer talkative. He kept his eyes on his bowl of stew and muttered one-word answers as Wasserman talked. We noticed also that Wayne and Russell did not sit together, and they walked up to and away from the shelter separately, rejoining around the corner to walk back to the camp.

Extroverts do not do well at the shelter; one is well advised to keep their eyes on their plate. Outgoing, talkative people will encounter resentment and get into conflicts. In those cramped conditions, a "character" is a nuisance. On the streets, proximity to others is voluntary. If someone is getting on another's nerves, they need only to separate. While there are sometimes mild conflicts, and more rarely serious ones, the freedom to be oneself without typically getting into conflict may be one of the most appealing aspects of staying on the street.

Perhaps its not hard to imagine that a bunch of men with nicknames like Knucklehead, Potato Water, Waffle House, Black, Hammer, Pookie, Motown, and Lockett, are not well suited for life in a shelter. Their nicknames often directly reflect their personalities or pasts. Hammer is a strong, commanding presence, Potato Water a vodka loving jovial, cut-up. They are strong personalities who would not thrive in an environment, which requires one to draw back. Big E noted about going through treatment, that one had to be humble. He discussed how getting along

with others in such cramped conditions was a real test of personality, how much one is willing to "tone it down."

On the street, a strong personality is required to survive. But the very aspects that enable one to survive on the street may make it impossible for them to survive in the shelter. "The problem" of the street homeless may simply be that because of their personalities, they tend to be square pegs in the round holes of the shelter.

Creativity

Plato said, "Necessity is the mother of invention." The street homeless have necessity in spades. The popular conception among the public is that the street homeless are broken and depraved, beggars with no initiative, bums who take, but never give. However, as we spent time with the street homeless in various camps and gathering spots, we found people that tended to be highly creative, engineering solutions to a myriad of problems that would get the better of most of us. In this section we discuss various examples of creativity on the street.

One does not typically think of daily life as artistic expression. That is because for most of us, it is mostly unconscious routine and ritual. There are standard procedures for everything, eating, working, moving from place to place, and getting a home. There is no standard procedure for the person living outside the system. For them, daily life is filled with creative acts (recall that this is the thrust of the anonymously authored book, *Evasion*, discussed in chapter 2).

The very condition of being street homeless essentially constitutes a creative act. Some are better at it than others, but all of the street homeless must actively claim something for themselves; they must create their own home. Whether it is a tract of land along the train tracks, or a spot on the sidewalk, and whether it lasts for years or just for the night, the street homeless per-

son must say to the world, "This is mine. It used to be yours, you think it still belongs to you, but I claim it for myself." Often they take the creative act to impressive lengths, not only claiming space, but also developing an infrastructure and amenities, and in doing so they create a life for themselves. What is even more impressive is that this act emerges so directly from their own wills. They do not rely on banks and financing, on family, on a real estate agent, on Wal-Mart, on plumbers and electricians, on friends with housewarming gifts, or on the power company. They rely more directly on themselves than perhaps anyone else in society. Yet society views them as broken people. For broken people, they are remarkably creative and effective. Most of us would be paralyzed if all the people and institutions we relied on to build and structure our lives were suddenly gone. Whether by necessity or not, the street homeless are stronger and more creative than most of us can imagine.

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In the end, the concept of self cannot be given adequate treatment by group-level focus such as we have presented here. Nonetheless we hope to have countered the perception of the street homeless as corrupted individuals by giving examples of identity and creativity that cast a positive light, especially in such an often-dark environment. Our experiences with the street homeless have changed us in ways we could not have predicted (other homeless researchers have had similar experiences; e.g. Snow and Anderson 1993). Our sociological backgrounds predisposed us to examine the causal implications of things such as race and class; we did not have much difficulty moving beyond individual pathology explanations of homelessness. But we did not expect to be so utterly impressed. We expected to meet people who had been beaten down by society, and we did. We did not expect to meet people who, in their own creative ways, were

beating back. For all of the problematic aspects of street homeless life, the strength and creativity of it should not go unappreciated (see also Hopper 2003; Snow and Anderson 1993). Most of us live lives facilitated by right of law and the ability to get financing and without those our gears would grind to a halt. The street homeless run on pure will and creativity.

Findings Part II: "The Solutions"

Overview

We began our description of "the problem" (Part I) by identifying one common response to the question, "Who are the homeless?" This most often elicited a list of causes of homelessness. But also individuals inclined toward myth busting and "shaking people" up would say something like, "It could be anyone; it could be you or me." Service providers were particularly fond of giving this answer. Sociologists enjoy these kinds of statements because they are destabilizing and demand the attention of the financially comfortable who tend to avoid confronting structural issues of inequality and poverty. But as statistically minded professionals we ought to know better. To be sure, it is possible to find an example of a solidly middle-class person who became homeless through a series of coincidental misfortunes. But anecdotal outliers do more to prove the rule than subvert it. The homeless by and large are poor people who have become even poorer. There is something unsettling about trying to make people believe that it could happen to them. As if that somehow shifts the ethical ground and broadens social responsibility; as if someone should only care if a social problem reaches up to infect his or her class.

In this section we discuss various groups and institutions that engage the homeless in general and the street homeless in particular. Our primary research focus was on the street homeless themselves. We already have touched on some of these issues as they relate to life on

the streets, for example, the ways in which the police "sweep up" homeless camps and the relationship of the street homeless to the shelters and to those enrolled in shelter programs. In this section we attempt to shift the locus from that of the street homeless themselves, to those groups and institutions, discussing the way that they see the street homeless, rather than focusing on the way that the street homeless see them.

We can begin by delineating two general ways of approaching homelessness: legal and service. These typically can be differentiated on a gradient running from conservative to liberal (Kyle (2005) makes this distinction as well). Legal responses to homelessness, including those of the police and city, as well as businesses, who utilize these, typically follow a conservative ideology. This is not to say that these people are all politically or socially conservative in general, but they certainly are in the way they approach homelessness. They are more likely to see homelessness as the result of choice, as a moral deficiency, a lack of will, and they therefore are less sympathetic towards the homeless. This directly relates to their tendency to use forceful means of eliminating homelessness, such as sweeps and banning them from public parks (see Gibson 2004; Mathieu 1993). Service providers tend to be more liberal in their approach. They typically are sympathetic and recognize the structural factors of homelessness, although they do not address these systemic problems in their roles as service providers (see Lyon-Callo 2000).

The legal and service approaches are the two dominant ways in which society addresses homelessness. While they differ on how to deal with it, both conservative and liberal approaches to homelessness work within the same paradigm; they both approach homelessness as "the problem". However, stepping outside the dominant paradigm generates new conceptualizations and approaches to homelessness, like those of the anarchist literature discussed in chapter 2. This includes fighting against structural conditions which predicate homelessness, but also a variety

of other positions that are paradigmatically different from the liberal and conservative approaches. Generally speaking, radicals strive to work *with* the homeless, to empower the homeless to speak for themselves, rather than speaking to the homeless about what they should want and how they should live.

Our categorizations certainly should be taken as fluid. Service providers likely see themselves working *with* the homeless, and surely some of them do, some of the time. For example, several shelter directors in Birmingham have spoken on behalf of the homeless to the city council, trying to mitigate, to varying extents, proposed vagrancy legislation (although most of them are in favor of some form of it). Similarly, those whom we here call radicals provide rather standard services such as feeding the homeless and providing addiction counseling. The boundaries of our general categories are not definitive. Rather, they can be seen as tendencies toward one or another perspective. Additionally, our discussion of religious approaches shows that they do not fall in one or another category, but are quite varied. Conservative religious approaches focus on the notion of sin, liberal approaches on that of charity, and radical religious perspectives resemble liberation theology.

In the next two sections, we describe conservative and liberal approaches to homelessness, highlighting various problems and underlying misconceptions of the dominant paradigm under which they operate. As we mentioned, these "solutions" often do not solve very much. The street homeless are emblematic of this; they are one test case for the success of the dominant model, an example of the ways in which it is failing.[28] The liberal approach is not really an alternative to the conservative approach; they are two sides of the same coin. Radical approaches represent real alternatives to the dominant model illuminating possibilities that we cannot see

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[28] Another test case is the recidivism of service-using homeless. Still another is the growing number of homeless people, sheltered or street, whose very existence suggests that, at best, dominant approaches to homelessness help some homeless people recover, but have little to no impact on homelessness itself as a social phenomenon.

unless we are willing to question the foundational assumptions of the dominant paradigm. We discuss these approaches in the third section. In the end, street homelessness is not solved by conservative-legal or liberal-service approaches, and our discussion of radicals will give some indication as to why.

<p style="text-align:center;">*Cops and Shops: Conservative Approaches to Homelessness*</p>

Businesses often feel victimized by the presence of the homeless. This is clear in Birmingham in Five Points South, where the merchants association has made the preponderance of homeless people in the area a focal point. They argue that the homeless drive away customers by generally being a nuisance. Because businesses possess the institutional savvy and socio-political connections, they naturally turn to the city government for help (see Bickford 2000 on these connections; see also Mathieu 1993). They complain to the police and the city council and push for the enactment of a variety of vagrancy laws. The Five Points Merchants Association proposed, for example, that the park benches in the area be removed so that homeless people could not sit on them (Coman 2006a). In this section, we explore these types of positions, contending that they are predicated by a particular perspective of homelessness and also that they are the result of vested financial interests. We also assert that these factors result in a physical form of oppression of the street homeless, a group already systemically oppressed. We begin with businesses, as they appear to be a primary launching point for police actions and also the development of vagrancy legislation in the local government. Aside from our research location, none of this is particularly novel (see for example Gibson 2004). However, we hope to add a discursive assessment that illustrates the general conceptions about homelessness, which largely are

inaccurate but serve the financial interests of businesses and local government (the two, of course, being intimately related).

Because of its relative isolation from businesses, Catchout corner receives a less-constant attention from the authorities. Pressure from the authorities seems more intense, but less frequent. For example, the men at Catchout are banned from the corner a few times a year, whereas in Five Points, individual people are continuously harassed and arrested for minor "quality-of-life" offenses. Because of the more immediate involvement of businesses in this area, this area will serve as the focal point for this portion of our discussion.

In Birmingham, the cycle of ire from local business about the street homeless began a new upswing sometime in 2005. There were several factors, including a seemingly growing number of street homeless and the redevelopment of business and entertainments districts in various other areas of the city. Five Points is a trendy nightlife district, but has faded in its popularity. Fewer people are frequenting the areas bars and nightclubs. This likely is the direct result of the development of new pockets of bars and clubs such as the Lakeview area or the growing downtown district, but the Five Points Merchants Association has been quick to point the finger at the homeless in the area (see Coman 2006a, 2006b).

In the center of Five Points South is a rather bizarre fountain featuring a statue of a goat reading to various animals gathered around. "The Fountain," as it is simply known has fallen into a state of disrepair; the water no longer flows and has settled into a murky stagnant pool. Surrounding this centerpiece is a diverse array of businesses, from the highest-priced restaurants in town to hotdog stands and head shops. There is a wine and cheese bistro on one corner and across the street a dank, graffiti covered bar hidden away in a basement. On one block, in succession there is a ritzy piano lounge, a Mexican restaurant that throws Latin dance parties, and a

seedy pool hall. The diversity of businesses is paralleled by the diversity of people. Yuppies drink their coffee, angst-ridden youth frequent the head shop and tattoo parlor, while college students go to the mid-priced bars and lawyers go to the expensive ones. They all meet after hours at the dance clubs. The homeless punctuate the sidewalks of the area, particularly around the Fountain.

It seems that as the area has become less popular, the conflict between the businesses and the homeless has become more frequent. Clearly profit is the central concern for these businesses; few of them would deny this. They often frame the issue as a matter of community revitalization and quality of life, but these are only intermediate concerns between the homeless and the bottom line. Their essential premise is that customer bases are negatively impacted by the presence of the homeless. The owner of an expensive optical shop, for example, was quoted in the Birmingham News, "I would say there are people who don't want to come down here to do business with me because they don't want to contend with it" (Coman 2006b).

Responses from businesses to the general deterioration of the area, to which they feel the homeless make a significant contribution, has taken direct and indirect forms. Direct approaches have included advising their patrons not to give money to panhandlers and to deny the homeless access to their facilities. Signs are conspicuous in almost every storefront, "Restrooms are for customers only". While we certainly can be sympathetic to a business not wanting to be the public restroom for the whole town, in Five Points, the rule is not uniformly applied. As a test, we walked into various restaurants and asked to use the restroom and were never denied. This is not the case for the street homeless. The idea is to keep undesirable elements away from customers and also to make the area as uncomfortable and uninviting for the homeless as possible. More directly, in some businesses there is a flyer posted advising people not to give money to the street

homeless, citing that they will only use it to buy drugs and alcohol. One bar's entrance is adorned with a large sign reading, "No bums, hobos, or transients allowed."

These practices have increased tensions and exacerbated problems. The street homeless note that there is nowhere for them to use the restroom, since they are forbidden by the businesses and the city does not provide any. As a result, one particular incident has become legendary. Businesses, police officers, and even service providers have all told various versions of an instance where a homeless person defecated on the doorstep of a Five Points business. One police officer concluded his telling of it by suggesting that the homeless should at least have enough self-respect to "go in the bushes." The story is heralded as evidence of "the problem." In the estimation of the businesses and local government, it captures the way in which the homeless are a constant nuisance, a threat to businesses, and simply disgusting. However, the street homeless in the area fill in some details. As it turns out, a homeless man in a state of digestive emergency went to the restaurant and begged to use the bathroom, admitting to them that he understood it was against the rules and that he would not ask unless it was truly an emergency. The restaurant refused. Later, in an act of retaliation and protest, the man intentionally defecated on their doorstep. Regardless of one's moral assessment of the act, the construction of the doorstep defecation legend clearly illustrates the agenda of businesses. The way in which businesses and city officials construct the doorstep defecation story is a clear example of the way that interests play out in narratives, and also betrays their position on the homeless. The telling of businesses and city officials leaves out information that casts the restaurant as rigid and heartless. The tone is that the manager and employees simply arrived one morning to find that someone had randomly defecated on their doorstep, with no other explanation than the fact that the homeless are animalistic.

