The Social Construction of Homelessness by Service Providers: A Narrative of Our Country's Biggest Blindfold

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The Social Construction of Homelessness by Service Providers: 
A Narrative on Our Country's Biggest Blindfold 

Senior Project Submitted to 
The Division of Social Studies 
of Bard College 

by 
Sophia Kali Pappas 

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York 
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Dedicated to everyone who fights everyday for the justices of people currently homeless.
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Thirteen years ago when I first started working there... there was a woman that when I first came, had been pregnant. A year later she was pregnant again. She was nodding out at the table. And I remember saying to one of the staff who had been through our recovery program at one point, “Gosh, I wish we could put like birth control in the water because it's painful to watch.” You know, this woman who's pregnant, put her unborn child through addiction. And he turned and he looked at me and he said,

“Look around this room. This room was filled with people who were born from addicted mothers... I was born from a mother who was using drugs. Are you saying you don't want us to be here?” - Susanne, Saint Francis Shancis
Introduction:
An Introduction, History and Literature Review

Growing up in an urban area such as New York City, you are taught from a young age social rules of the subway, of the streets, the street bench, the line for the street cart. You are taught how to place your feet just wide enough to balance on the subway train without sticking the entirety of the left side of your body in someone’s face. You are also taught how to look at people and smile with respect and dignity. You learn that the streets are the core of the city. Here is a community you are responsible for upholding. So when someone asks you for money on the street or on the train, there is a deep feeling of guilt and sadness that this city is not providing a comfortable home for so many.

What people don’t necessarily learn when living in a city is just how many people do not have a home. Shelters are dispersed throughout, hidden with no signage. Within New York City, approximately 60,000 people currently use these buildings as a home.\(^1\) They are part of a system which discretely shuffles families from shelter to shelter, in and out of residencies. Shelter usage has risen 74% since ten years ago.\(^2\) In 2018, approximately 133,000 people cycled through the New York City shelter system, 46,000 of these being children. 58% of shelter residents are African American, and 31% are Latino and 7% white.\(^3\) The huge disparity affects minority groups and communities within the city.

In 2018, New York City put aside approximately 1.8 billion dollars for shelter budgets.\(^4\) What is so strange about these numbers is that the city is funding these shelters and


\(^{2}\)“Basic Facts About Homelessness.”

\(^{3}\)“Basic Facts About Homelessness.”

consequently, spending more money on shelters than they would be spending if they provided more affordable housing. New York City and other cities throughout the United States have an undeniable housing crisis, leaving the poor with no option but to rely on a system to give them and their families basic needs.

It is such a publicized problem, yet so secret at the same time. And when people hear the stories and data of the shelter system, they are still in shock. The homeless are simultaneously the most exposed and the most hidden group of people. Homeless individuals who circle through trains, punctuating and emphasizing the same words every morning, possess notions of who the homeless are.

On the thirty-first of October in 2018, I stood at the bottom of Manhattan. With approximately twenty other individuals, we faced a group of activists holding up signs on the steps of City Hall. The signs were engraved with, “Pass the Bill: 15% for the Homeless” and “62,000 homeless for housing”. Most of the posters were handwritten by the activists or had been handed out by service providers before the newscasters turned on their cameras. All the signs were made to spread awareness. Like other signs made with plans of change, these signs were shown proudly to grab attention. Hopefully, someone at home watching the rally with their television’s sound on mute would see a sign. These are the people trying to convince New York City that homelessness is a problem that is deeper than the subway car or even the street. Homelessness infiltrates every aspect of a city. Not many people have unmuted their televisions yet.
It was a loud and powerful small group of individuals whose eyes glared right into the
cameras facing them and voices boomed. Chants echoed around New York’s City Hall,
“Housing is a human right. Do what’s right!” which transitioned into a call and response:

“What do we want?
Housing!
When do we want it?
Now!
Why do we want it?
To house the homeless!”

Miss Flowers was one of the speakers who was presented. Miss Flowers was the woman
who, back in October, approached Mayor DeBlasio during his workout to ask why his new
affordable housing plan would not support homeless New Yorkers. The video got a lot of press
attention and now when introducing herself, Miss Flowers calls herself the one who approached
DeBlasio at the gym. In the video, she got down to DeBlasio, who was perched on the floor,
shook his hand and calmly asked about his thoughts. But Miss Flowers is much more than that,
which is apparent by the way she walks into a room. She is brilliant and continuously holds her
ground and speaks in a joyous but firm way when addressing matters.

That day at City Hall, she stood at the podium in a bright red sweater with a matching ear
warmer that wrapped her head. This is not her first fight. Miss Flowers proudly announced that
she was at the walk at Washington next to Martin Luther King Jr. “This is the same fight” she
yelled at the cameras.

With the same sense of integrity, Congressmember Salamanca Jr followed her speech with some
facts;

Homelessness in New York is one of the biggest issues of our time. For the past
four years, the number of homeless people sleeping in New York City Shelters
each night has stagnated to 60,000 or so, making it clear that we need bold policy strokes if we ever want to end this crisis. These grass that you see around us show that despite good intended policies, they have ultimately failed thousands of New Yorkers that are still living in shelters not to mention the thousands more that sleep on the streets and remain uncounted for. It's clear that we as a city need legislation that can actually be effective.

Homelessness in New York City is an epidemic at the moment with levels reaching higher than the Great Depression. Furthermore, the largest population in shelters are children under the age of six. One in every hundred children in New York City are born into a shelter.

The public hearing I attended was an attempt to make these numbers more widely known. Currently, politicians do not contribute to the fight in impactful ways. Because of the lack of resources available to homeless New Yorkers, having people with more resources help advocate for them is really helpful in the fight.

This study focuses on a portion of the front lines of this movement; service providers, activists and non-governmental organizations. Their role is an important one; They are the defenders and many people’s only source of support in the dizzying moments of homelessness. They are crucial to many lives as a source of food, shelter, and information. The lack of care that the government has shown to people struggling to stay afloat is appalling, landing on private organizations to keep people grounded.

The rally is not an event that I analyze in my research, but it was a way to better understand the issues being addressed right now when I was at the beginning stages of my research. What I noticed most during my times at the rally and other events that I went to was the immense power and dedication that so many people had. Each sign that was held up symbolized a different organization that was there in support. I became intrigued in how service providers viewed their positionality in the fight. Moreover, I was interested in these relationships that were
formed between organizers and the homeless. Many of the service providers were white who were directing people of color by passing out signs and directing their movements. It made me wonder what their relationships were like and how the service providers understood the people they were intending to help.

Furthermore, I wondered what the organizations were like when they were not at a public event. How do these organizations operate? How do they intend to help people? What are their mission statements and do the organizers personally follow them?