During the majority of our research period, vagrancy legislation was prominent on the political scene. A "doorways" ordinance had been passed which prohibited homeless people from sleeping in doorways on the sidewalk and the city councilman representing the downtown district had proposed an "Urban Camping Initiative". This would have made it illegal to "stay" on public property without a permit, an intentionally ambiguous and pointed policy, since one cannot apply for a permit without an address. The councilman was recently not re-elected, but our interview with him was nonetheless illuminating.

"The parks are for everyone. You should not be able to be in the park with your belongings scattered about, making someone else uncomfortable," he told us. This is clearly inconsistent. If the parks *are* for everyone, this logically would include the homeless (see Waldron 2000). Being uncomfortable at another's mere presence is not legal grounds for their removal. A racist white man cannot have an African American family banned from a public park because he is made uncomfortable by their presence, but somehow, this was seen as a legitimate position when applied to the homeless. This is indicative of the pervasiveness of the stigma and particularly the notion of choice. The only possible justification for applying this to the homeless, but not an ethnic group, for example, would be that people choose to be homeless, that they are somehow morally culpable for the condition. In essence, the only logical justification is that homelessness has a moral component whereas other demographic qualities do not. To legislate particularly against the street homeless, one must hold that it is not morally legitimate to be street homeless. In response to the city councilman's remarks, Lawton Higgs, a radical advocate, noted, "You see, that's a symbol of our sickness. Someone's poverty should not offend you."

At Catchout Corner police harassment is less pervasive than at Five Points. Sweeps are connected to local events such as the annual City Stages Music Festival, the Mercedes Marathon,

or the Crawfish boil or the occasional complaint from the few nearby businesses, but these are relatively rare. Naturally the most intense pressure comes from the officer who works the area. The men just call him by his car unit number, #122, and dislike him intensely. They tell stories about him driving down the sidewalk where they sleep and arresting people simply for being on the "wrong side" of the bridge. Of course, we could not verify these stories directly, but they were frequent and rather consistent between participants. But we were able to directly make contact with #122, set up an appointment at the police station, and conducted a face to face interview. We found #122 to be an archetype for the conservative approach that was playing out amongst businesses and the city council.

Most telling was his estimation that the street homeless typically were addicts and beggars. "The guys at Catchout Corner would be the hardcore drug addicts." When asked what could be done about homelessness he replied that there was "no hope" for those type of people. While #122 explained that there was no way he could lock them all up, since the jails are overcrowded, he noted that he had to move them from one spot to another occasionally. He claimed that charitable donations did, in fact, enable their homelessness in general and their addiction in particular:

> People think, 'oh this guy's just down on his luck, but they don't know where that money is really going. That guy will take that money and buy alcohol or crack or they will sell the things people give them, blankets, whatever. They can sell pretty much anything.

Finally, #122 discussed how homeless people manipulate the system, for example by saying they are suicidal so they can get an evaluation in a hospital, delaying their booking into the jail.

Suffice it to say, #122 holds a negative view of the homeless. At one point he mentioned, "I get up and go to work every day, so I don't see why they can't." Similar statements were

made by other police officers. Several times, at Food not Bombs (FNB) picnics[29] police officers would arrive and harass the homeless and the FNB volunteers. Socio-political arguments would erupt between FNB volunteers and the police officers (FNB is a very political, very protest-oriented group). Police officers typically would reflect the same conceptualizations of the homeless that #122 embraced. In their estimation, most people chose to be homeless, many were criminals, and others a nuisance at best.

Vagrancy legislation and general police harassment are the direct result, not of the existence of homelessness, but the immediate presence of homeless people, as we discussed in chapter 2. The goal of business is not the alleviation of homelessness, but the quarantining of homeless people. Storefronts are interested in keeping the homeless away. They may therefore support efforts to help people get off the streets, but they equally support subversive tactics designed to literally push people out of their part of town into whatever other area. The consistency of these two approaches for those with a conservative approach betrays a foundational premise of self-interest, a concern for ones own financial interests. While service providers consciously are interested in helping the homeless get off the streets for their own sake, businesses and city officials, particularly the police, are interested in minimizing the purported nuisances.

Service Providers: The Hegemony of Helping

Freire (1994) contends that charity is oppressive. His argument is that in efforts to help the oppressed, the privileged replicate the structural power dynamics that are at the foundation of oppression. This is clearly characteristic of the dominant service provider model. We have termed their general approach as a liberal-oriented perspective, but one that works within the

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[29] As we will discuss, FNB is a radical, group organized only by the ideology that food is a right and, in Birmingham, on the notion of reclaiming public spaces. They hold feedings (they call them picnics) at the Fountain in Five Points.

same paradigm as the conservative approach of the police, business, and local government. In this section, we describe our research experiences in more detail to buttress our conceptualization of the current, dominant model of homeless service provision as hegemonic. Generally, the dominant service model relies on authority, something that the street homeless eschew, almost by definition.

While the thrust our research concerned the street homeless themselves, we naturally developed close contact with the service providers. We used these contacts to pursue a comparison of those on the streets and those in the shelters as well as being able to delve into complaints about the shelters. Several of our experiences highlight and add to the small literature on the medicalization of the homeless (Hopper 2003; Lyon-Callo 2000; Mathieu 1993; Snow et al. 1986), and the idea of medicalization will frame our discussion here.

The Medical Model

Homeless services underwent a significant shift throughout the 20th century, from emergency shelters to continuum of care. The emergency shelter model also is known as "three hots and a cot," because the focus simply is on providing the basic necessities of food and shelter. The dominant continuum-of-care models were based on the idea that food and shelter did not address the underlying needs of the homeless. The now dominant model of homeless service provision is directly historically rooted in the idea of treatment, and especially treatment for individual problems such as addiction. Continuum of care is a social programming model, characterized by case management and enrollment in treatment for one's problems. Ideally, although not always, individuals are provided transitional housing after completing treatment programs, with the goal of re-assimilating them into society. Rules and restrictions become less stringent in

transitional housing and slowly autonomy is returned to the homeless person. While they per-

form a variety of services, such as helping their clients get identification, job training, and life

skills coaching, their primary focus typically is addiction treatment and mental health counseling.

Other services are supplementary, and given the preponderance of people enrolled in treatment

programs relative to the total number of beds in the shelters, it is fair to say that in many shelters,

access to these other types of services is restricted to those enrolled in treatment programs. In

other words, to get job training or transitional housing, one must first "go through the steps" of

the addiction and/or mental health treatment programs. At a well-known shelter in Birmingham,

estimates are as high as thirty out of forty-two beds given to those enrolled in treatment pro-

grams.

The street homeless are quite conscious of the preference given to those enrolled in

treatment programs. "You gotta be in the program to get a bed," a man in Five Points reflected

the common sentiment. But this also expresses a sentiment of alienation of those who, for what-

ever reason, are not willing to submit to treatment in order to get food, shelter, or the myriad of

other addendum-benefits at the shelters. Also, as we previously described, those who use ser-

vices without enrolling in programs are stigmatized by shelter workers and those in treatment, a

notion summarized by the sanction-laden term "frequent flyers".

Medicalization is a process by which non-medical conditions become understood in a

medical framework (Conrad 2007). The essence of homelessness is simply that one does not

have a home. There is no inherent pathology. The emergency shelter model seems to work di-

rectly from this paired-down version. That is, a homeless person needs shelter, so the emergency

model gives them shelter. The continuum of care model works off a conceptualization that folds

other conditions into that of being homeless. In the conceptualization of this dominant model,

homelessness primarily is either caused by, or at least inextricably linked to, addiction and mental illness. This emphasis is made clear by the preponderance of treatment for these rather than other services.

While most shelter directors are savvy enough to understand the structural economic conditions that predicate homelessness, generally they work around them (see Lyon-Callo 2000). Steve, a shelter director in Birmingham, was a particularly compelling example. An extremely progressive individual, and extremely sympathetic to the structural explanations of homelessness, he was in an interesting position. Despite his recognition of social structural constraints, as a shelter director, he felt confined to working on individual pathology problems. He noted that the real solution was prevention. "People shouldn't be coming to me, we need to keep them from becoming homeless. This should be a last resort." Moreover, Steve was sympathetic to the complaints about the shelters, such as being crowded, dangerous, etc. Over the course of several years and multiple interviews he was working on the creation of a new facility that rectified many of these immediate problems.

Steve was by far, the most progressive shelter director we met. This was made particularly clear at the aforementioned meeting of service providers where a proposal for a "no strings café" was discussed. We have noted that after the initial pitch, various directors of various service programs began to add string after string. "How can we get case managers in there to help people," "We have to let people know about this or that program," etc. Wasserman raised the point that these were the types of things that were alienating a certain portion of people and that if the idea specifically was to feed, that it would be compromised by things like case management. This was met with general rejection. One woman noted that the survey that prompted the initiative was done at shelters, so therefore, the target group was the service using population

who were not getting food on the weekends. "So it's not necessarily about feeding everyone." Another shelter director nodded, "Good point." While this was the common response, Steve was the exception. With a characteristically troubled and introspective manner, Steve noted, "I think that we [service providers] need to hear some of those things and think about the ways we can improve. It's hard because we've been doing certain things for so long, but we can question those things and make improvements."

While we interviewed most of the shelter directors in the city, Steve best illustrates the pervasiveness of the medicalization model, because, while he is not personally disposed to the individual pathology explanation of homelessness, he nonetheless directs a shelter whose primary focus is on the treatment of those conditions. He always appeared to have an inner struggle over this. In essence, Steve, and the shelter he directs, can be seen as the most difficult test case for the medical model; it exists there in spite of conscious recognition of its shortcomings.

Seeing medicalization in the dominant model of homeless service provision requires relatively little abstraction. When, with Steve's permission, we checked into the shelter that he directs, we were immediately given a needs assessment. Addiction and mental illness factored most prominently into the response sets to questions about why we were homeless. While we only stayed one night, had we stayed longer we would have been assigned to a case manager. In order to insure we did not take a bed from someone truly in need, Steve declared an "inclement weather day". Otherwise, we may not have been let in at all since a preponderance of beds were given to full-time residents in treatment rather than "frequent flyers" such as ourselves. A young man told Wasserman at dinner to claim he was addicted to Klonipin so that he could get enrolled in "the program" and be guaranteed a bed. In sum, while one might secure temporary shelter without entering the treatment program, lasting services required submission to it.

More specifically, the medicalization of homelessness reflects similar historical power dynamics between doctor and patient. The doctor diagnoses and treats the patient, while the patients role is to passively accept the authority of the doctor (Parsons 1951, see also Clair 1990; Clair and Allman 1993). The service providers play the role of expert-doctors, by diagnosing and treating the homeless. Lyon-Callo (2000) notes that failure to accept the diagnosis, typically of addiction or mental illness, can result in expulsion from the shelter. In other words, in order to receive services, at least consistently, one must allow their homelessness to be defined by the service providers, they must accept the diagnosis. This perfectly reflects Freire's notion of oppression of helping. To get help, the homeless must accept the ontological disposition of the shelter that is one must allow their world to be defined by those with authority.

In the next section we examine the way in which the medical model fits into a broader American ideology, specifically notions of justice and fairness consistent with American capitalism.

Justice and Exchange: The Logic and Insufficiency of Fairness

The traditional service providers, with few exceptions, overtly write-off the homeless who refuse their services (see also Hopper 2003). In their minds, they have created an opportunity structure in which homeless people, like the guys at Catchout corner, can get help. The logic goes that since the opportunity structure exists, those not taking advantage of it are doing so by their own choice. Since the street homeless opt out, their homelessness is their own problem; there is no remaining social obligation to help such people. Service provision strategies become about creating and promoting the opportunity structure. If such an opportunity structure exists and is known, the rest is up to the homeless themselves.

Of course, this is familiar logic and it resonates with our notions of fairness. Americans, in fact, are fond of ascribing this logic to the problem of homelessness as a whole. In the land of opportunity, your fortune (or misfortune) is your own responsibility; equal opportunity is the obligation of society, anything beyond that, any use of opportunity or outcome from it, are the responsibility of the individual. If you are poor, it is because you did not work hard enough. Service providers may recognize that no such equal opportunity structure exists in broader society, but they conceptualize their own projects with a remarkably similar logic.

This opportunity structure view further is characterized by exchange. In other words, using the opportunity structure is not free, but requires some concession. For example, to use a bed at a shelter may require that you enroll in a treatment program. Often the homeless significantly benefit from this treatment and the exchange is successful. Other times, the homeless are able to manipulate this system, for example by submitting to an addiction treatment program when they are not addicted (as suggested by Wasserman's shelter acquaintance). Sometimes these requirements keep people away.[30] This third outcome is our primary interest here. Those that benefit from services, either legitimately or by deception, are welcomed as long as they make the proper concessions, i.e. obey the rules. But those that "stay away" if not totally, at least in spirit, are the ones who service providers excuse from their obligations, and quite consciously. In this section, we provide evidence from our research which illustrates the prominence of this exchange model and the way in which service providers appeal to universal principles of fairness. We conclude by suggesting the insufficiency of this model and offer an alternative viewpoint.

[30] Again, we are oversimplifying here. Most of the time service providers offer some unconditional services and other conditional services. For example, a shelter might offer lunch to anyone, but dinner for residents only. Also, most homeless use *some* services. In our conceptual scheme, non-service users represent a mentality toward services rather than a total rejection of them.