This paper aims to answer the question, “How do service providers construct notions of the homeless”? Subsequently, I come to the question, “How do the service provider’s goals affect their construction and outcomes as providers?” in my third chapter. Providers are the main actors providing relief for the homeless. In my research, I highlight two types of providers who differed in their practices: Parcel and encompassing providers. By constructing the homeless, I am referring to how their provision creates new ways of viewing homelessness and “treating” homelessness. Temporality is identified as an important theme in my research. Temporality simultaneously exists in the sphere of the service providers and the world in which their clients operate and subsist. Service providers consistently make a concerted effort to view homelessness as a temporary state in an attempt to consider the issue through a humanistic lens. To view homelessness as a state of permanence would be to reduce the individual to a non-human form. Instead of treating and aiding their clients as individuals who are incapable of personal growth and moving past their current situation, they instead seek to address homelessness on a day-to-day basis. Hoping that if they can help their clients in one moment of strife, they can equip them with the tools that will allow them to approach tomorrow (i.e.: the
future) with a newfound sense of empowerment. Instead, this ignores evidence exhibiting homelessness as a systematic problem that people get stuck in, which does two things. It only helps people momentarily and not in the longer term. It also contradicts some of the goals that the providers maintain, referring to community, autonomy, and dignity. These goals are very prevalent for encompassing providers. While the encompassing provider’s constructions do not inform their goals, the two interact. Parcel providers do not have solid goals for their organizations, which allows the constructions of their clients to rule the way they provide for them.

(Figure 1: A chart showing the major themes in each chapter & how they connect to each other)

**Methods**

To understand providers ideologies on the homelessness, I connected with providers that I had previously been in touch with. I met most of the providers at rallies and community
organizing events. I then used the snowball method to connect to more service providers by asking at the end of interviews if providers had any other organizations that they could put me in contact with. We had our interviews either in person or over the phone. Over the course of two months, I was able to connect with seven organization providers. I categorize three of the interviewees as “parcel organizations” and four as “encompassing organizations.” Most of the interviews lasted one to two hours.

In my interviews, I asked questions starting with how the providers got into their line of work and their educational backgrounds. By doing this, I intended to understand more about who the providers were and their reason for wanting to pursue service provision. I found this helpful to understand the provider’s positionality in their work. I then asked basic questions regarding the organization. My original intent was to focus on how they work with homeless mothers, by I found that many of them skimmed through these questions when they were asked. Most said they did not see a significant difference in the ways that they tried to help. I started with a list of questions, but they altered depending on the direction of the interview.

I had limitations in my research as most service providers work long hours and have limited time. Additionally, a government shutdown was happening at the time of my research making it an extremely unavailable time for many of the providers I connected with.

Chapter Layout

Each of the chapters throughout my project build on each other. Chapter 1 is my attempt to layout the groundwork for all the organizations that I interviewed. This chapter is what I call “Organization Profiles”, where I give detailed profiles on each of the organizations. I then use
themes that I observed throughout my interviews to split the organizations into categories. The main categorization that I have deciphered between providers I interviewed are “encompassing organizations” and “parcel organizations”. I also explain the overall significance of religion in all the organizations.

Chapter 2 asks the question, “How do the organizations construct their idea of homelessness”. I use themes from interviews to explain and analyze the ways that the service providers construct narratives of homelessness. The main themes that I touch upon in this chapter is “temporality” and “stigma”, as well as “systematic notions”.

Chapter 3 looks at how the constructions from chapter 2 penetrate the service providers goals and missions of how they want their organization to treat the homeless. Most of the organization’s goals encase notions of “community”, “agency” and “dignity”. Temporality and stigma both inform these notions and vice-versa.

**Literature Review**

*Historical*

Homeless people have always been an element of urban life. Yet, the history of homelessness is usually synthesized by referring to the problem in terms of the national events of the era. While homeless people have always been a present group, developments in the United States are a good way of explaining the evolution of homelessness where homelessness and service providers stand today. The Bowery mission in New York City, opened in 1879, is thought of as one of the first shelters. The Bowery Mission sought to help men find jobs in
response to a lack of employment at the time. This first organization in the United States was an acknowledgment of a problem. Soon, the Great Depression hit and homelessness became an issue that included families. Homelessness was not just seen as affecting young men, but a more diverse population. From 1950 to 1970, urban renewal was enforced in cities and many poor people were displaced from their homes as prices for new housing shot up. This period sets the scene for a new, “modern” kind of homelessness, which continues to this day. Throughout the 1960s, homelessness was blamed on the person’s deviant self, rather than systematic problems like the shortage of housing. After the 1970s, homelessness was an issue that was articulated more within politics and throughout urban areas. It has become known as talked about as a “chronic problem” in the United States. The government started to address the problem more. By the 1970s and 1980s, homelessness was understood more like a systematic problem, which “shifted responsibility away from welfare services and onto housing departments for the first time.” For example, The McKinney- Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 was the first sizable federal law in America which provided funding for social services for the homeless, as well as research to find long term solutions to homelessness. This work is important since the

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8 “Understand Homelessness |.”
9 “Understand Homelessness |.”
McKinney Homeless Assistance Act serves as the foundation for contemporary federal legislation on homelessness and for much contemporary homeless relief and assistance.\textsuperscript{12}

The increase of the homeless population throughout the 1980’s caused an expansion of services available to the homeless, consisting of traditional emergency shelters to soup kitchens. Because the homeless population was, and is, so visible by congregating outside, homelessness was thought about as an emergency, calling for “emergency housing”. Emergency housing has become what we know as transitional housing.\textsuperscript{13} These services today are the main ways which the homeless get relief.

Kohler-Hausmann explains “tough policies” that occurred in the United States which cracked down on attitudes towards drug use, poverty and crime “during the 1970s… These policies subordinated groups that rehabilitative welfare programs had already marked as suspect by virtue of their need for individual-level transformation or reform”.\textsuperscript{14} Because welfare is so negatively viewed, welfare recipients are concerned as a “lesser citizen”. Like people who have been labeled as criminals and do not have the right to vote, the poor in the United States have also been given “secondary citizenship”\textsuperscript{15}. The emphasis on “individuality” and the assumption that people have the opportunity to make it in a market economy makes welfare recipients seem to have attributes of laziness and motivation. In return, the poor are viewed to be undeserving of their full set of rights. Additionally, the welfare state creates a dependence on the state from the


poor. Welfare creates government surveillance for those receive benefits by being placed in a system where citizens are now able to be tracked.

In addition to this close monitoring, laws are placed on low income individuals that must be strictly adhered to in order to uphold their aid. Laws are placed on the poor that they are obliged to follow if they want the help from the government. Therefore, welfare programs trying to help the poor view the poor as the problem. The poor’s character is attacked instead of systemic problems like racism and oppression. This makes it hard for people to ever be legitimized as suitable market actors, stagnating them in their positions.17

Furthermore, Barbara Cruikshank explains ways of governing that exhibits itself as ways of helping the individual who are seen to have bad dependencies on the state;

... the method is to govern people by getting them to govern themselves...More often, poor people are governed at the level of the social through case management, empowerment programs, parenting classes, and work training. Again, constituting the needs and interests of others to fulfill their human potential is a mode of governing people.18

Cruikshank recognizes that ways people are governed are not solely through traditional policing. Programs, schools, classes and training are all ways that we are taught how to efficiently act in society. Goffman’s ideas of “total institutions” (below) are examples of programs that teach ways of governing. Homeless shelters and organizations can be seen as examples of governing through things like self help classes, addiction programs and parenting courses.