We again turn to the meeting about the no-strings-café to highlight the ideological nature that underlies the medical model and here we give a more detailed description. The idea was the brainchild of a shelter director named Chris Retan and the meeting brought together an eclectic mix of people related to the homeless service provision in various ways. It was therefore an explicit coming-together of service providers to discuss service provision and so was highly informative. Notably present were the directors of the cities main shelters and treatment facilities, including the director of the local coalition of homeless service providers (MBSH), Michelle Farrelly, and also the director of CAPS, a citywide security force funded by local business, Theresa Nix. The impetus for the café had been two-fold. First, an MBSH survey had "revealed" that 20% of people surveyed had listed food as one of their needs. This shocked the service providers, as they felt, with good reason, that if there was one thing they did well, it was provide food. So they constructed a follow up survey, which suggested that food distribution on the weekends was problematic. A second motivating factor was the growing hostility toward the homeless from local businesses. Many of the service providers including Farrelly, who was particularly fervent on the issue, thought this conflict was being exacerbated by "drive-by feedings." These are instances where churches or other groups independently provide food at homeless gathering spots, which often also are spaces of commerce. Although not mentioned at the meeting, the recently organized FNB group was at the forefront of this issue and had been prior contacted and criticized by both Farrelly and Retan.

Motives aside, Retan's idea was quite progressive, particularly in this room. With the intentionally narrow goal simply of feeding people, he explained that his vision was a place that was "warm and welcoming," where one did not have to be enrolled in a program or talk to a case manager in order to get food. After his brief exposition, he opened the floor for suggestions and

subsequently saw his vision bastardized and compromised in the most complete sense. Farrelly, a paradigm for the traditional mentality, immediately suggested that they staff the place with social workers and offer literature and program information, "even if it is not required." Several others made similar suggestions. While we had not anticipated speaking up, the group was clearly moving away from Retan's vision and so we decided to attempt a reframing of the issue. This prompted Wasserman's suggestion that such things might be alienating, "even if they are not required." As we previously noted, response to his comment was polite, but firm rejection.

A number of subsequent remarks were noteworthy. Theresa Nix from CAPS stated that most of these people were willing to listen to the sermons by the drive-by feeders and so they were obviously willing to do *something* in exchange for food. Of course, this argument rests on a quasi-empirical assessment biased by the fact that only those who *are* willing are sitting through such sermons. Those that are not willing are not around to be observed. Another woman reacted more favorably, but worked Wasserman's comment into the treatment paradigm suggesting that his concern could be satisfied if volunteers and counselors at the café were properly trained to not put that sort of pressure on the homeless. A largely unrelated remark later came from a formerly homeless woman who talked about providing hope and spiritual food and Farrelly immediately followed up with another comment about letting people know about treatment options; she seemed to operationalize "hope" as treatment programs.

The key point here is that everyone seemed implicitly to agree that by providing food they accrued the right to make demands or place constraints on those who received it. To accept food was to become obligated to hear what the social worker had to say, to hear about treatment programs, to be talked to about one's problems. Of course this reflects the medical model, most famously noted by Parson's (1951), where the implicit condition of seeking treatment is follow-

ing the course prescribed by the authority, i.e. the doctor. More generally, this reflects a westernized value of fairness, which underlies the logic of the exchange paradigm. In a capitalist exchange model, we have no positive obligations to help, only negative obligations to not harm. Giving food is a positive action of helping. In order to be folded into the exchange logic of our culture, to be consistent with our notions of fairness and obligation, giving must not be an end in itself, but produce a reciprocal obligation. After all, it would not be fair for someone to simply *get* food and not *give* something in return.

Obviously, there is another way to approach the issue. While it certainly feels odd to suggest that the principle of fairness is not a good guiding principle (what kind of person is against fairness?), this is exactly what we suggest in regards to helping the homeless. There is nothing beyond culture that necessitates a reciprocal obligation when helping the homeless, or anyone else. This does not preclude offering the very same types of treatment programs that currently exist. Rather it calls into question the idea that the rejection of these programs is cause to exclude a group of people from one's scope of helping.

Clearly many service providers do react with exclusion and it is understandable. They work as hard to set up and run these programs, and are then rejected by a certain subsection of the people they intend to help. It is not difficult to understand how this can be taken as insulting. It is not difficult to understand how they might then reject new ideas about how to interact with the homeless, like those of FNB or Retan's café. After all, their prior efforts went unappreciated. Besides that, no one thinks they owe anyone this help in the first place; they have lived up to the universal principle of fairness, and nothing ethically compels them to act beyond that. But as understandable as the exclusion-by-fairness reaction is, if the ultimate goal is to offer help, appealing to a principle of fairness is irrelevant and counterproductive.

There is no reason to think that a café whose sole purpose is to give food unconditionally is an insufficient service, particularly if the criteria for sufficiency, the inclusion of social workers and treatment programs, negatively impact this goal. There is a fundamental difference between charity and exchange that is seemingly eroding. Ideally charity is a pure act of giving, free from expectation and even from questions of who deserves to receive it. Increasingly, however, charity is an exchange act where, by giving, we receive commodities such as bracelets, buttons, bumper stickers, or our name on a plaque. Similarly, if "charity work" becomes largely about *work* then it flirts dangerously close to the exchange paradigm; "giving" becomes "working for". The blurring of this distinction facilitates mental blocks to types of homeless service provision that reject the exclusion of those who refuse to reciprocate.

Ultimately the question facing service providers should not be whether they have a right to expect particular behavior in exchange for their services. Evolving out of this exchange mindset opens up a fundamentally different and needed approach to service provision, but it is not necessary to reject it altogether. Instead, one could take the position that providing food does create a reciprocal obligation, but nonetheless conclude that even without reciprocity, giving is better than not giving. By taking this stance, one would see reciprocal exchange as ideal, but recognize the value that remains in a nonreciprocal exchange. Regardless of whether one rejects the condition of reciprocity altogether, or subverts it for utilitarian considerations, this much seems clear: As long as the notions fairness embedded in American capitalism continue fundamentally to guide the provision of services, the street homeless will continue to be alienated.

Power versus Empowerment: The Maintenance of the Medical Model

Freire (1994) notes that until oppressed individuals are empowered to define their own reality and seek their own ends, their oppression will continue. This is true of the dominant model of homeless service provision; it both replicates the oppressive power structure of society at large and perpetuates it. It *replicates* stratification by alienating the street homeless from services when they are unwilling to allow their reality to be defined by anyone other than themselves. The homeless are a stratified group within themselves, with the street homeless on the bottom. The dominant model of service provision *perpetuates* stratification by reproducing the same oppressive power dynamics that are part and parcel to being poor. That is, being poor in the United States is characterized by a loss of control over one's own life, an increased reliance on institutions, which give sustenance but not empowerment. In the shelter one may be "cured" of addiction, but they likely remain desperately poor. Recidivism is the natural result.

Homelessness is predominantly an offshoot of poverty, where poor people become even poorer, and as such, it is a problem of stratification. In other words, it is a problem of severe economic inequality. In more egalitarian societies homelessness does not exist or at least not in a socially significant form (e.g. Canada, Sweden, etc). The clear relationship between structural inequality and homelessness, and the focus of service providers on addressing individual pathology, suggests that these services are little more than a cyclical band-aid. This is particularly highlighted by research that notes that these individual pathologies often are the result, not cause, of one's homelessness (e.g. Conley 1996). The question then becomes, "How can such an unsuccessful model become so entrenched?"

Of course, we have been overly simplistic in highlighting the problematics of the model. The shelters do have their successes. As we have observed it, those who are successful are those

who are homeless only for a short period of time and who are generally more institutionally savvy, i.e. they had good jobs for a long time, retain strong family ties, are more educated. The current service model also has success with those for whom homelessness *is* the direct result of addiction. Our discussion of Big E is a good example. He always defined his homelessness as related to addiction. He therefore fit well into the shelter and was successful in using the treatment model to get off the streets.

But this suggests that the failures of the dominant service model are not simply the failures of the individual homeless, but rather that services only address certain types of homelessness, and that an entire subset of homeless whose homelessness is not defined (by them) as related to an individual pathology will not be successful in utilizing existing services. This is systematic, not individual; whole types are excluded.

The exclusivity with which this model is maintained also can be explained in terms of the vested interest of service providers. This consideration is two-fold. First, a significant portion of Federal funding for shelters is based on enrollment in treatment programs. When we first heard the accusation of the street homeless that the shelters were "a racket," we largely dismissed it as paranoid. However, the way in which the individual pathology model is financially mandated by the government, even at the Federal level, adds legitimacy to this position.

Secondly, entire careers are built on providing services for the homeless within the confines of the continuum of care paradigm. It would be quite a personal feat for one to subvert the very orientation by which they themselves are employed. One academic, formerly involved in Healthcare for the Homeless, who takes a radical perspective on the issue of homelessness summed this up, "I was in New York at a conference and we were getting coffee and I heard

someone say that Columbia was offering a masters degree in homeless service provision. And I thought, that's it's… its over."

We do not wish to suggest that those with vested financial interests in the dominant model consciously celebrate the existence of homelessness. They nearly all are sincere in their efforts. Nonetheless, as social scientists, we cannot ignore the way in which certain approaches to homelessness are reinforced by financial structures.

Moreover, while financial investment in the dominant model may not serve as a conscious impetus for its maintenance, service providers do engage in other, conscious justifications of the status quo. Several shelter directors and the director of the MBSH have expressed a great deal of concern, if not irritation, with various independent groups who feed the homeless on the streets. This includes a variety of church groups and also FNB. Shortly after they began to hold their picnics, FNB was approached by these service providers to cease and desist. FNB was told that they were angering local businesses because their (*once-weekly*) picnics supposedly were contributing to the congregation of the homeless in the Five Points area. Additionally, it was noted that these types of street feedings "enabled" the homeless to stay on the streets. The service providers routinely referred to groups like FNB as "drive-by feedings".

The concept of "enabling" comes directly out of the modern addiction literature, which, not coincidentally, takes a rather medicalized view of addiction. We also have been confronted with this criticism because we bring toothpaste, food, and socks to our research participants. The essence of the enabling critique is that giving supplies to the homeless makes it significantly easier to stay on the street. In the view of service providers, this is problematic because it is an impediment to the homeless person "hitting bottom," which is a point at which they become desperate enough to ask for help. Of course, the presupposition is that the help they need is the

treatment programs at the shelters; as we noted, there is little other help available. Finally, the enabling argument rests on the quite questionable premise that giving someone food or tooth-paste makes it significantly easier to live on the streets. Our three-day stints on the street made it clear to us that this is by no means the case. There is nothing easy about living on the streets, regardless of how much toothpaste one has or how many pairs of socks.

The terms "enabling" and "drive-by feedings" are attempts to use language to buttress the current service paradigm (see Mathieu (1993) for an additional discussion of medicalization of homelessness rhetoric). That is, they imply alternative, institutionally independent services im-pede the "real solution". As a play on the phrase "drive-by shooting" the phrase "drive-by feed-ing" goes so far as to equate feeding people with shooting people. The director of MBSH noted, "I'm tired of people saying bad things about *my* homeless people." She blamed "drive-by feed-ings" for fanning the flames of this hatred particularly by making businesses angry. The service providers largely desired to appease the complaints of business and the city. This, of course, is likely tied to funding they receive from these institutions. While the city of Birmingham has not done so, other cities have passed laws against street feedings and people have literally been jailed for giving food to the homeless (e.g. McKay 2006; Pratt 2005). In an ontological sense, these linguistic tactics suggest a right and wrong way to serve the homeless, putting the dominant paradigm on the preferable side of that line.

Homeless service provision is a social institution guided by professional service provid-ers. As such its concerns extend into broader social, political, and economic arenas. Self-regulation is an essential feature of a profession (Goode 1957; Starr 1982). Not just anyone can practice medicine and legal prosecution awaits those who try. Homeless service provision has these same characteristics, including increasingly legal prohibitions against those who would

provide services for the homeless without the appropriate credentials. Of course, the self-regulation of a profession has the effect of promoting certain conceptions over others.   The AMA subverted homeopathic medicine to the extent that AMA physicians were prohibited from conferring with "irregulars" (Baker 1984).

Professional boundaries are reinforced and perpetuated by financial interests, ontological domination, and social and legal coercion. The dominant model of homeless service provision is a growing profession, replete with all of these characteristics.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

In this section we have tried to illustrate the problematics of the dominant model of homeless service provision. Working within a medicalized conception of homelessness, service providers rely on the authority to diagnose and treat the homeless, and inversely on the submission of the homeless to the particular conceptualization of their homelessness as individual pathology. More generally, the traditional model rests on the premise that the homeless are a problem and that they are a solution. Even where shelter directors and workers consciously reject that notion, they reinforce it in action. Moreover, we have attempted to locate the ways in which this medical model is entrenched both in a basic American notion of fairness embedded in capitalism and the way in which vested financial interests serve to maintain it even when it clearly falls short. Ultimately, we have attempted to raise questions about whether a condition that results from inequality can be addressed by an institution that replicates and perpetuates inequality.

We noted at the outset of this chapter that the problem/solution conceptualization of homelessness is insufficient. Our goal in part one was to give a broader account, showing that street homelessness is not wholly problematic, and to this point in part two we hope to have

shown the ways in society tends to approach homelessness, that is the conservative and liberal approaches, are not good "solutions". In fact, the conceptualization of the homeless as "the problem" is the shared foundation of both conservative and liberal approaches and ultimately is the reason they both are oppressive. To define a group as "the problem" legitimizes stripping them of power and autonomy. Conceptualizing homelessness then becomes the rightful domain of everyone except for the homeless themselves. Business, local governments, police, and service providers all assert their authority over the lives of the homeless. They therefore reflect and perpetuate the very problematic social dynamics typically at the root of homelessness.

In the next section we describe typical religious approaches to homelessness and the way in which they coincide with the legal and treatment approaches we have already described.

Jesus the Physician: Religious Approaches to Homelessness

In chapter two, we noted a general dearth of academic attention paid to the ways in which religious groups approach homelessness. We suggested that this might be partly due to the fact that large variation makes broad categorizations such as "Christian" rather meaningless. The countless numbers of people and groups with beliefs, often in polar opposition to one another, who invoke the category Christian, that the designation itself does little to characterize them. However, we use this section to identify two general faith-based approaches under the broad rubric of Christianity. We again employ the conservative-liberal dichotomy to characterize these two variants and to illustrate the ways in which they parallel the legal and treatment approaches we have already discussed. A third perspective is more radical, resembling liberation theology. We discuss this in the context of a local pastor named Lawton Higgs, in the subsequent section on radical approaches to homelessness.