16 Cruikshank, 34.
17 Cruikshank, 18.
18 Cruikshank, 40.
There are many different types of social services for the homeless and as Meanwell points out, it can be problematic to generalize all types into one category. There are also many ways in which previous academics have used terms like “therapeutic incarceration” or Goffman’s “total institutions” and “therapeutic policing tactics” as a way to describe the shelter system and policing the poor. These programs aim to “instill levels of introspection, self-discipline, and future orientation that would lead residents to begin taking steps toward rehabilitation.”

Additionally, therapeutic treatment ignores the science behind addiction and instead places emphasis on the bad morals of the addict. In the same manner, police ideology continues to distinguish the poor as troubling morals as a way to try to put blame on the person and not the system.

Forrest Stuart illustrates how police view homeless as having no control over their lives. By diagnosing subjects with a problem and directing, police think they are helping to ultimately cure their poverty. The police are actually diagnosing them with a criminal record, which allows them to be further surveilled and punished. For example, in terms of Stuarts research, Skid Row’s authorities patrol people with intentions for people to “graduate” from an impoverished way of life. In doing so, people are encouraged to progress and physically leave the

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22 Gowan, 73.
23 Stuart, Down, out, and under Arrest, 67.
neighborhood to an “improved” way of life. While I do not talk about this type of policing, it is important to understand the literature discussing control of the poor and homeless. Through policing and institutions, there are many ways that homeless are controlled through therapeutic methods.

Additionally, Goffman’s “Total institutions”\textsuperscript{24} are spaces where people are contained into one space. While not targeting the homeless specifically, institutions establish the deviants in society and try to fix them. Total institutions are a way of containing a “deviant” group of people in order to try to render them fit for normal society through instilling the organizations ideologies. Another way which shelter’s fall under total institution is what Joniak calls “tough love” is a way in which is when providers are harsh in order to get a better result out of clients.\textsuperscript{25} Other literature has these same ideologies framed in various ways referring to Goffman’s ideas of total institutions.\textsuperscript{26} Additionally, Bogard looks at shelters rules as a way of control.

\textit{Stigma & Deviance}

In regard to government support for the homeless, there are notions of who the deserving homeless are in legislation. People had in the past and still have to meet criteria in order to get housing, which qualified them as “unintentionally homeless”.\textsuperscript{27} In other words, people have to


\textsuperscript{27} Neale, “Theorising Homelessness,” 37.
prove their situations are inadvertent, showing a mistrust and stigma towards the homeless from the government.

Homeless people have always been seen as a deviant group, associated with laziness and irresponsible behavior. Throughout history, these accusations have always restricted the rights of homeless people, viewing them as not worthy of getting welfare and assistance that they need. The “deviance” of the homeless appears repetitively throughout history and in more current research. The way we stigmatize the homeless is at the core of the problematization of understandings of people's situations. While homelessness is discussed and accepted as a systematic issue, it is not treated as one. The most common theme throughout all the literature relating to the management of homeless populations is the stigmatization that infiltrates their lives. The homeless experience immense discrimination in the public sphere because they are physically present and seen.

Goffman (1963) discusses the stigma of people in our society. He explains that a stigmatized person is not seen as a fully human. They are people who present a kind of danger to the normalization of society with the differences that they have. Important to my research, Goffman explains that people with stigma are unsure of how other people in society “identify him and receive him”. He also discusses the two type of people who he thinks view the stigmatized differently than the rest of the “normals”: other stigmatized people and “the wise”

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30 Goffman, Goffman, 25.
31 Goffman, 16.
The wise are people who “are normal but whose special situation has made them intimately privy to the secret life of the stigmatized individual” explaining them as a “courtesy membership of the clan.” In my research, I see service providers as what Goffman explains as “the wise”. Usually the wise will have to go through a “heart changing experience” in order for them to understand the point of view of the stigmatized. Knowing the stigmatized personally is a way to humanize them and create a personal identity of who they are. In regard to my research, Goffman’s understanding of literature informs the homeless relationship to general society and the providers. Providers could be understood to be the “wise”, separating their perspectives from others.

Previous Literature Regarding the Homeless

Previous research has understood that people stigmatize the homeless by calling them, “lazy, dangerous and undesirable.” Anderson et al look at strategies that the homeless “salvage the self” in order for stigmas to not affect them in. Additionally, there has been a lot of previous research done where homeless populations are seen by providers as “worthy” or “deserving” of services. DeWard goes into detail about clients having to conform to shelter’s rules in order to

32 Goffman, 126.
33 Goffman, 28.
34 Goffman, 28.
35 Goffman, 55.
be seen as worthy clients. Additionally, DeWard emphasizes a dependency that is formed on service organizations because of the lack of independence that clients get within the organization. Total institutions remove clients from society, making it hard for them to reintegrate. Marvasti (2002) uses the word “compliance” to explain the relationship expected between providers and clients. Hoffman et al states that there are power relations inherent in the interactions between providers and the homeless. Much of the time, homeless are blamed for their situation which affects the help they receive.

Joniak looks at staff-client conflict within organization which she says is most prevalent in the staff’s role of “creating sustaining and escalating much of the conflict.” Much of this is based off what a “good client” is in the eyes of the provider. She observes ways in which staff members delegitimize clients voices in order to gain power over them. While staff may have their clients best interests at heart, they view their clients as “rebellious children,” something I also refer to as how providers view clients in my research. Additionally, Joniak thinks of this as therapeutic policing tactics which tend to silence clients and view them as deviants.

Neale refers to the “deserving and undeserving” homeless, who are seen to have been affected by “structural factors beyond their control” get much more sympathy and help from government, while people who are seen to be responsible for their homelessness receive less help. Theorists such as Foucault and Giddens refer to social power structures that denounce the

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39 DeWard and Moe, “Like a Prison!: Homeless Women’s Narratives of Surviving Shelter.”
41 Neale, “Theorising Homelessness,” 44.
idea of the deserving and undeserving poor. Power structures are very prevalent in people lives, limiting people to certain freedoms, “there are forces in operation which make it likely that some people, and not others, will become homeless in any given circumstance”. Theories of whether homelessness falls under a welfare or housing problem therefore do not include the whole dynamic problem of what is at play when people fall into homelessness.

*Time & Home*

Previous literature has discussed how time in homeless organizations like shelters is manipulated, but there is not literature about how the actual temporality of being homeless affects services. Much research has been done about singular institutions, studying the ways in which “shelter timetables for daily activities” “diminishes senses of linear time”47. Gounis found that a shelter’s help is extremely time consuming, making it harder for clients to escape temporal shelters to permanent housing producing “shelter dependencies”48. Past studies have examined how homeless people’s time is very reliant and based around providers. Amy Cooper talks about how a lot of women’s time in shelters in what she calls “empty time” and “overscheduled time”, where clients spend their time waiting around, “determined by social institutions’ timetables”. A lot of time was spent on buses getting to another place. “Over scheduled time” is how women have to spend most of their time and energy trying to access the most basic human needs like sleep, bathing and eating. Most of their time is scheduled around these aspects of life.49 This is

46 Neale, 47.
49 Cooper, “Time Seizures and the Self.”
something that I see in my research too, but since I only interviewed providers, it is not as emphasized as a negative aspect of shelter life.

Neale also refers to “home” when talking about shelters and homelessness. Home is the opposite of being homeless and it is what many shelters, in my research as well, strive to be like. They explain home to refer to material conditions and standards, privacy, space, control, personal warmth, comfort, stability, safety, security, choice, self-expression and physical and emotional well-being⁵⁰. This refers more to the ideological ideas when we talk about home. In my research, I found similar references to home and community. Simple activities that

Religion within Service Provision

Cnaan et al discuss congregations role as service providers. Because every service organization I interviewed had a religious background in some way, their research informs some of the background information of my research.⁵¹

Today’s welfare state is heavily supported by congregations throughout the United States. Claiming to be one of the most religious modern democracies, “43% (of Americans) attend religious services at least weekly”⁵². Cnn et al claim that religious social services significantly reduce the need for other public services. Social services through religious organizations are much more relaxed and lack attention to detailed recorders which therefore, gives them more freedom to

create certain criteria for their service provision. Additionally, the article points out that these organizations need to be seen as service providers with caution as service provision is not the organization's main goals. Sager et al’s research finds that clients see religious service organizations as “hypocritical and condensing” of what they preach in religious services by ignoring the experiences of the homeless and instead, thinking of them in stereotypical ways.53

Community

Past researchers have also studied the emotional labor that is required from providers in order to do their job well. In a way, this is a form of social control because it is a way of the organization expressing their desires and how they want to come off to the public and their clients. This refers to “effort planning and control required to express an organization’s desired emotions”.54 Like flight attendants, providers of organizations are seen as “good workers” if they “bend the rules for the youth (their clients), stay overtime and (are) available”.55 They also discuss a trust that refers to emotional labor. When providers have to put in the time and effort to relate to their clients and soothe their emotional needs is very emotionally draining. In Jeffery’s study, one worker stated, “You got to be there, like, got to let yourself go, you got to make yourself accessible to people that come at you”56. Jeffery refers to the notion of providers being available for clients. Providers are expected to come to work and be physically and emotionally open. The organization in this study required providers working for them to “buy into its philosophy”. The workers commitment to the larger organization is a form of social control.

55 Jeffrey, 348.
56 Jeffrey,
Jeffery also questions the provider’s role between friends and workers. Providers have to find a medium between being the clients friend and a sort of authority figure.\textsuperscript{57} In my research, I also saw providers struggling with the emotional labor of the job requirements. They also seemed to not understand the blurred line between too much emotional labor and too little.

\textit{Dignity & Identity}

Previous anthropologists and sociologists have understood that institutions are very influential in the ways in which homeless people view themselves. The efforts that the homeless go through to get the basic necessities in life is very challenging and makes it hard to feel a sense of dignity. Additionally, going through life relying on a organization for the basic necessities makes it hard for clients to organize their own life. They are regulated by the time and schedule of the shelter, which makes it hard to have a sense of self.\textsuperscript{58} When Cooper asked what the worst part of being homeless was to homeless participants, 17\% of the women stated that the lack of control in their lives was the worst part.\textsuperscript{59} Additionally, “34\% of women participating in the survey reported that using social services made them feel a loss of dignity”\textsuperscript{60}. Out of these women expressing a lack of dignity, 67\% of them said that having to go through long, tedious procedures like waiting in lines for basic needs most affected them. In other words, dignity throughout the homeless population is less affected by their reliance on social services and more about “aspects of engaging with social services”.\textsuperscript{61} Participants of the study explained that

\textsuperscript{57}Jeffrey.
\textsuperscript{58}Cooper, “Time Seizures and the Self.”
\textsuperscript{59}Cooper.
\textsuperscript{60}Cooper, 177.
\textsuperscript{61}Cooper, 177.
experiences like having to wait outside the shelter to go in and get services is shameful and embarrassing.

Homeless people have a loss of identity do to not having a permanent address, but deeper and more physiological than that, homeless individuals are prideful of past identities that they had prior to being homeless. Boydell et al found that when homeless people talked about their identities, they emphasized their past careers instead of talking about the present. When they talked about their current selves, they have to advocate for their attributes. When the homeless talked about the future, they discussed a future that encompassed an idea of “good health and well-being”63. Additionally, Boydell et al discuss homelessness as a process as well as an event.

Because the loss of home comes with a loss of relationships as well, homeless people’s identities are also lost. Because these past relations are lost, new relations with people like providers and other homeless people make up most of how homeless people view their current identities.64 But a lot of the time, homeless people have hopes about the future. These are hopes that providers do not think about in my research.

In general, my research points to these same findings, but is constructed in a different way. Most previous research is ethnographic research that focuses on one singular organization or shelter. Because I talk strictly about the language that service providers during a specified amount of time, I am able to understand more about the ways that providers verbalize their work then how they act. Furthermore, this allows me to analyze the ways that the providers think about

64 Boydell, Goering, and Morrell-Bellai, 28.
their work rather than how they actually approach it. This is important because through my research, I learned that providers say certain statements that contradict how they act.

*Social Constructionism*

Many researchers look at the same themes that I look at, but do not think about their research in the same themes that I am. I try to unpack how service providers for the homeless view homelessness, and as a result, the services that they offer. I use social constructionism theory as a way to understand the relationships that occur and form through the ways that the providers think. Social constructionism is a comprehensive theory that many sociologists in the past have interpreted.  

“Reality” to the average person is made up of so many things that society has constructed. Social constructionism is based off subjective understandings of the world through one’s daily interactions. Berger and Luckmann (1967) think about society in both objective and subjective realities. Repetitive patterns in society develop into concepts that are embedded in society which become instinctive “knowledge”. By passing on these ideas, they become embedded in society and become objective in society. We change understandings and interpretations of the world into facts that construct the way things operate in society.

By analyzing the ways that the providers talk about the homeless people that they are providing for, I can further understand the ways that homelessness is constructed. Because these providers are people who interact with homeless people daily, they determine the homeless people’s futures. As a result, the ways in which they talk about homeless people is important in

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66 Berger and Luckmann, 13.
67 Berger and Luckmann, 7.
understanding how the greater society views the homeless. Because homeless providers are the people that lend support to the homeless, the ways that they construct ideas of homelessness become the objective way that the rest of society view and understand homelessness. What's more is the internalization that the homeless face in terms of who they are may come from the ways they are perceived by the providers. Themes that are prevalent throughout interviews I conducted with providers explain further who homeless people are to society are and how we try to help them.

Other researchers have discussed social constructions in regards to many social phenomenons. Social constructionism is a very broad theory that can relate to many societal problems. Reinarman explains social constructivism in terms of alcoholism in the United States. He studied a activist group called MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) that used drunk driving as a way to highlight alcoholism in our country.\(^\text{68}\) He highlights that the organization did not come from any turning event that would hypothetically create a new urge to open a organization against it. Moreover, the organization created a new way of viewing alcoholism. By mothers forming alliance against drunk drivers, it created a new form to approach alcoholism.\(^\text{69}\)

Pfohl approaches social constructivism by exampling a new social movement against “child beating”.\(^\text{70}\) The act of hitting your child used to be socially accepted and has slowly become a very frowned upon action in society. By making a term like “child beaters”, parents who do this are automatically looked down upon.\(^\text{71}\) The progression of how the act of hitting a


\(^{69}\) Reinarman.