Like conservative legal approaches, some religious groups stand in accusation of the homeless as corrupt. The notion of sin has permeated Christianity, particularly since Augustine, and in the eyes of many, the homeless represent the sins of mankind. For many of these groups, sin is employed as part of a punishment paradigm, an approach to controlling human behavior; this is the classic notion of "don't do X or you'll go to Hell." Of course this assumes an entire order of the universe, discussion of which is beyond the scope of this project. For our purposes, it assumes that humans inherently need external motivations to "do right," and specifically that the homeless need them. The underlying logic of choice suggests that the homeless have lost touch with God and are therefore immersed in a world of immorality.

Perhaps this seems heavy-handed. We would have thought so too, until we encountered Mama Reatha, the woman mentioned earlier who pulled up in her car yelling, "I brought food!" She got out, empty handed, introduced herself began to witness to the men. Throughout the course of her lecture, she told them that Jesus had come for the poor and that if they accepted him he would cure them of their wicked ways. As her presentation came to a close, she pointed to LarryAA and recounted her last visit, "This guy will tell you. Last time I was here I told the guys if they prayed that Jesus would provide the rest. So we all prayed and a little while later a van pulled up with food." This is what she had meant when she had yelled from her car. She had brought the power of prayer and salvation, spiritual food. She later got into an argument with Knucklehead when she told him that he obviously had not repented because he was still on the street. She told him that she could see the drugs all over him because the Lord had given her the "power of discernment."

There are other similar situations. Lockett told of a preacher who used to serve meals along with harangues about how they were sinners. "I bet there wouldn't be this kind of line if I was givin' away bibles!" Lockett recounted.

While we have already talked about the role this has in the tendency of the street homeless to hold fatalistic beliefs, discussion from the other side also is illuminating. What the "sinners" explanation of homelessness means is that nothing will have an impact on homelessness except their own willingness to reestablish a relationship with God. The condition of being homeless is just punishment for their sins, getting off the street a reward for "getting right with God." This of course conveniently alleviates social responsibility, even to the extent that it rejects the treatment model of service provision. Direct connections to the punishment-reward paradigm were made shockingly clear when Mama Reatha questioned Knucklehead, "Don't you want to have life and have it more abundantly? I accepted God and I can have whatever I want." Knucklehead asked her why, if she could have whatever she wanted, she was driving such a shoddy car. She told him, "I choose to drive that car. I can have whatever car I want." "You choose to drive *that* car?" Knucklehead exclaimed. The punishment-reward paradigm for Mama Reatha was particularly explicit, tied not only to reward in heaven, but also to real things on earth.

Despite invoking the name of Christ in proclaiming the homeless sinful, many other Christian groups likely would be appalled at such rhetoric. Many religious groups who do homeless outreach employ less fiery concepts of Christian charity, such as the biblical notion, "that which thou doeth to the least of my people, thou doeth to me" (Matthew 25). This classic version of Christian charity certainly is less offensive than the idea of saving the souls of the wicked, but closer examination suggests that notions of helping "the meek" replicate problematic

hierarchies in the same way as the medical model of homeless service provision. While less accusatory, the concept of Christian charity still rests on the idea of helping the less fortunate, but does little to empower them as agents in their own lives. The status of the givers and takers remains in tact and thus the structural social arrangements that predicate homelessness, and oppression in general, continue unmitigated. The meek are still the meek.

Not coincidentally, most service programs are supported, if not governed and staffed, by religious organizations. In all of our trips to shelters church groups served meals, with all being prefaced by prayer. While not typically of the hell-fire orientation, these prayers nonetheless suggested that all power for change lay in the hands of God (see also our previous discussion of the mantra, "God is good, and he's good everyday"). Again, the logic of this suggests that homelessness ultimately is God's choice, the natural order, implying that challenging political-economic structures, and ironically, by deduction, engaging in treatment of the homeless, is at best secondary to an individual's calling on a higher power.

Both of these religious approaches fit the dynamics of the medical model. While they vary in their subtlety, both suggest that the individual is problematic, either a sinner or the helpless meek. This establishes hierarchical relationships that call on these religious people to save the homeless; in each orientation salvation is managed by the privileged. Mama Reatha, again supplied the most explicit example of the connection between religious approaches and those of the medical model:

> This one right here (pointing at Hammer), you can see Jesus on this guys face, right here. But you know, he's come out here and gotten out in the wilderness. But you know something? Jesus had a wilderness experience too. And guess what happened after he went and had his wilderness experience? The angels came and ministered to him. And then what did he do? He went out and started healing the sick, you know, and causing the blind to see, cause he went out and started preaching, didn't he? And he preached to people just like ya'll. <She points her finger and pans across the crowd> And he wasn't for the upper class,

> he was for the one's that need the *physician*. He said those that are *sick* need the *physician* not them that are well. And these are the kind of people ya'll are <another sweeping point> that Jesus went walking about and ministering to when he was here on earth.

Whether sick souls or sick minds, the medicalization of homelessness maintains structures, which empower people other than the homeless to define and deal with homelessness. Critique of this dynamic underlies those whom we classify as taking a radical perspective, including one whose radicalism is rooted in his religious beliefs.

In the next section we describe various radical perspectives, a diverse array of views tied together only by a commitment to subverting the problem-solution paradigm. Radicals maintain a robust conceptualization of society as the problem. For them it is not the homeless who are sick, but social structure and even those of us who unconsciously participate in it. While service providers like Steve may be sympathetic to these positions to some extent, radicals are distinguished by a rather total rejection of the dominant model, a view that acquiescence is unacceptable, that the system cannot be saved.

Slaves not Sinners: Radical Approaches to Homelessness

The comedian George Carlin took the American ideal of freedom to task suggesting something like, "We don't have real choice. Our choices are between a bagel or a muffin." The problem-solution framework has limited us to two ways of approaching homelessness. The conservative and liberal perspectives are the bagels and muffins of homeless service provision. They both presuppose that the homeless are the problem and offer solutions that ultimately replicate the problematic power dynamics, which are at the root of homelessness. Conservative approaches use an explicit and physical form of power to quarantine the homeless; liberal approaches use a hegemonic, persuasive form of power to treat them. Radical approaches naturally

are varied. Unlike the service providers, uniformity, which requires institutionalization, is in many ways the antithesis of radical perspectives. At best, radicals have a loose camaraderie formed on identification of and resistance to oppressive power structures. Particularly in light of the problematics of the dominant model already identified, radical perspectives offer a real alternative to current practices. In this section we describe several examples of radical homeless service provision. While we have already woven some of these examples into the text, here we give a more systematic treatment to radical approaches to homelessness, which work from very different premises than those approaches we have so far addressed.

Ralph Hendrix, director of a university program that offers community based alternatives to prison (TASC), most clearly addressed a needed paradigm shift. We interviewed him early in our project, and at the time were ourselves enmeshed in the problem solution paradigm. "What can be done to help get these people off the streets?" we asked.

> I'm not so sure that there needs to be a steadfast decision to get people off the streets. I think perhaps there needs to be some green areas in all cities where people might want to live, I don't even know if the goal is to get them off the streets, if that is where they so choose, then there needs to be those opportunities in terms of shelters, different kinds of ideas of shelters, and that sort of thing sure should be made available, but for someone that because of a diagnosis can't quite at most times of the year, or some times of the year, might not want to live in 90 degree walls made of cheep cardboard, which is what this office is, surrounded by brick with no wind, I might add and very little sunshine, I start thinking, maybe they've really got it right and we don't.

Hendrix would repeatedly challenge parameters like this. About service provision he noted:

> There is some saying in social work that there are no wrong doors for someone to get services. That goes part of the way, but the problem is why do you need *doors* to get services? Why can't we change the whole idea of where services are delivered or who delivers them and for what, to truly serve the folks that truly need it, it's got to be given to them.

Perhaps his most passionate and lengthy discussion was about the idea of community. Hendrix, like our other radical participants, felt that the root of a real solution depended on build-

ing relationships *with* the homeless, establishing a dialogue. Because he is employed as a direc-

tor of a probationary drug-testing program, Hendrix was particularly critical of the criminal jus-

tice system. He noted that the criminal justice system was a fractionalized, "Cartesian" system,

which was extraordinarily difficult for poor people without resources or institutional savvy to

negotiate:

> By Cartesian I mean it is based on rules, it's based on timetables, and it's based
> on a supposedly logical way of dispensing this concept called justice. And it
> worked to some extent a long time ago, they tell me. Right now all I see is a bro-
> ken, broken, desperately broken attempt at managing a whole variety of very
> needy poor folks. It's not a system, let's get that straight from the word go. It's
> not a criminal justice system. It's a whole variety of about five, six, seven differ-
> ent players and offices, some elected and some not, with separate budgets. The
> only person that really sees it as a system is the poor person that is trapped in it.

True to form, Hendrix suggested an alternative approach that focused on building community

relationships:

> There needs to be that dialogue. Some of the community courts are starting to
> develop that in some of the areas of the country where you have folks that can get
> services right there at court. Not let's go to court to go to prison, let's go to court
> for help. Imagine that! What a concept! Lets go to court for help where they are
> given lots of services, where they are getting medication, getting referrals treat-
> ment and also the folks that are pressing charges to be able to sit down and medi-
> ate some solutions and those are kind of things that need to be looked at in terms
> of different ways of doing business. We have to redefine this old stuff.

The notion of community and dialogue was explicitly addressed by all of our radical participants.

Their criticism was directed at power structures, including the government and service providers.

Community for them is measured by one's relationships with the most marginalized, not by the

extent to which one is assimilated into the dominant paradigm.

As described, FNB holds community picnics. While a large portion of those who attend

are homeless, someone claiming that FNB feeds the homeless will be quickly and decisively cor-

rected. "We'll feed anyone," they put it succinctly. Consistent with its radical ideological orien-

tation, FNB is a worldwide *non*-organization. In Birmingham, there is no official membership, rather a collection of people loosely organized on the sole premise that "food is a right". They are funded by food donations from individuals, local restaurants, the farmers market, and also from their own pockets. When people try to give money to FNB, the response is some variation of, "We don't take money, not because we don't want it, but we really don't have any structure to deal with it. We'd rather you just cook something vegetarian and bring it down on Sunday. Or if you can't cook, just come and eat."

We've already described the reactions of city government, business, and service providers to FNB's Sunday picnics. They were immediately held up as troublemakers by the city and Five Points businesses and the consistent, although differently angled, perspective of the service providers is that FNB is enabling the street homeless. The community-building ideal that Hendrix spoke of was true for FNB as well, although they were more antagonistic toward the power structures. The pressure put on FNB by the police, businesses, and the service providers only strengthened their resolve, not only to keep holding picnics, but also to continue to do it in the town square of Five Points. As one member put it, "I want everyone to see this, I want it to shock them, and I want it to call into question what they think about the poor and the homeless. I want to be right in their face." In the estimation of FNB, "reclaiming public space" is as much a service to the homeless and the community at large, as is giving food.

Lawton Higgs, the Pastor of a church in downtown Birmingham, with a congregation he estimates to be 50% homeless, pays particular attention to its political and economic causes. While the church serves over 700 meals a week and provides clothing and various types of counseling, Higgs also engages homelessness on a political level. This includes helping homeless people file complaints against the city, fighting police abuse, and lobbying against the criminali-

zation of homelessness at city council meetings. He also spearheaded the local chapter of a self-governed, grassroots political organization called the Coalition for the Homeless.

Not coincidentally, Higgs maintains an impeccable reputation among the street homeless. On the street, opinions about other service providers in the area vary from lukewarm to highly critical, but Higgs reputation was exclusively positive. The common sentiment among the homeless in Birmingham, echoed by one of our participants, was that, "He's the only one around that I've seen that actually does real things for homeless people."

Among the other service providers Higgs is seen as something of an outsider. His organization receives no federal funding and often he is not active in efforts by the coalition of service providers, the MBSH. In the course of our research, we routinely asked people whom we encountered for recommendations on others to interview and his name rarely was mentioned among the service providers. Steve was the only service provider to recommend him with any sort of enthusiasm; others spoke of him in a hushed tone. He clearly is seen as an agitator whose structural approaches are seen as peripheral, if not detrimental, to the work of mainstream service providers.

It also is no coincidence that Higgs' church receives no funding from government agencies. This adds support to the idea that particular approaches are financially mandated. Free from those constraints, Higgs is able engage systemic issues and openly call into question dominant conservative and liberal approaches. Steve's recommendation made this especially clear, "He can say things that I can't."

Higgs is openly and vehemently critical of all sorts of social institutions, he lets virtually no compromise slide. Yet at the same time, he carries a sincere ethos of togetherness, rooted in his religious and spiritual beliefs. This makes it difficult for the city government or local service

providers to dismiss him, despite the fact that they are often the targets of his criticism. For example, in a time where much service provider effort was directed at creating more shelter space, Higgs commented that more shelters were fine, but that as long as they operated as "night prisons" then they would not solve much.

Of government and retail businesses, Higgs contended that they wanted to create a shopping island in the city of Birmingham, expelling all of the poor and homeless from the area. Their failure, as he saw it, was not addressing the systemic issues of poverty and attendant considerations such as public transportation. Homelessness was an outgrowth of the "new economic Jim Crow" that plagues the country and the vagrancy legislation was, in his opinion, only exacerbating the problem.

> You are not going to solve homelessness with military solutions. You solve homelessness with justice. And the punishment, the exclusion and driving people out is not the solution. The solution is justice. So we will continue to give that witness and work for that, with whatever that requires.

Moreover, Higgs railed against businesses that openly exploited the homeless such as the plasma donation centers and temporary labor places. He argued the city should shut them down, noting an irony, "You can't run these hospitals around here without a blood supply. Birmingham is literally living on the blood of the homeless."

A deeply religious man, Higgs was of the mind that Christianity was founded on ideals of love, inclusiveness, and liberation of the soul. Slavery was a common theme in his discussions of the homeless, including his critique of other religious approaches to homelessness:

> If Moses would have shown up in Egypt and [told] the Hebrew slaves, and he told them the reason you have these problems, Hebrew slaves, is that your sinners, the Hebrew slaves would have laughed Moses out of there. Right? That is what everybody tells the homeless, that they are a problem and they are sinners. And then so that only bashes them down further. Right? In other words religion contributes to the oppression.