\(^{71}\) Pfohl.
child has changed throughout history shows the way that it is a subjective opinion that turns into an objective one.
Chapter One:  
The Providers

In this chapter, I lay out a foundational narrative of all the service provision organizations that I interviewed. First, I discuss the main language I use to categorize the providers. I then go into detailed accounts of each organization in the study. Most of the information I provide in this chapter comes from what the providers told me in the interviews in order to capture their importance in their work. Through these “organization profiles”, I intend to show the ways in which the organizations differ in thought and practice. For example, some of the organizations have one way of provision and others have many different tears that make up the organization. I hope for the discrepancies in the organizations come across in this chapter.

Parcel versus Encompassing, the categorization I use in my analysis.

I have created a way of categorizing the organizations I interviewed in order to better analyze the differences between organizations. As Meanwell states, it is problematic to label at types of provision the same as not all organizations aim to present the same services.\textsuperscript{72} Within the data that has been collected, there are two common themes that separate the types of provision. There are organizations that are “trying to just help people” by giving them basic needs and there are the organizations that go a step further to try to create change. I will refer to the services that aim to give basic needs to people as “parcel organizations”. Parcel providers are organizations that may not necessarily have the funds to provide more than the basic bed and food for people. They are run by people that do not have a degree in social services and are doing

\textsuperscript{72} Meanwell, “Experiencing Homelessness,” 80.
the service from a place within. This means that these organizations are being run by human reaction instead of through a social science business way of assistance.

In this study, parcel providers are smaller providers that have a limit to the amount of people they are able to serve at once. Usually, these providers are branches of bigger organizations that may not have a certain service that parcel providers can help them with. In this study, all the parcel organizations help people coming from a bigger organization who offer chairs to clients but do not have beds. In retaliation, these parcel providers are able to coordinate with the bigger organization and have people sent on a bus to have a meal spend the night in a cot. Additionally, the parcel organizations are using borrowed spaces. They do not have a space of their own to supply the services so a lot of the time have to alter the way in which they go about services to make it work in the space that they have. For example, some of the parcel providers are connected to schools. Therefore, the shelter has to operate according to the hours of operation of the school. The clients of the shelter have to leave by 7 a.m. before the kids arrive for school.

It is not that these organization do not want to give other services, but they may not have the means to do so. The other two organizations that I interviewed which could fall into the category of parcel providers are the two small shelters that are connected to the churches. Lisa and Sandra do not necessarily have the skills essential to aid people further than offering food and shelter.

The organizations that I interviewed that took the help a step further were Saint Francis Shanice, Leaders Forward and Northeast Hope. These organizations not only give shelter and food but they also aim to provide other services which they would hope to aid people further
than the basic necessities. Some of this just means being available more regularly but for me, it implies something a little that their intent is more intersectional in the ways that they help. The organizations that I will call Encompassing providers penetrate deeper into the lives of the people that they intend to help. They think about the people that come to the organization further than just when the people are in the walls of the organization.

For example, the small churches only let people stay the night who have been tested negative for drugs. The bus of people come into the shelter and the shelters goal is to greet those people with open arms but they have not made it their responsibility to do anything which will infiltrate the lives of the people outside of the organization. The encompassing providers have a mentality of change whereas the parcel organizers have a mentality of “we do what we can do”. The difference in mentalities addresses a difference in services. While all providers have the same overarching, basic end goal to help with the homeless epidemic, they have different personal goals that change the way that they provide services to people.

In Hobo, Hustlers and Backsliders, Gowan explains that “beginning in the 1980’s, an ad hoc network of advocates many of them members of activist churches and religious orders, had responded to the rising demand for emergency shelter by opening basic, no-questions-asked overnight accommodations in church halls and basements, armories and warehouses. As the decade progressed, this bare-bones homeless provision gradually developed into a new branch of the American semi-welfare state.” And while these shelters do something short term, too much money is spent on emergency housing for homeless individuals and not long term housing that would create a more stable lifestyle. In other words, “The emergency shelters were merely

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73 Teresa Gowan, Hobos, Hustlers and Backsliders, n.d., 185.
accommodating homelessness -- and were by no means amelioration it.” These are what I am calling “parcel shelters”. They do not have the infrastructure to help people long term, but they are there to help people in the short term.

*Encompassing Organizations*

Saint Francis Shanice, Doug and Sharon

**Saint Francis Shanice** is a big organization located in the Bay Area with various means of relief for people seeking it. The organization's main service is based around what they call *The Dining Room*, which is somewhat of a cafeteria/restaurant. They serve approximately 3,000 trays of food a day. All food is free and open to anyone who shows up. Customers are able to grab as many portions as they want. Additionally, clients have the option to use a take-out box to bring food out with them. These elements of the dining hall give clients the autonomy that one has as if it were a profiting restaurant.

I interviewed two providers from the organization who work in different tears. From what Doug and Sharon have explained to me, I presume that the other services that the organization offers built physically and immetirally around the dining hall. When customers come into the dining hall, they are welcomed by *Guest Services* whose goal is to ultimately present other services that the organization has. These include services such as a shower truck that shows up once a month and the clothing bank that they have where people can freely go through to find clothes. They also explain having a clinic, providing free medical services for customers. On the

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74 Gowan, 188.
website, the services are presented as a list: “Hot, nutritious meals; Technology training; Medical care; Addiction recovery; Clothing; Job training; Social work”.

Upon getting hired, Doug worked for guest services. He now works as a “job coach” for the Workforce Development Program, which is a male rehab program. The rehab focuses on placing the men in the workforce as a way of securing the men’s rehabilitation. The men that are enrolled in the Workforce Development Program work in the dining hall for five months as a way to get integrated into the workforce. Doug explains that the relationship between all the services are all connected. The influence that all the services have on each other are really good as they all inform themselves in some way.

From the way that both Doug and Sharon discuss Saint Francis, the organization is more than just a service provider. There is a way that they talk about the organization that feels like there is a comfort to it. I picture customers filing in when the Dining Room doors open talking amongst each other. I don’t imagine a serious energy, but instead one of light hearted community. In fact, I don’t really imagine a serious energy from any of the organizations that I have talked to. But the idea of the dining hall has been discussed in a way where the customers have a huge amount of agency and there is a very well coordinated support system for customers if they need anything.

According to the organization’s website, 83% of customers of the dining room live alone, either on the streets or in a single room occupancy (SRO). Additionally, one third of the customers rely on the dining hall as their only main meal of the day.

The medical center that is also located at Saint Francis has around 4,600 patients who rely on the center as their primary care. 30% of the patients that use the clinic are children and
many of them deal with chronic diseases. Another type of service Saint Francis provides are services that encapsulate “lifestyle guidance” like cooking courses.

The dining hall is open from 10:00 am to 1:30 pm. The first hour and a half is “Senior Hour” where only seniors and families with children are allowed in. I assume this lets them settle into the dining room without a feeling of rush from the rest of the crowd. Everyone else is invited in at 11:30 am. Saint Francis is a very large and well planned organization which seems to do a good job of filtering people into services. All this being said, it is important to note that Saint Francis is the biggest organization that I interview with. Because of this, it seems to funcion the most as a empire in the way that there are so many sectors and arms of people working within it.

Leaders Forward, Stacy

Leaders Forward is an organization based in New York City which also has many different folds to it. The organization has a cafe that serves approximately 400 meals per day. Lunch is served Monday through Friday from 12 to 2 pm and dinner is served from 4-6, Monday through Thursday. The organization also has an empowerment program which leads the members to access to “housing, benefits, job training, legal services, health care, and counseling”.

Additionally, the organization has a Community Action Program which helps mobilize people to form ways of improving policies. Stacy is the director of the Community Action Program. I went to one of the meetings that was held in the basement of a church where they served an array of pizza and soda. There were a lot of people there, all homeless or previously homeless except for me and Stacy. The meeting started off with everyone going around saying their names and
their reason for being there. Stacy and her coworker then proceeded to construct a list of rules for the meeting which were things like, “listen to everyone while they are talking and respect everyone’s ideas”. They then went onto talk about many political battles that were going on which dealt with problems of homelessness. Their goal seemed to inform people on activism and protests that were going on, as well as hearing people’s ideas on what they wanted to change.

Leaders Forward was the most systematic rooted organization that I interviewed. Stacy explained that while she feels this is the best way to help, it is also the hardest to fund because people who fund non-profits want their money going to things that they can see instantly change. This leg of Leaders Forward focuses on systematic change instead of instant change.

**Parcel Organizations**

NorthEast Hope, Tiana

**NorthEast Hope** is a small organization fueling a small city in Upstate New York. The organization was started by Tiana, the woman that I interviewed. The organization has been expanding since Tiana started, three and a half years ago. The organization is built around “Saturdays on the corner” where people from the city gather, serve food and give out necessities to the homeless population in the neighborhood. The Saturdays are explained by Tiana as a community gathering where different facets of the city come together. Tiana emphasizes the importance of the variety of types of people that congregate on Saturdays, creating less of a divide between different communities in the city.

Because NorthEast Hope is a much smaller organization, it is more of a facilitator for events. Without it, there would be where reliable space where various actors of the community
could meet to either hand out their home cooked meals or receive the home cooked meals. When thinking of NorthEast Hope, I synthesized it as a homebase for people of the city. The main organization’s goal is to help homeless women, but because the events are located in a public space, they do not turn anyone away from the services. Tiana explains the corner on Saturdays in a magical way. People are consistently bringing things and showing up just in time when stock is running low.

Additionally, something that should be noted about the organization is that it stems from religious roots. Tiana explains that it doesn't follow a specific religion but Tiana, as a person, follows Jesus. There is absolutely no criteria for her to help someone but in herself, she finds reason in her past which incorporates religion.

At the moment, there is no specific private space that the organization working out of. Tiana explains the organization to be built around her rather than a space, saying the organization is somewhat of a one-man-show. She has a day job where she gets paid to counsel people going through addictions in other counties while also continuously, morning and night, being on call in a way to always be readily available to people. While the organization is based off of the Saturdays, Tiana seems to have dedicated herself to the cause of the organization. This meaning that there is never an end for her.

The organization now has eight members who sit on the board from various workplace settings. This way, the organization can expand to become a more physically established place. NotherhEast Hope has plans of building temporary housing for women in the future.
St. Paul’s Church, Sandra

Saint Paul’s Church is located in a borough of New York City. It is a shelter that is attached to a church and holds room for ten men to sleep as a time, Monday through Friday. The shelter is run by a couple who attend the church and sustained by people who volunteer their time. The men who spend the night are sent by a larger organization that the men apply through.

When the men arrive at the shelter, they are welcomed by a family style meal that a few volunteers that night are responsible for. They each get a bed with seldom privacy through space dividers along each of the beds. The small organization is a leg of a larger organization that sends the men. The couple that runs the shelter are very reliant on the larger organization to arrange the coordination of dropping off and picking up the men, as well as who the church receives. Men arrive before dinner time and leave at 7 am to ensure that people that need to, can get to work on time. Therefore, Saint Paul’s shelter has very little to do with the lives of the men outside of the time the ten men spend the night. Sandra says that much of the time, the same men come to spend the night so they are able to form a certain relationship with the volunteers.

Additionally, Sandra says that when someone volunteers once, they usually come back to volunteer again. This hypothetically creates a type of familiarity between the volunteers and the clients, although it seems rare that clients come back many times and overlap with the volunteers. It seems as if the organization creates a new sort of community every night. The shelter has a lights out at 10:30 PM, where everyone has to be in bed. Sandra says this forms a kind of order that is necessary to have a well-functioning shelter.
Vision Sake Church, Lisa

**Vision Sake Church** has the same concept as Saint Pauls but for women. Additionally, this shelter is open only on weekends but continues to be open throughout the year. The shelter’s space is bigger than most, which Lisa explains as something that people really enjoy about the shelter. The organization’s rules and missions are pretty much exactly the same as St. Paul’s shelter. Each client gets a bed, seat and access to the bathroom during her stay. Vision Sake Church gives clients the basic needs to stay there. Clients arrive before dinner and everyone eats together and then clients are able to either go to sleep or chat before lights out.

Lisa has a funny story for why she took over the role of director for the shelter. Her sister’s cat went missing. After two months of putting up flyers and searching, Lisa prayed. She promised that if the cat came back, she would do volunteer work. Sure enough, the cat came back and she started working for the shelter. Soon enough, the previous director got too old and she took it over.

**How is the field of services organized?**

This next section of this chapter explains other ways to define and categorize each of the organizations. I first talk about religious because every organization has a religious background. I then categorize each organization into groups to try to make sense of the different modes of thinking within service provision work. I also categorize by place and gender, but those are not as relevant to my research.
Religious Organizations

Every organization I communicated with throughout my research was connected to religion in some way, which is the main factor that unites all the organizations. Even if the services are not currently “religious” in the sense that they abide by religious laws, they all have a religious foundation. The church shelters that I interviewed are funded by the church. Additionally, organizations like Leaders Forward was formed by a group of nuns. Today, they do not associate with religion but the foundation was with religious ideals.

The emphasis on religion throughout the organizations is important due to the values that religion engrains into the organization. While all organizations stress that they do not discriminate towards people who are not religious, it does not mean that the way that they go about their services does not imply religious theory.