In the end, Higgs critique of the causes and "solutions" to homelessness turned on this notion of liberation. One can imagine why traditional service providers did not often recommend Higgs to us. Despite all of their efforts, Higgs was still critical of them, although he does it with a rather kind demeanor. That must be frustrating and confusing. But Higgs operates from a very different premise. By building new programs and more shelter space the service providers were still working within the same paradigm. For people like Higgs, they were simply rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic; they were missing all of the systemic factors, either totally or at least in practice.

In fact, it was Higgs who suggested we call our project, "American Refugees," "…because that is really what it is. Refugees are uprooted people, who have been uprooted by economic, and war and violence, right. And the homeless communities here have been uprooted either by economics, hatred and violence of some kind. So Catchout Corner is a refugee camp."

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It is important to note that the criticism leveled by radical approaches is of a specific kind. None of these alternative perspectives suggest that addiction or mental illness treatment necessarily is bad. Rather their criticisms concerned the exclusivity of these approaches and the methods used to exclude other considerations. Namely, vested interests in powerful positions maintained near total exclusivity of the dominant paradigm. Those like Hendrix, FNB, and Higgs would not suggest that there was no need for addiction treatment. Instead they confront the assumption that homelessness is a function of addiction, rather than a symptom of systemic oppression. They hold that individuals must be liberated from oppressive control, and that dynamics of oppression can be found not only in the government, but also businesses and even

homeless service provision. They reject these underlying arrangements, not the ostensible content; treating addiction is not problematic, but refusing to believe that someone is not homeless as the result of addiction is. Hendrix notes, "I don't believe experts. I believe people a majority of the time want to have the ability to communicate what their wants and desires are, and also need that incredible freedom to have a choice. We have to think differently than we have in the past."

Conclusion

In part one of this chapter we described the characteristics and lives of our street homeless participants. We attempted to show they are not, as the service providers suspected, wholly dysfunctional personalities. Rather we found on the street normal people in an immensely difficult situation. Moreover, we were able to locate quite admirable qualities in those who, in order to survive in such circumstances, must be creative and self-reliant. This is not to valorize them. We have also noted negative qualities that we observed. Nonetheless, in our description we hope to have countered the idea that the street homeless are "the problem".

Likewise, we have described our observations of three approaches to homelessness. The conservative-legal approaches and the liberal-service approaches both subvert the agency of the homeless person. The former seeks to quarantine, the latter to treat, but both retain conceptions of the homeless as sick. We have tried to illustrate why these two "solutions" are not very effective. The street homeless are emblematic of their failures. To highlight the insufficient paradigm of the legal and service approaches, we have described radical perspectives which subvert their paradigmatic assumptions altogether. These help us conceptualize real alternatives. This is especially important, since most homeless advocates and researchers ultimately make practical

recommendations which simply call for more services, without fundamentally reformulating the service model, these will only perpetuate its hegemony.

The themes of this chapter have emerged directly from our data, primarily our fieldnotes and interview transcripts. In the next chapter we use some of this thematic content to build fractal models of street homeless life and of different models of homeless service provision.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Society is complex at every level. At whatever scale—people, groups, organizations, institutions, society, or globally—complexity is part and parcel to the human world. Scientific investigators of the world always seek to separate simple notions from these entanglements; the epistemological thrust of science is differentiating, to break things down into simpler pieces and propositions (see chapter 3). While this provides useful and important knowledge, a great deal is lost in the process. An examination of the explanatory power of social scientific models illustrates the limitations of differentiating scientific practices. In social science, piecemeal models routinely peak at explaining forty-percent of the variance. This elucidates quite nicely the role of proposed components—the variables in the model—indeed they are related to the phenomenon in question, but most often, at least sixty-percent of the picture is left obscure. Moreover, methodological assumptions and problematics (among them: model specification, external validity of measures, assumptions of linearity, colinearity, and the ever-illusive question of causality) complicate matters. Nonetheless differentiating scientific practices, mostly by statistical quantification, are well suited for testing theoretical propositions, that is, the proposed relationships of variables. Despite its limitations, when predicated by well-developed theory and executed with appropriate rigor, quantitative methods can verify theoretical hypotheses. Nonetheless, the situation of this project requires a different approach than verification of theory, since, as we have argued, no good theoretical understanding exists of the street homeless vis a vis the homeless in general. This compels us to innovate on methods for generating theory, as discussed in chapter

3. Our fractal concept methodology, with MIC as the generator, allows us to produce models that retain complexity, rather than being flattened into linear hypotheses.

The purpose of this chapter is to identify key conceptual models that, because of their fractal nature, root specific observations about street homelessness at lower levels of scale within those at higher levels. In this way we present holistic theoretical models of street homelessness which conceptually link together the variety of social relationships that they have, namely with government, business, and the general public, and service providing institutions. In the previous chapter we detailed the emergent themes from our data. In this chapter we organize some of those key themes into conceptual models using fractal concept methodology.

Our theoretical models differ from those normally produced by grounded theory, because we do not seek only to differentiate component variables and assert linear propositions. By using fractal concepts we can iterate and catiterate between levels of scale, thus enabling us to systematically link small-scale observations, those made directly in the field, with observations, which emerge from conceptual analysis at larger scales. In other words, we can start with the observable contents of the data, the iterated concept structures and catiterate to higher levels of scale, to make structured observations about broader conceptual observations, for example of the nature of institutions themselves as opposed to being limited to particular organizations within an institutional complex, or particular people within those organizations. Social science, in general, and ethnography in particular, often makes these large-scale propositions, but they are not systematically linked to observations at smaller scales. Fractal concept analysis gives us the ability to do just this.

We provide two basic fractal concept structures to give formal theoretical explanation to a variety of our thematic observations in the preceding chapter. In the first model we character-

ize the life of the street homeless. In the second we detail the current dominant model of service provision counterposed with a Freirian service model. Illustrating the hegemonic process in the current model of service provision and suggesting a robust alternative, is significant since suggestions from most academic and public policy research calls for more services. Our findings suggest this will not be largely effective, particularly for the street homeless, without being complemented by a fundamental reorientation of the approach of those services.

Model One: Fractal Concept Model of Street Homeless Life

Our first model (Table 3) deals with the life of the street homeless and key interactions that they have.

Of course, this model is not inclusive, but rather we have distilled essential themes for logistical reasons. These themes illustrate essential aspects of street homelessness. Fractals iterate infinitely. For social science, iterations of conceptual fractals reach a point of diminishing returns of utility. In other words, we attempt to present here iterations that possess utility for social knowledge about the street homeless, with the acknowledgement that in theory our concept fractals can be iterated (or catiterated for that matter) infinitely.

Statics of Street Homelessness

Row 1 represents static level notions of street homelessness, what we might simply say are definitions of the street homeless. Within Row 1, column C shows the basic results of our data coding process, where recurrent codes were grouped into these thematic statements explicated in the previous chapter. The most basic conceptual understanding of the street

Table 3. Fractal Concept Model of Street Homeless Life

	A	B	C
1	Street homeless description		i. Live on primarily on the street
			ii. Resist shelters/institutions; get informal work; lack of nutritious food choices; exposure to elements, dangerous work, and drug culture; spatially and technologically separated from family and former friends
			iii. Poor physical and mental health
2	Street homeless struggle for freedom in the face of physical oppression	i. Street homeless reactions to business, police, and general public (Maintaining freedom and autonomy)	i. Poor people who have encountered particularly bad life events
			ii. Choose streets over shelters, encounter many hardships there, including harassment
			iii. Feeling: Shame, anger, fatalism Value: Maintain street living as innocent, aimed at autonomy
			iv. Use identity management and creativity to survive physically and socially against overt physical oppression
		ii. Conservative approaches to street homeless of business, police and general public (Physical oppression)	v. Legitimate citizens use law and entitlement to deal with street homeless, illegitimate citizens
			vi. Feeling: Put-upon, annoyed, afraid Value: Homeless as choice, protection of own quality of life
			vii. Maintaining community standards through, sweeps, jail, single purpose areas, etc
			viii. Vagrants, bums, lazy, nuisances
3	Struggle for autonomy in the face of hegemony of service providers	i. Street Homeless vis a vis service providers (Freedom and autonomy)	i. Poor people who have encountered particularly bad life events
			ii. Rationally choose streets over shelters
			iii. Reasons: dirty, unsafe, rules, degrading
			iv. Independent
		ii. Service providers vis a vis the street homeless (Hegemony)	v. Charitable authority
			vi. Authority for efficacy; legitimate generator of rules and rational order
			vii. Redefining choice of streets as illness, treatment of homelessness as illness
			viii. Addicts and mentally ill
4	Creative characters		i. Identity management as survival
			ii. Protectors, mediators, connectors
			iii. Freedom, autonomy, community, Americanism, Southern religion, hard work
			iv. Characters

homeless is simply that they live, at least primarily, on the street (1C-i). This nearly is tautological, but that is the characteristic of the static observation within an overall static level. Moving up one level within the same row and column (1C-ii), we can identify actions tending to be fundamental to the street homeless, i.e. tendencies by definition, a function of dynamic qualities embedded in an overall static conceptualization. We can note a variety of actions endemic to the condition itself of being street homeless, among them a tendency to resist shelters, to get work through informal organizations like the street corner, and to experience a deterioration of physical and social life resulting from exposure to the elements, poor nutrition from food choices and a lack thereof, exposure to substance use, increased stressors, spatially and technologically separated (i.e. no transportation, limited access to telephones) from family and former friends, etc (1C-ii). These dynamic elements are endemic to the static level condition of living primarily on the street. Furthermore, from these, we can find all sorts of valuative themes (1C-iii), the production of bad health from poor nutrition, exposure, and physically dangerous work, mental stress and from the insecure environment of the streets, and so on.

The conditions at 1C-iii are what have stimulated much homeless research and service aimed at getting people off the street. Moreover, the fulcrum most often used is found in the level two observation that the street homeless tend to resist using shelters. However, our analysis, here suggests that other interventions on behalf of the street homeless might also rectify the valuative problems at 1C-iii, for example by providing more healthy food choices, better public transportation, free public telephone and internet services for maintaining contact with friends and family, and areas in which people can use as relatively secure, sanitary, and protective street shelters (e.g. public-use cabins). The latter seems to be the thrust of the Housing First initiative.

For Row 1, the static observations in column C need only be catiterated back one level, that is, they comprise the essential components of street homeless life. However, Rows 2 and 3 involve relationships of the street homeless to particular groups and institutions and, as we will see, thus require an additional catiterative step to delineate the respective groups (column B) and then the overall relational notions (column A).

<p style="text-align:center">Dynamic Relationships of the Street Homeless</p>

Row 2 illustrates the dynamic relationships in which the street homeless are engaged. We group here government, police, the general public, and business, on the idea that these groups largely are committed to the alleviation of nuisance, as opposed to the rehabilitation of street homeless people, the thrust of the dominant model of homeless service provision (Row 3). Thus, we put these relationships at a more purely dynamic level, since they are not primarily mo- tivated by values or feelings, but rather the physical, or material, implications of street homeless- ness. That is, they simply do not want to see homeless people, however that might be accom- plished, rather than being motivated by a value orientation which suggests that the existence of street homelessness is fundamentally wrong (personally or socially). While they certainly share in this value orientation, it does not primarily color their relationship with the homeless. In other words, they do not crusade against street homelessness *because* of a notion that it is wrong to live on the street, but rather because of the many physical problems they believe are put upon them by the street homeless (decreasing retail profits, various nuisances, etc). They do possess particular valuative judgments about the street homeless, but, unlike the service providers who work *from* these considerations, the groups in Row 2 *employ* these valuative notions to serve

their ends, notably, ridding the streets of the homeless, with comparative disregard for the way in which this is accomplished.

We risk being overly general in this row and caution the reader that we intend this grouping to reflect particular similarities we find relevant, especially those which can be counterposed to service provision (Row 3), and moreover that the similar tendencies regarding the way in which they are identified here do not necessarily extend beyond the substantive concepts reflected in this model. In other words, concepts are fluid and thus observations of different groups can be conceptually aligned in some regards without being so in others. Two trees might be conceptually similar in regards to their patterns of branching, but radically different in terms of height and color, just as these groups might be aligned with regard to street homelessness without being so aligned elsewhere.

In Row 2, column C, we characterize both how the street homeless define themselves, act, and feel (i-iv) and also the ways in which they are defined by government, police, businesses, and the general public and how those groups act and feel in regards to their definitive conceptions (v-viii). Freire (1994) notes that oppression is fundamentally rooted in the definition of reality; stratification privileges ontological conceptions as much as it creates ostensible material advantage. A comparison between 2C-i and 2C-viii illustrates this notion. The street homeless retain conceptions of themselves as poor people who have encountered particular difficulties, i.e. people who have fallen on hard times. The position of government, police, businesses, and large segments of the general public redefine homelessness as a condition intertwined with individual deficiencies and problematic social characteristics. The bleeding over of judgments into definitional concepts reflects the way in which stigma is entrenched; seeing homelessness is not a value-free activity. The definitions at 2C-viii reflect the idea of the street homeless as so-

cial nuisances and corrupt individuals. At the dynamic level within 2C, the street homeless sim-

ply have chosen to stay on the streets rather than in the shelters (2C-ii). This conception is not

ontologically contested on the other side of the fractal (2C-vii), but rather physically contested.

At 2C-vii, governments, police, businesses, and the general public aim efforts at sweeping away

homeless encampments, pushing anti-vagrancy initiatives aimed at getting homeless people off

the streets, or at least off particular streets, hiding them away in run-down areas is typically ac-

ceptable until gentrification tags those areas for redevelopment.

Moving toward the valuative concepts in 2C, the stigmatization and physical harassment

that the homeless experience as a result of the dynamic actions aimed at getting rid of them (2C-

vii) cause feelings of shame and fatalism, we detail these in the previous chapter. Moreover, we

can the dynamic actions of the street homeless (2C-ii) betray a basic value orientation toward

living on the streets which suggests simply that it is essentially innocent and aimed at retaining

some sense of autonomy (something they feel denied in the shelter). Again, this is not *primarily*

ontologically contested by governments, police, businesses, and the general public, although they

would likely reject the autonomy assertion, contending that living on the street is not aimed at

legitimate autonomy, but rather the ability to drink and do drugs. Nonetheless, their primary

valuative opposition stems from directly asserting values located in the community's quality of

life (2C-vi). That is, they do not primarily confront the valuative assertions of the street home-

less as untrue (although they would likely say they are), but oppose them from a communitarian

direction (see Waldron 2000).

At the identity level in 2C, the homeless respond to the dynamic actions and valuative

assertions of governments, police, businesses and the general public by engaging in identity

management to separate themselves from the 'other', problematic homeless people and also by

creatively carving out lives for themselves in response to increasing and constantly shifting en-

croachments by these oppositional groups (2C-iv; see our discussion in the previous chapter and

also Hopper 2003; Mathieu 1993; Snow and Anderson 1987; Snow and Anderson 1993). Moved

away from one location by pressure from the city and the police, they are remarkably adept at

creating new spaces to occupy. At the identity level for governments, police, businesses, and the

general public, notions of their own social legitimacy vis a vis the illegitimacy of the street

homeless, and a sense of entitlement to social space, engenders the use of law to engage in proc-

esses of ridding the streets of the homeless (2C-v). The quintessential example is a city coun-

cilman's assertion in support of new vagrancy legislation that would empower the police to arrest

homeless people for "staying" in public parks: "The parks are for everyone." He clearly did not

mean this literally, since that would include the homeless people at whom the legislation was

aimed. Rather "everyone" was defined as all legitimate citizens who wanted to use the park, a

category intentionally exclusive of the street homeless.

The eight conceptual statements in 2C can be catiterated into two overall notions, which

capture the conceptual essence of the street homeless on the one hand, and governments, police,

businesses, and the general public on the other. That is, the street homeless' relationship with

these groups seems to be a physical struggle for freedom and autonomy. The street homeless

employ a variety of tactics to mitigate the effects of sweeps, the threat of arrests, and stigmatiz-

ing judgments in general. As suggested in chapter 2, we can catiterate 2C-v through 2C-viii into

an overall concept for these groups, which suggests a quarantining approach to street homeless-

ness. Fundamental to the notion of quarantine is a physical separating of one population from

another, based on the safety of the majority. The dynamic actions and communitarian values of

government, police, businesses, and the general public fit the overall notion of physical oppression.

Finally, we can catiterate to an ultimate relational statement which characterizes the life of the street homeless vis a vis these groups. That is, the street homeless seek freedom in the face of physical oppression by these groups. The idea of oppression is delineated as a level two quality here precisely because of the physicality of the process of quarantining. Of course, there are valuative components that underlie it, but they also are primarily relational and moreover secondary to the physical process of simply getting rid of "them". The validity of our dynamic conceptualization of oppression will be further elucidated by its contrast to the hegemonic notions of service provision at the valuative level.

Valuative Disconnects: The Street Homeless and Service Providers

In terms of homeless research, which typically entails a hint of advocacy, much has been made of the problems endemic to homelessness (Row 1), and even some has been explicitly critical of the insufficiencies of quarantining approaches (Row 2) since they do little to rectify any of the problems facing the homeless, but rather address, albeit in vacuous ways, the problems facing the "legitimate" community (e.g. Waldron 2002). However, efforts to rectify the problems endemic to homelessness, and particularly the street homeless (Row 1), have typically resulted in the suggestion of providing more homeless services. Despite increasing available services, and the changing character of these services—i.e. from emergency shelters to continuum-of-care services—the street homeless population has been stable, if not increasing. This would suggest that, at best, the current model of services is successful only for a portion of the homeless. The typical call for more funding for homeless services, then, is not promising unless

we address the fundamental notions of the services vis a vis the street homeless, to understand the disconnects between the two. Our analysis shows valuative disconnects (Row 3), which no increase in funding for the current model of service provision can address. Here we address the disconnect itself; later, in Table 2 we give more detail about the conceptual structure of service provision and counterpose an alternative model counterposed to the dominant paradigm.

Like Row 2, analysis of the valuative notions of the street homeless and the service providers begins with ontological disconnects between conceptualizations at the static level. Once again, the street homeless define themselves as poor people who have encountered particularly bad circumstances (3C-i). The service providers tend primarily to redefine the street homeless as mentally ill or addicted (3C-viii). It is important to note that these need not be in direct opposition to each other to be counterposed in an MIC fractal model. That is, the service providers would not *reject* the notion that the homeless typically are people "down on their luck," but this is not the *essential* characterization they employ. Moreover, the key differentiation that they suppose between the street homeless and those enrolled in their programs is based on the idea of mental illness and addiction being at the root of the decision to stay on the street (3C-vii). Furthermore, as we note in the previous chapter, the street homeless most often will not deny that the conditions of mental illness and addiction apply to them, but they are unlikely to define these as the essential features of their homelessness.

The definitional characterizations at 3C-i and 3C-viii predicate particular and different processes for the street homeless and the service providers. Here again, the street homeless engage in resistance to the shelters, but at this level we also can note that an essential aspect of this process vis a vis the service providers is that such a choice is, from the perspective of the street homeless themselves, a rational decision (3C-ii). As noted in the previous chapter, this was an

early insight in our research. The inclusion of rationality, a valuative component of thinking processes, additionally can be understood with the dynamic vision of the service providers (3C-vii) that emerges from their static conceptualizations of the street homeless (3C-viii). The dynamics of the service provider conceptualization is two-fold: (1) the street homeless choice of the streets is understood as irrational, the product of addiction and mental illness, which compromise the ability to make a sound decision; (2) the service provider role emerges in this level as treating mental illness and addiction, the conditions which primarily define homelessness at the static level.

At the valuative level (3C-iii and 3C-vi) the street homeless assert reasons for their disdain of the shelters, among them that the shelters are dirty, unsafe, too restrictive, and degrading (3C-iii). This conceptualization is countered in two ways by the service providers (3C-vi). The first way is rooted in their understanding of the choice of the streets as irrational. Seen this way, the would-be legitimate reasons to avoid the shelter are deflated into mere rationalizations of addictive and insane behavior. More directly at the valuative level (3C-vi), the shelters assert that the rules they employ are the only way to deliver effective treatment. That is, they assert the value of their own authority as yielding efficacy-qua-structure. This most clearly correlates with the doctor patient relationship. The physician's authority, that is, the legitimacy of their knowledge (diagnosis) and treatment, is a prerequisite for the success in curing the patient. If the patient does not follow the plan, that is, if they question the doctor's authority, the cure will not work. Since the service providers operate from a similar disease-and-treatment structure, it is not surprising that their valuative orientations legitimize their own authority. This version of authority, however, is qualitatively different than that asserted by government, police, business, and the general public (row 2). Whereas the authority of those groups was postured on behalf of the

non-homeless community and in direct opposition to the street homeless, the service providers posture their authority as on behalf of the street homeless, those irrational people who simply do not know any better.

At the identity level (3C-iv and 3C-v), we can more fully understand the street homeless resistance to the shelters as a quest for independence. They consciously identify the various pressures from the service providers, and explicitly reject not only the service providers' conceptualizations of their homelessness, but also the authority of the service providers to help them. On the other side, the service providers maintain a self-concept rooted in the notion of charitable authority, that is they admit their authoritative position, but conceptualize it as efficacious and in the best interests of the homeless.

Like the catiteration in 2B-i, the conceptual model of the street homeless vis a vis the service providers (3C-i through 3C-iv) can be catiterated into a valuative concept of autonomy (3B-i). However, unlike the overt physical oppression found in the quarantining processes of 2B-ii, which are executed in direct and conscious opposition to the street homeless, the service provider is more accurately conceptualized as hegemonic (3B-ii). The service providers derive their authority from redefining the street homeless resistance to the shelters as irrational—and their seemingly rational reasons as teleological rationalizations—and also posture their initiatives as on behalf of the homeless. Hegemony refers to the way in which the ontological reality of the world privileges certain viewpoints over others. This clearly captures the thrust of the dominant paradigm of service provision.

The final catiteration summarizes the two together. That is, the street homeless' relationship with the dominant model of service provision is characterized by hegemony (3A).

The notion at 3A can be further understood in contrast to the physical oppression at 2A as something qualitatively different, yet in many ways complementary. The service providers sometimes speak against the stigmatic conceptualizations held by the groups in Row 2, for example, but at the same time criticize groups like FNB for exacerbating the problem by "enabling" the homeless (i.e. keeping them from confronting their *real* problems such as addiction), and for causing trouble with the public and businesses. The timidity of service provider opposition to city sweeps and police harassment makes sense in this conceptualization because, although it does not mesh well with their understandings of the homeless as sick, it might well serve their ends of getting the homeless into treatment. In the popular mental health literature this notion is called "raising the bottom," meaning that, on the premise that a person will not get help until they hit "rock bottom," the best way to help them is to catalyze that process.

While its relational nature might give 3A a dynamic appearance, the relationship of the street homeless to the service providers is best understood as a valuative disconnect which centers on the former's contentions of legitimacy and rationality and the latter's deflating redefinition of these within a medicalized understanding of homelessness.

Self-Concepts of the Street Homeless

Like the static concept fractal (Row 1), concepts of self among the street homeless are inherent rather than fundamentally related to other groups (e.g. Rows 2 and 3). Thus, only one catiterative step is useful for our purposes here. In 4C, a basic four-fold fractal is iterated. At 4C-i, there again is a basic definition of street homelessness, although this time the concept is infused with the notion of survival on the streets. This logically reflects concepts present at 2C-iv, where identity management and creativity are survival strategies in the face of physical op-

pression (see also Snow and Anderson 1987). When embedded in an overall self-level, notions of identity management as survival strategy, which reflect static conceptualizations of self, appear at the static level (4C-i). At 4C-ii, the various relationship roles appear, those of protectors and connectors (Gladwell 2002). These serve the maintenance of the street homeless community, and while they are informal and fluid, they also are indispensable toward maintaining interpersonal relationships within a community as well as linking various homeless communities together.

At the valuative level are the pure values characteristic of the street homeless community. Those of freedom and autonomy, factor heavily into their contested relationships (rows 2 and 3), but also salient here are those of community, patriotism, hard work, and intense religious faith colored by the apocalyptic imagery of southern religious culture. Whereas their grasp of freedom and autonomy thrusts them into opposition with various social institutions, other values reflect a commonality with the rest of us. In the previous chapter we noted the difficulties of advocating for the normality of the homeless, the idea that "they're just like the rest of us." This assertion is used in well-intentioned efforts to counter stigmas wrongly applied to the homeless, but it runs the risk of glossing over the impact systemic disadvantages that predicate homelessness (Wacquant 2002). Here, we can easily see the points of commonality without engaging in overly simplistic notions of being "like us" which undermine the importance of class position. The thrust of "like us" claims is that the homeless are not morally bankrupt, but rather people with a similar moral conviction in a radically different social position. The valuative identity observable in street homeless communities (4C-iii) speaks to this without oversimplifying the significant impact of differences in the lives of the privileged and the street homeless.

Finally, while an analysis, which reaches a pure self-level would examine individuals themselves, we can find in the street homeless tendency of individualism, not only as a value, but also observable in their self-concepts. That is, the street homeless tend to be characters (4C-iv). Essentially, the street homeless tend to be extroverts, storytellers, cut-ups, jokesters, etc. These may not seem like academic observations, but they are crucial to understanding what tends to characterize the street homeless vis a vis the shelter using population. Survival on the street depends on being a character, an extrovert, a storyteller, because these are the traits that engender friendships and thus community. But, as noted, these very qualities are problematic in the shelter where one is best off being introverted and subtle.

Catiterating to 4A, the overall self-concept of the street homeless (keeping in mind that without individual analysis we only achieve here basic tendencies across the group), can be summarized as creative characters. That is, the street homeless encounter systemic disadvantage, are pushed to the periphery of social order, and fall back on only themselves and their self-created communities to carve out lives from the negative space of the social fabric. This is not to ascribe them sainthood. Some fight, steal, and hoard. But they also mediate conflicts, they share, they work, and they build relationships. In all of these, they are "like us," but that they do so from such disadvantaged social circumstances is undeniably impressive.

In the next section we give more depth to the model of service provision, examining it in more detail and contrasting it with what we consider to be a paradigmatically alternative model of service provision. Along with suggestions for academic research born from our novel fractal concept methodology, our service provision fractal concept model yields suggestions for restructuring homeless services to avoid the hegemony at the root of the alienation of the street homeless.

Model Two: Dominant and Alternative Models of Homeless Service Provision

Some research has noted the problems the homeless face from local governments, businesses, and the criminal justice system (e.g. Gibson 2004; Mathieu 1993), but relatively little research has looked at fundamental problematics of the dominant service provision model (Lyon-Callo 2000 is a notable exception). In this section we move from a general fractal of street homeless life, including important interactive relationships they have with other social groups, toward a fractal model which addresses in more detail the hegemonic nature of the dominant model of homeless service provision (Table 4). A fractal MIC analysis of the dominant model of service provision naturally suggests an alternative conception, one that, by virtue of its recognition and attempted rectification of hegemonic influences, reflects Freire's pedagogical approach. Furthermore, our fractal model allows service provision itself to be understood in light of broader cultural values and even western ontological notions of the human being. By identifying these core problematics, we can make a sincere reformulation of service provision, rather than tinkering with peripheral considerations. In other words, we can rebuild homeless service provision from scratch, as opposed to making surface changes that leave in tact underlying hegemonic dynamics. Unless we address these fundamental issues, attempts to improve homeless services will be futile. We will move first through the four levels of the current popular model of service provision (1B-i through 4B-i), and then go back to propose an alternative model (1B-ii through 4B-ii).