Peter Berger, a sociologist of religion, discusses how religion and society connect. Berger introduces *The Sacred Canopy* by explaining man's relationship to society; “Society is a product of man” and “man cannot exist apart from society”\(^7\). The way that we are characterized is only in relation to the way that we are addressed through society. Because society is all we know, it becomes more than just a control but reality. For example, language is not a skill that we are born with but a human product that we grow up to assume is natural. Socialization is the “dialect of identity by saying that the individual becomes that which he is addressed by others”.\(^7\)

Similarly, *Ipso facto* refers to the idea that one takes on the roles that are assigned to him.\(^7\)

Ideally, someone who has a nephew internalizes what it means to be an uncle and takes on the

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\(^7\) Berger, 16.
\(^7\) Berger, 15.
role. Berger regards religion as being a way of solidifying ways of social control like this. In order to keep people in roles, we need ways of socialization so people are able to internalize our roles in society to actually become them instead of imitate them. Religion is an institution that reminds humans of their roles within society. Religion is part of a ritual that is rooted in reminding people. Rituals become a way to embed practices and beliefs into people's lives. Religion becomes a way that a socially constructed world is able to seep into society's values. The repetitive nature of having one book that one can always go back to for values becomes a form of social control.

Above all, religion, creates a certain behavior and a standard set of morals in which people are able to refer back to;

Religion is not simply about providing humans with information or knowledge but also, viewed sociologically about the proper organization and right guidance of life. Religion tells people not only what is real but consequently what are good, right, true, wise, and worthy desires, thoughts, feelings, values, practices, actions and interactions. Religion is a way to organize and conduct people’s values and morals. It is a way to govern a society's thoughts by creating social rules that people can respond to in guided and specific ways.

Throughout the interviews, the providers made references to Jesus's Corporal Works of Mercy. These are a list of actions in Jesus's teaching that give a model for the ways in which we should treat others from the book of the Mathew, chapter 25: 31-46;

(31) When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, (32) And all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (33) He with place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. (34) Then the king with say to those on his right, ‘come, you who are

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Berger, The Sacred Canopy.
bless by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (35) For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, (36) naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.’ (37)Then the righteous will answer him and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? (38) When did you see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? (39)When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?’ (40)And the king will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’ (41) Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (42) For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, (43) a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.’ (44) Then they will answer and say, Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?’ (45) He will answer them, ‘Amen I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.’ (46) And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.’

This tells a story of how the Son of Man, Jesus Christ separates the sheep from the goat. He tells the sheep that they should go into the blessed land because when his people were in need, they took care of them. They fed the hungry, gave drinks to the thirsty, sheltered the homeless, visited the sick, visited the prisoners, buried the dead and gave alms to the poor. These are the seven teachings that religious commonly refer to when talking about why they help. In interviews, when I asked the reasons for them doing the work they do, the religious providers always responded with this proverb. Lisa summarized it by saying, “when we die, God won’t be looking at what we have but what we did in life” which is especially what this proverb says. The goats in the story are sworn to hell for not helping the people in need. These lend answers to many “why” questions that follow a common thread throughout the religious organizers. Many of them do not give much more of an answer than that. The proverbs gives them a reason. Instead of using an answer regarding it is something that they felt was their “calling”, which a lot of non religious
people may more regularly refer to, they talk about it in reference to what is God’s calling. Religion is a way of conducting “moral orders” and Matthew’s proverbs are an example of people using the bible as a repetitive reminder of who they should be in Society.

The commonalities throughout the organizations are in the way that religion is incorporated. While none of the providers that I interviewed referred to the proverbs as a threat from God, they use it as the reason that they are in service provision. Religion manifests a certain behavior that guides many of the providers in their work.

San Francisco Vs New York City

It is important to touch on the reasons for interviewing people strictly from New York State and California in this study. New York and San Francisco have two of the highest homeless populations in the United States. According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development 2018 report, New York City is the number one city with people experiencing homelessness with 78,676 people total. San Francisco is number six behind Los Angeles, Seattle, San Diego City San Jose and DC. Both New York City and San Francisco are headquarters for some of the most wealth in the United States and additionally have some of the biggest wealth disparities. While there may be many cities in the United States with more numbers of homeless populations, San Francisco is known as the fast growing homeless capital of the United States. With such a dense population, both cities are home the wealthiest and poorest in the world. Both cities have a major affordable housing crisis. An article in Business Insider has called San Francisco one of the “strongest economies in the world” with the average

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household earning $96,677 annually. This is about double the national average, which is about $58,000.\textsuperscript{82} While the average household in New York City has an income closer to that of the national income, New York City has always been the largest economy in the United States but San Francisco area is one of the fastest growing. Additionally, like any other major global city, both cities face major inequalities as well.\textsuperscript{83}

While this is not a comparative piece as a whole, there may be different ways in which providers from San Francisco think about the problem of homelessness versus the ways in which providers from New York do so. Because San Francisco is in the midst of a transformation in regard to the economy and therefore everything else socially, there is more of a consciousness that the providers in the bay area have than those in New York. In other words, when you see a change happening, it is easier to interpret it than if it is an ongoing problem. New York’s continuous label as the homeless capital maybe stunts the way in which providers in New York see the problem of homelessness. The difference between New York and San Francisco is the on-going housing problem in New York versus a sudden housing crisis that has occured in the last four years in the Bay Area.

\textit{Men, Women and Co-ed}

When starting this research, I was really interested in the ways in which service providers treated specifically homeless mothers because single mothers are the most marginalized group of


people. I was interested in the ways in which women who had young children got treated differently by non-governmental organizations or service providers due to their lack of support from the government. It became tough to focus specifically on mothers and women because most service providers that I made contact with did not work with mothers and if they did, they did not think much of it. Within this study, I have two organizations that specifically help men, one that is specific to only women and the others are for both men and women. While, Saint Francis Shanice’s dining hall is for both men and women, they have the Workforce Development Program that is only for men. When I asked why the program was limited to men, Doug was unsure. Even so, Sharon from Saint Francis Shanice was the most thoughtful about the shelter’s relationship with women that use the services out of all my interviewees. Sharon added details to the interview where others did not like “so when you add children to crisis and poverty, the trauma is not just the children, but you know, we tend to focus solely on the kids. Um, but the cycle is painful for everyone and the trauma just keeps compounding.” In this interview, Shannon talked about the different ways in which the organization was there to help connect people to services which could further help them with what they needed. For example, if a homeless woman is pregnant, they could connect her to a Gynecologist.

I found a huge lack of attention and thought to homeless women and mothers by service providers. When interviewing providers, I usually brought up services for women by first asking, “What barriers do you face?” and then I would ask “Does this change when working with mothers and children?” When the question was brought up about how the providers cared for specifically women and mothers, the answers was usually dismissive and vague. There was not any specific barriers that most of the providers brought up.
“Figure 2: The 2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress: Demographic Characteristics of Homeless Individuals”

Providers in my study also seem to ignore many racial aspects that occur within the organization. Most of the providers that I interviewed mentioned within the interview that they identify as white or caucasian. According to the 2018 AHAR (Annual Homeless assessment Report), there were 202,046 White homeless people, 128,741 African American, 4,919 Asian, 11,812 Native American and 4,128 Pacific Islanders accounted for in 2018. These numbers are not representative of our national demographics of people in the United States. The majority

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white providers in my research shows a lack of representation of the homeless population that
they are working to help and therefore, a possible lack of understanding of the needs and
experiences of the people undergoing homelessness. Many of the service providers did not bring
race up without being asked in the interviews. I see this as a lack of attention to systematic
problems and a divide between the majority of the homeless population and the service
providers. Hsu et al find that people receiving services are much happier with same-race
physicians, as they connect to similar experiences and therefore get better treatment.
Additionally, they find that white physicians spend less time with black patients and spend
extensive amounts of time with white patients on more mundane problems. Additionally, they
found that when service providers and clients share an aspect of identity, client satisfaction rates
are higher. Only Tiana, who identifies as white has ever been homeless herself. The rest of the
providers I interviewed have never experienced being homeless and therefore, lack another form
of understanding of the population they are working with. While they sympathize with their
clients, it is hard for them to understand clients full needs and desires. Even Tiana experienced
homelessness as a white women, which holds different experiences than people of color who are
homeless.