Table 4. Fractal Concept Model of Dominant and Alternative Homeless Service Provision

	A	B	C
1	Structures	i. Structures of hegemony	i. Role: Homeless cases (problem), service providers (solution)
			ii. Hierarchical social relationships
			iii. Power, social control
		ii. Structures of liberation	iv. Legitimacy of agency
			v. Dialogical relationships
			vi. Circumstance: Homeless as without home, service providers as resource base for homeless
2	Service provision	i. Acts of hegemony	i. Diagnosis of cases (sets of variables, categories, e.g. addiction, mental illness)
			ii. Healing the sick (addicted, mentally ill)
			iii. Normalizing the individual
		ii. Acts of liberation	iv. Humanizing relationships
			v. Dialogical praxis
			vi. Participatory identification
3	Culture and ideology	i. Values of hegemony	i. Institutionalized ideologies
			ii. Social control, enforcing moral prescription, top-down moral dictates
			iii. Traditional western morality, value of having, owning, taking
		ii. Values of liberation	iv. Creativity, individuality, self-reflexive morality
			v. Situational praxis morality
			vi. People and their thoughts
4	Concepts of self	i. Self-concept of hegemony	i. Tabula rasa self
			ii. Socialization / social programming
			iii. Society defines identity, normal self is well socialized, lives within social structures
		ii. Self-concept of liberation	iv. Self is creative with own life, lives above, although not against, social structures
			v. Creative participant, social artist
			vi. Creative self

The Dominant Model of Homeless Service Provision

Static Suppositions

Row 1 deals with static concepts, which underlie homeless service provision. Freire (1994) notes that oppression begins with ontological suppositions about reality. In other words, the oppressed take on the ontology of the privileged, creating a restrictive framework by which any subsequent actions are confined. Freire leaves this notion somewhat obscure, but in our

fractal concept analysis we can see a precise example. At 1C-i, the current model of service pro-vision defines roles, thereby setting a definitive framework on which all subsequent action is predicated. The current model of service provision defines roles according to the problem-solution framework noted in the previous chapter. It sees homeless *cases*, that is, it defines homelessness at the outset as a problem to be managed, thereby defining a role for itself as the solution. This elucidates the way in which homeless service provision becomes vested in the ex-istence of homelessness. The role it defines for itself is meaningless without homelessness; "so-lution" has no meaning without "problem". This also suggests reasons that the dominant model of service provision so vehemently rejects radical approaches, which subvert the idea of the homeless as problem, suggesting instead that society is the problem. Not prepared to be solvers of society-as-problem, the service provider role as solution is eradicated by such a radical move to re-substantiate the concept of "problem".

Moreover, these cases specifically are defined in terms of particular problems, and mostly in terms of problems, which the service providers logistically are equipped to address. In other words, the homeless case most often is narrowed to the particular problems of mental illness and addiction. This specification of "problem" disallows the legitimacy of other attendant circum-stances that might predicate an individual's homelessness.

Building off these definitions, particular relationships naturally are formed between prob-lem and solution, relationships based on hierarchy of power (1C-ii). In other words, the particu-lar static conceptualizations naturally entail a particular arrangement of each role vis a vis the other. Solution is above problem in the hierarchy because, it is supposed, problem needs solu-tion. Of course, we question who needs whom, but if we were to accept the static concepts from

the perspective of the dominant service provider model itself, the hierarchical relationships at 1C-ii are the natural emergent dynamics.

The value of these definitional roles and their attendant arrangements has been discussed in the previous fractal model. Social control is the value on which homeless service provision is based (1C-iii). This may be denied in rhetoric, but more often, it is evident in assertions of efficacy. That is, as in the doctor-patient relationship, the authoritative position of the service provider is justified in terms of its ability to heal, to induce an end to the "problems". The power service providers hold is purported to be fundamental to the legitimacy of their knowledge, that is their knowledge, exclusive of what the homeless addicts or insane claim to know about their own lives. The knowledge of the latter can be disregarded because it is corrupted by sickness. A privileged position, that is power, for the service provider is, in their conception, although they would not posture it this way, key to "getting through" to people, to making prescriptions about what they ought to do.

We can catiterate these three concept statements (1C-i through 1C-iii) into an overall concept, which we label as "structures of hegemony" (1B-i). These static conceptualizations establish an ontological framework under which the homeless and the service providers operate. However, this is not a benign structure, but rather one that privileges at the outset the conceptualizations which empower one group over the other, even to the point of de-legitimizing the ability of the homeless to define their own lives and their own condition of homelessness.

Dynamics: Service in Action

In Row 2, the static suppositions take action. As an inherently active institution, the dynamic row encapsulates what is ostensible in service provision, that is, the act of providing ser-

vices to the homeless. However, having laid out static conceptualizations which otherwise might be left obscure we can understand the observable dynamics with greater depth. Here again, medicalization frames the process. At the static level of the overall dynamic row, we have the diagnosis of cases (2C-i). This reflects the notion of case types noted in row 1, but now entails the basic process of diagnosis, the labeling of the case. At the dynamic level is the concept of healing the sick (2C-ii). Again, this draws on the ontological notion of homeless as sick, but brings this into action with the process of healing. This naturally is the thrust of service provision, the purpose for which they are funded. While the statics and dynamics of service provision are directly observable, the notions of case/problem and healing entail an implicit value concept, which we describe as normalizing (2C-iii). The concept of being sick is by definition a non-normative condition, and one for which social tradition dictates an obligation to get well (Parsons 1951, see also Clair 1990). Of course, this relies heavily on a supposition of what is normal (see Kyle 2005). For people who have always been poor, homelessness is not terribly distant from "normal" (see our discussion of Mike in the previous chapter).

Current Service Provision within Institutionalized Ideologies

At the valuative level (row 3), we move beyond the service provision institution per se and identify broader conceptualizations of cultural ideology, which bear direct influence on service provision. At the static level, we note the cultural tendency to institutionalize ideologies (3C-i). That is, values take on the ontological status, and also the problematics, of roles in that they become definitive of subsequent orientations and actions. In other words, we conform ourselves to the valuative orientations of culture. The institutionalization of ideologies is evident in all sorts of social control mechanisms, both formal and informal (3C-ii). The common denomi-

nator at the dynamic level is that institutionalized values exist in a top-down relation with people. Currently in the United States, people seem to have very little influence on institutionalized morality. They tend to live within the moral order, rather than actively participating in the creation and transformation of it.

At the valuative level (3C-iii) we identify one key western value institutionalized in the attendant moral order of capitalism; one which bears direct influence on homeless service provision. The values of having, owning, and acquiring, speak directly to the processes by which we define the homeless as problematic. That is, when individual worth and social contribution is defined in material terms, and by these standards the homeless have comparatively little material worth, then the normalization goal of service provision can now be specified as a re-assimilation into the economy. The healing of addiction and mental illness naturally precedes it, but the gold standard of success for service provision is having a job and a place of one's own. Being a contributing member of society sometimes is explicitly laid out as a goal. It is important to note that there is nothing inherently wrong with this conceptualization, but when "social contribution" is embedded in the material moral order of U.S. capitalism, the goals of service provision become rigidly defined and exclusive of alternative pursuits and valuations.

Here again, we can catiterate one scale to the conceptualization of the "Values of hegemony" (3B-i). Again, the values themselves are not inherently problematic, but the institutionalized nature, which creates a confining moral order and is then the antithesis of human freedom. All sorts of institutions, which fail to question the foundational assumption under which they operate, carry out the imposition of this moral order. The current popular incarnation of homeless service provision fits this characterization.

Concepts of the Human in the Current Model of Service Provision

At the most fundamental level, conceptualizations of what constitutes the self directly condition and justify the institutionalized moral order in general (3B-i) and the current pedagogical model of homeless service provision in particular. Western culture in general has been deeply influenced by the Lockean, *tabula rasa* conception of the human. This supposes that at birth humans all are "blank slates" and are subsequently socialized, i.e. filled with knowledge. This traditionally has been seen as a liberal alternative to various fixed concepts of self, for example, the supposition of "criminal types" which underpinned criminology prior to the mid-twentieth century. The assumption of these fixed-self positions simply was that certain people were born bad. Aside from the inherent problems with this conception, prevailing social biases led to the convergence of this innately flawed population with the poor and non-white. Postured in opposition to this fixed notion of self, Locke's *tabula rasa* looks quite progressive. We contend that it is a false choice and that the notion of the human as a blank slate is the static concept of self at the root of hegemony of homeless service provision (4C-i). In the next section, where we propose an alternative model of service provision, we will also outline an alternative conception of self. Here, suffice it to say, the *tabula rasa* concept is problematic.

From the static concept of the *tabula rasa* self (4C-i)—a concept which posits all humans are fundamentally the same at birth, differences being the products of social influence—the relationship of the human individual to society emerges. The human is the passive receiver of knowledge. Freire (1994) calls attention to the problematics of the "banking concept of education," a process we argue is fundamentally rooted in the tabula rasa self. If the human individual is the product of socialization, then "broken people," like the homeless, not only are the results of bad socialization, but they only can be fixed with more socialization. This sets up the social

program perspective utilized by the dominant model of homeless service provision. They seek to re-socialize (4C-ii) and this can only be undertaken on the premise that the individual fundamentally is a passive receiver of knowledge (4C-i). The value embedded in this self-concept is society as the source of identity, and moreover that normal individuals have been rightly socialized (4C-iii). Of course, socialization processes are not free, but imbue the dominant cultural moral order.

The catiterative step for 4C-i through 4C-iii, "self-concept of hegemony," ties the current model of homeless service provision directly to cultural notions of the human. The western moral order, which ultimately privileges society over the individual, despite its rhetoric, thereby establishes social control as hegemony—and sometimes overt physical oppression (table 1, row 2). The *tabula rasa* concept of the self presupposes the dominant role of social institutions in the development of self and entails the debasing of true human autonomy. The homeless individual is stripped of any agentive role in their own lives or in confronting their own homelessness, not only by the immediate institutional interests of service providers, but ultimately by the very concept of human presupposed by western culture.

Re-Conceptualizing Homeless Service Provision

Because our conceptual fractal methodology yields an account of homeless service provision which not only spans various levels of scale, but systematically elucidates the interconnections of these, i.e. the connections of broad cultural valuative notions and ontological concepts of the human being to specific actions and definitions of homeless service providing institutions. Whereas much previous research has made suggestions applicable to immediate problems facing the homeless and some has even spoken to immediate problems of homeless service provision,

we propose a restructuring of service provision attentive to problems at a variety of levels of scale. In this way we address not only the immediate problematic definitions and processes, but also the fundamental cultural suppositions on which the current institution is built.

Most academic work concludes with practical suggestions about what should be done in light of its findings. We admit that much of what we suggest does not seem at all practical, particularly since most of those reading it are doing so from within the confines cultural assumptions we seek to subvert. However, difficulty should not be an excuse for disregarding the fundamental considerations we address here. If these foundational questions are ignored, hierarchies of power simply will be replicated and the hegemony of the current service model, which lies at the root of its broken relationships with the street homeless, will continue unabated.

Alternative Definitions

Just as the specific problems of homeless service providing institutions are rooted in their role concepts at the static level (1C-i), we begin our reformulation of service provision with this concept. The static concepts for the alternative service model are not rooted in role concepts, but rather purely practical circumstance (1C-vi). The static concepts in the dominant model include attendant valuative baggage, primarily that of homeless as problem. Here we remove this notion, and see homelessness, at this level, as a more pure static concept--the condition of being without a home. Service providers also are not conceptualized in a role as solution, but more simply as those with resources to mitigate the difficulties of being without a home. These definitions refer to objective circumstances without weaving in valuative baggage not strictly entailed by the concepts. This is characteristic of a well-defined static conceptualization and it is the root of building a framework to rectify the problems of the dominant model of service provision. In the same

way, a problematic framework was established by the static conceptualizations of the dominant model, which tacitly included problem and solution concepts not warranted by the ontological demands of the static level (1C-i).

Because of these redefined static concepts, we no longer are locked into particular power arrangements of the homeless and service providers at the dynamic level. In 1C-ii, Freire's (1994) notion of dialogical relationships emerges, that is relations between the homeless and service providers can be undertaken on an equitable field because role definitions which posture one above the other have been rectified. On this new equitable playing field, agency is returned to the homeless person (1C-iii). It is important that nothing about this reformulation implies that the homeless person is privileged over the service provider in this relationship. Rather they now work together on a common goal, in free association, each with input into the course of action.

The catiterative step here, in contradistinction to the dominant model, is to establish structures of liberation (1B-ii). While an apparent paradox, structure in the alternative model denotes only a relationship form, without *a priori* substantive content for that relationship. Therefore, as a model of service provision, the relationships between service providers and the homeless can indeed be structured (in form) to engender liberating processes (which we will analyze in the next section (row 2)).

Alternative Dynamics

Without hierarchical relationships to dictate the process of diagnosing—action necessarily predicated on the authority of service provider knowledge and the illegitimacy of homeless agency—new dynamic processes emerge that are built on dialogical relationship structures. We call this *participatory identification* (2C-vi), where both the homeless person and the service

provider, participate in the identification of the predicative factors of that person's homelessness. Diagnosis currently is confined by the paradigmatic assumptions of service providers, notably that homelessness is caused by, or inextricably intertwined with mental illness and addiction (2C-i). Participatory identification is not exclusive of other considerations. While the opinions of service providers may still be confined by logistical considerations such as resources, the validated agency of the homeless person provides a crucial check. No longer a passive non-participant, the homeless person can legitimately say that particular conceptions of their homelessness suggested by service providers do not correctly apply to their situation. Participatory identification can still identify mental illness and addiction as key problems, if both parties feel they are accurate, but unlike diagnosis, participatory identification does not proceed as though the labels applied by service providers necessarily are correct, or unquestionable. In the dominant model, raising such questions is redefined as failure "to admit you have a problem," rather than legitimate participation (see Lyon Callo 2000).

From participatory identification (2C-i) we move to the dynamic aspect of alternative service provision, which we call *dialogical praxis* to note a practical plan of action rooted in the dialogical process of problem identification which is constantly renegotiated through reflexive dialogue of both parties (2C-v). There are no longer fixed, uniform steps to complete (see our references to "going through the steps" in the previous chapter), but a plan of action for each person, which can be reevaluated and modified as needed. In this way it can fit the individual development of each person, rather than assuming homogeneity, which is a treatment program tendency

Ultimately the valuative notion that emerges from participatory identification (2C-vi) and dialogical praxis (2C-v), both of which implicitly recognize the individuality of the homeless

person, is humanization (2C-iv). This stands in opposition to "normalization" the valuative concept embedded in the processes of the dominant model (2C-iii). Normalization entails a measuring stick of a person's life, which is external to that person. Humanization recognizes the individuality of values and aspirations, allowing the individual to define their own measuring stick and the freedom to change it as they develop.

The catiterative step for the dynamics of the alternative service provision stands as liberating in contradistinction to the hegemonic processes of the dominant model of service provision (2B-ii).

Alternative Values

Where we turn the cultural context of homeless service provision, our proposition may seem even more insurmountable. We again would assert that the alternative to facing such difficulties is continued failure and moreover that in many ways, simply by making conscious the cultural assumptions implicit in the dominant model, our alternative model is already successful.

The valuative notions of the dominant service provider model (3C-i through 3C-iii) can be located in the institutionalized morality of western culture. We specifically identify the value of having/owning as the institutionalized moral order of capitalism. As external to the individual, enforcement of this institutionalized morality socially and legally is evident in a variety of forms of social control, physical oppression (Table 3, Row 2) and also hegemony (Table 3, Row 3; Table 4, 1-4A). Rather than institutionalizing fixed notions of value (3C-i), the alternative model individualizes values and supposes simply the static concepts of people and their thoughts (3C-vi). From this emerges situational praxis morality at the dynamic level (3C-v). This concept is characterized by recognition of the insufficiency of morality defined as a set of categori-

cal imperatives (Kant 1996; this recognition is present in feminist theory, as well as Goethe, Schiller, early Steiner, and others). In other words, "what one ought to do" is not determined by abstract principles but by reflexive processes. Thus the notion of ought itself will be applicable to the particular person and situation that they face. This clearly is important for homeless service provision, which is best formulated without *a priori* notions of "ought" but rather is established as a form in which "ought", can be determined individually.

At 3C-iv, creativity, individuality, and self-reflexive morality emerge as the valuative notions tied to the static and dynamic concepts (3C-vi and 3C-v). This stands in contradistinction to values ordained by social structure and impressed on individuals, which thereby are the antithesis of real individualism.

The catiterative step, similar to those of rows 1 and 2, is conceptualized as the values of liberation (3B-ii). These stand in opposition to the values of hegemony, which relies on a moral order external to the individual (3B-i).

Alternative Concept of Self

Whereas discourse on the nature of the human self has typically been confined to a tension between innate, fixed notions of self and the Lockean *tabula rasa*, these are false parameters. Rather than these, we use a notion of the human self as creative. The notion of the creative self (4C-vi) sidesteps the innate--*tabula rasa* quagmire. The creative self is not concerned with supposing a self with a particular fundamental substance (innate), or inversely by supposing a self of no fundamental substance. Creativity denotes a capacity for uniqueness, born out in the thoughts and actions of human life. It neither supposes a fated self, or one wholly in the grip of socialization. Dynamic action as creative participation (4C-v) flows directly out of the basic no-

tion of the creative self. Creativity by definition occurs when the individual produces something, a thought or a material product, which is then necessarily a part of the world. Creative participation transforms the individual from solely a product of socialization, into a social artist (4C-v).

The concept of artistry provides important characterization to the concept in that artist draw from resources made available to them by their social and natural environment, but we would hardly consider works of art to be social products for which the artist was solely the conduit. Rather, artists draw from contextual resources, but always in a creative act of production. Similarly, the notion of creativity need not cut the social artist off from society, but rather it simply rejects the Lockean notion that the human is simply the conduit for the products of socialization. This idea is conceptualized at 4C-iv, where the creative self lives above social structures, meaning that the individual can freely draw on social structure as a resource, and necessarily will have to do so, but social structures do not impress on individuals any preordained notions of morality, social arrangements, or even ontological suppositions about the nature of things. With the notion of the self as creative and the individual as a social artist, humans now can legitimately participate in the construction of their lives and environments—the specific necessity of this for homeless service provision already should be clear.

Following the same catiterative process as rows 1 through 3, the catiterative step for the concepts of self of the alternative service model suggests a self liberated from the deterministic control of social forces (4B-ii), a determinism entailed by the tabula rasa concept of self (4B-i). From this we can understand the way in which a truly alternative, liberating model of service provision must not remain rooted in the same problematic ontological concepts of the human being, as these create from a broad cultural base the same confining framework which is replicated in the problematic static concepts of homelessness specific to the dominant service paradigm.

The significant consequence of these ontological conceptualizations at the broad cultural and specific institutional level are what Freire means when he asserts that liberation must start by questioning the basic assertions about the way the world "is". Our alternative service provider model does this by counterposing the conceptualizations that emerge in our fractal analysis of the current service paradigm, one that upon analysis is shown to be hegemonic. By countering the validity of these conceptualizations at every ontological level and at various levels of scale, we have suggested ways in which society in general and homeless service provision in particular can be restructured to liberate the oppressed.

Limitations

The traditional research publication is required to state limitations to the study. As ours is an attempt to generate conceptual understandings of homelessness via our novel fractal concept methodology, rather than verify existing theory by testing data, our limitations also are theoretical. That is, we have identified particular epistemological orientations with which one could take issue. Both hard-line positivists and postmodernists, for example, will reject our contention that concepts are real, and thus viable objects of systematic analysis. In anticipation of these sorts of limitations, we have attempted to give a detailed ontological and epistemological foundation in the lengthy methods chapter.

Moreover, our study is faced with epistemological questions incumbent on ethnography in general. The extent to which an outsider can give a true account of a study population certainly is open to question, even amongst those who hold that "truth" itself is a meaningful concept. Have we been fair in our account? Ethnographic studies of the homeless have met this challenge before (see especially Wacquant 2002). We have tried to be honest, even when it was

unsettling. For example, we liked Jeff a great deal, and it was difficult to talk about his habit of hoarding or his violent tendencies. But also we did not want to unduly valorize any of our subjects. Efforts to counter stigmas of poverty, and homelessness in particular clearly sometimes have mutated into rose-colored ethnographies. We too were interested in countering stigmas, but we hoped not to have crossed that line.

We clearly have been attentive to structural issues and the culpability of society and social institutions at a variety of levels of scale, but we also have countered the assumption, implicit even in homeless research, that homelessness is *wholly* negative. We also run the risk of glamorizing poverty and homelessness. The various assertions of the homeless about a "peace of mind" on the street run counter to the presentation that homelessness is a *totally* miserable condition. Since we found these assertions to be sincere, we wrestled with how to incorporate them into our description without encouraging the myth that homelessness is a choice. We hoped to have managed this. Indeed, homeless people are structurally disfranchised and the blame is squarely on society's shoulders. But we also need not overlook that homeless people often find positive aspects in the midst of rather dire circumstances. This reflects the rich complexity of homelessness, not any mitigation of social responsibility. In the end, those predisposed to explaining away the culpability of the social system, or those particularly displeased with the street homeless, could employ parts of what we have here described to those ends, but they could do so only by ripping apart undividable observations and violating the integrity of our work.

Finally, while we contend that Birmingham is an ideal site for homeless research, since it is an archetype of economic shifts from the industrial to the post-industrial, the geographic parameters of our research call into question the generalizability of our results. However, in addition to these general observations, having developed our research in relative isolation from the

homeless literature, the coincidence of our conclusions with research from various U.S. cities gives further support for the suitability of our research site. Nonetheless, future research might examine cities with different historical characteristics to comparatively investigate the role of shifting economy vis a vis other possible predicating factors of homelessness. Our ongoing research soon will add a small city in West Texas and we anticipate the development of interesting comparisons.

Future Research Directions

Future research directions might center on the development of quantitative methods capable of retaining the multi-scale and multidimensional nature of fractals, which seem highly reflective of social life. While our fractal models might suggest various linear relationships, future research ideally would skip the transformation of our multidimensional conceptual models into linear equations and use fractal math to quantify the fractal structures themselves, and the MIC structures within each scale.

With the MIC generator, a requisite first hurdle, of course, would be the operationalization of the various within scale dimensions. The social sciences already are adept at measuring static and dynamic conceptualizations. Attitudinal research glimpses the valuative level, but sociology of emotions work has tended to be somewhat marginal and naturally disposed toward traditional qualitative methods. To the best of our knowledge, quantifying the concept of self, at least of the sort that we suggest comprises the fourth level of the MIC generator has not been attempted.

Conclusions

Given our detailed discussion in the previous chapters, it is neither necessary nor reasonable to recapitulate. Rather we wish to conclude with the simple contention that as a society we cannot hope to rectify a problem that is the result of stratification, by replicating that stratification. For its multifaceted nature, homelessness is primarily a function of poverty, keeping in mind also that class determines more than what one is able to consume, but also whole sets of dispositions (Bourdieu 1990). The homeless are the poorest of the poor, those at the very bottom of the social hierarchy. Within the general category of homeless, the street homeless are the most disfranchised sub-group. In terms of social position, they indeed are the bottom of the bottom. In other words, not only is homelessness itself a product of structural inequality which disadvantages certain people, the street homeless show that the ways in which society addresses homelessness replicates inequality, producing a population disfranchised from the services aimed at helping the disfranchised.

Our analysis shows that addressing the problems of stratification within homeless service provision, a necessary step toward offering sincere help to the street homeless, requires uncovering the root concepts of stratification, not only at the service provider level where ontological dispositions toward the concept of homelessness are problematic, but also in broader cultural terms. Indeed the Western ontological concept of the human being can be located at the center of the hegemonic service provider model. While a few critiques of homeless service provision are present in the literature, we hope to have used a novel methodology to delve deeper into this critique. Built on a detailed account of a multitude of aspects of street homelessness (chapter 4), we hope to have illustrated that the call both for new laws and more services is futile until we have addressed questions about, not only the nature of homelessness, but the fundamental nature

of those laws and services, and ultimately the fundamental nature of our culture. Rectifying the problems of homelessness must begin with an analysis and uncovering of social structural problems of which it is symptomatic. A house rebuilt on a faulty foundation will forever be structurally deficient.

While we consider foundational changes to be most important, some more immediate steps are worth noting. Combating the privatization of public space seems to be appropriate, specifically as this would help undermine the impact of "quality of life" complaints. This can be done in a variety of ways. Businesses often must get zoning variances to develop their private space onto formerly public areas. In Birmingham, for example, businesses increasingly are enclosing areas of the sidewalk, which become designated for their customers only. Since these must be approved by the city, there is at least a forum in which to combat such privatization.

More generally, encouraging the congregation of people in public spaces, particularly people of varied backgrounds helps develop (or rekindle) a robust sense of public-ness (Bickford 2000). This is the type of community-building is a premise which partially inspires FNB. They actively seek to gather all kinds of people at their picnics, which often are populated by students, professionals, retirees, and homeless people alike (although with a comparatively high number of the latter). Indeed, this is a step toward redeveloping public space, where the private walls of sameness are broken down.

On a strong foundation of public space, all sorts of new "services" can be developed. The aforementioned hygiene centers are one such laudable effort. Places where people can shower, use the restroom, and even do laundry, go far in both alleviating popularly cited nuisances, but also in raising the quality of life for those who lack traditional housing. Conely

(1996) noted that the homeless frequently cited a poor appearance as a barrier to getting off the street. Hygiene centers go far in addressing this immediate concern.

Wet shelters, a no-strings-attached homeless café, and Housing First also seem beneficial, so long as these are not subtle means of social control, but rather genuine offers by society to fulfill the basic needs of food and shelter. While those working within the medical model of homeless service provision will claim these enable the homeless, or at least their addictive behavior, the *quid pro quo* logic of the treatment service model simply has not worked, or at least systematically fallen short. As one person with a radical perspective noted in an interview, "…you've got to meet [the homeless] on their terms." While this violates our cultural notions of fairness, the bottom line is that it directly addresses need. The continued conditioning of need will result in continued street homelessness as some people will always resist oppressive structures and prize freedom above all else.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM

UAB THE UNIVERSITY OF
ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

Institutional Review Board for Human Use

Form 4: IRB Approval Form
Identification and Certification of Research
Projects Involving Human Subjects

UAB's Institutional Review Boards for Human Use (IRBs) have an approved Federalwide Assurance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). The UAB IRBs are also in compliance with 21 CFR Parts 50 and 56 and ICH GCP Guidelines. The Assurance became effective on November 24, 2003 and expires on February 14, 2009. The Assurance number is FWA00005960.

Principal Investigator:	CLAIR, JEFFREY MICHAEL
Co-Investigator(s):	WASSERMAN, JASON A
Protocol Number:	**F060217004**
Protocol Title:	*American Refugees: A Visual Ethnographic Study of the Street Homeless*

The IRB reviewed and approved the above named project on 4/18/2007. The review was conducted in accordance with UAB's Assurance of Compliance approved by the Department of Health and Human Services. This Project will be subject to Annual continuing review as provided in that Assurance.

This project received FULL COMMITTEE review.

IRB Approval Date: 4/18/2007

Date IRB Approval Issued: 06-25-07

Identification Number: IRB00000196

Ferdinand Urthaler, MD/db
Ferdinand Urthaler, M.D.
Chairman of the Institutional Review
Board for Human Use (IRB)

Investigators please note:

The IRB approved consent form used in the study must contain the IRB approval date and expiration date.

IRB approval is given for one year unless otherwise noted. For projects subject to annual review research activities may not continue past the one year anniversary of the IRB approval date.

Any modifications in the study methodology, protocol and/or consent form must be submitted for review and approval to the IRB prior to implementation.

Adverse Events and/or unanticipated risks to subjects or others at UAB or other participating institutions must be reported promptly to the IRB.