Here, I have laid a basemap of who my providers are and the lens in which I am
understanding my research. There are many ways to categorize the services, which go beyond
the ways that I did so in this chapter. These are the categorizations that most stood out to me as a
way to better understand the organizations.

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86 Becky Hsu, Conrad Hackett, and Leslie Hinkson, “The Importance of Race and Religion in Social
Service Providers,” Social Science Quarterly 95, no. 2 (June 2014).
Chapter Two:  

The Construction

In chapter 2, I plan on answering the question, “How do providers construct the idea of the homeless?”. I do this by analyzing and comparing how parcel and encompassing providers view time, stigma and systemic influences within their organizations. These are themes that I have analyzed to being big contributors to the ways that the providers construct their notions of who the homeless are. The ways that parcel providers and encompassing providers talk about the homeless and the organizations vary, showing differences in the ways that they construct who their clients are. Both the limitations of their organization and how they perceive their clients are instruments in the ways that they formulate who their clients are. Providers socially construct who their clients are based on the limitations of their work as well as how they perceive their clients to be. Because they share spaces with their clients, these constructions easily become objective rather than the providers opinions.

State of Temporality

This section suggests that encompassing providers focus so much on being politically correct, that they end up ignoring how hard it is to escape homelessness in America. In other words, providers view homelessness as a situational state that one experiences, however it is a phase that can/will change. The encompassing providers do not discuss their clients as “homeless people” but instead as people who currently do not have a home as a result of or with result to any other circumstances existing in the client’s life. As a result, providers think of clients as people who are temporarily in a state of homelessness instead of people who are stuck in a
system that does not provide them with resources. Parcel organizations deal with the problem in an opposite way by only intaking clients within a specific homeless bracket who are able to escape homelessness in easier ways. Because the window of time that they are helping clients is so short, it becomes hard for parcel providers to create a lasting relationship with clients.

Past research has categorized different types of homeless people in an effort to deconstruct a perilous state of being. Randall Kuhn and Dennis Culhane (1998) characterized three different forms of homelessness: transitionally homeless, the episodically homeless and chronically homeless. Transitional homelessness refers to people who spend a short time in a shelter but then move out to “stable housing”.*87 The transitional homeless are only in a state of homelessness for a short period of time and they do not go back into homelessness after they successfully find stable housing. The episodically homeless are people that go in and out of being homeless and shelters throughout their lives. Meanwhile, the chronically homeless are people who are stuck in the cyclical shelter system. The research system that Kuhn and Culhane refer to when discussing the different types of homelessness is a system they originated called “time-aggregated and time-patterned approaches”.88 This system not only measures the amount of time that people are homeless, but the patterns in time that someone is homeless. For example,

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two people may be homeless for the same amount of time in total over the years but in different increments. Kuhn and Culhane categorize people through these increments rather than the time.89

While distinguishing the various types of homeless people is crucial to understand the larger issue of homelessness, there is a divide between how the types of providers in this study view these categories. The parcel providers regard the homeless in these terms. Each state of homelessness presents a varied set of circumstances in which service providers should, in theory, adapt and modify their approach accordingly. In other words, it is important to distinguish how the people who are “providing” think about the various states of being homeless. I do not think that either parcel or encompassing providers approach their clients in the right manner with regards to Kuhn and Culhane’s categorization.

The parcel providers position homeless people very directly in the classifications Randall Kuhn and Dennis Culhane outline. In fact, the parcel organizations only intake what the aforementioned researchers refer to as “transitional homeless”. On the other hand, encompassing providers try to ignore these categories to the extent that it actually hinders their services.

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*Encompassing Organizations*

In my study, the encompassing service providers are all working within a state of temporality. During interviews, the providers always seemed to be in a frenzy due to the fact that they seek to deal with situations solely in the present to allow room for a situation to dissolve in

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89 Kuhn and Culhane, “Applying Cluster Analysis to Test a Typology of Homelessness by Pattern of Shelter Utilization: Results from the Analysis of Administrative Data.”
a preordered way. In a sense, this methodology is the result of the belief on the behalf of service providers that they are helping people who are at a low (but impermanent) point in their lives, and which they are trying to make better by helping them in the moment they are in. Providers ignore the urge to think about how they are going to help a person next week or next year. This disregard for the future occurs because providers believe that homelessness is a temporary situation that could be helped to be dissolved by giving clients help in the current moment.

Throughout the interviews, providers did not talk about the future. They kept the discussion in the present and past tense. Occasionally, they shared success and horror stories of clients they have worked with in the past, but these were only the extreme situations. Providers disregarded typical positions of their client’s futures. It seems like a hard relationship to balance: one where the provider seeks to have a personal connection with their clients, yet simultaneously striving to maintain an emotional distance. The providers are trying to furnish aid in the client’s present life while not worrying about what the client is doing in the future. By overlooking client’s future, they make the client’s presence a temporal one in order to be able to treat client’s daily, momentary problems.

While this comparison can be very problematic, one provider compared their relationship to a teachers. The teachers are there during the day to give students the support they need, as well as the stability of having a safe place to inhabit on a daily basis. While a good teacher should be invested in their students’ well being, once the student moves up a grade or even goes home, they do not have the same responsibility to care for them. As for service providers and clients, these are relationships that can extend past the year of the formal relationship, but this is not a common occurrence. Additionally, the teachers do not have a predetermined outcome for the
students except for hoping that they move up and then graduate. This simile puts into perspective the crucial necessity of a service provider/client relationship.

The encompassing organizations have a less embedded form of temporality within the community than parcel organizations, but one that is still apparent in the aid they provide. This relationship is demonstrated in various instances through the language of the service providers. While talking, Tiana described a scenario that was currently unfolding at the time of our interview. One in which she was aiding in the search for a young woman who had been reported missing by her family. While relaying the story, Tiana did not mention or seem to contemplate what the future might hold for the missing woman.

She could not know what would happen because the girl being homeless at that moment can not guarantee one singular outcome. She explained that the girl came from a well-to-do background/family situation, which possibly implied a level of safety or for the girl. She talked about what the woman’s past, home life and what she suspected the woman’s current situation to be, but she never explained what she thought her future would hold. Being previously homeless, Tiana thinks of her homelessness as a stage in her life and holds her clients to the same kind of living standard, which disregards their personal narratives.

On the other hand, many of the encompassing organization’s mission statements contain within them the goal of ending homelessness. So while they think of their clients as temporary in order to not contain them into a homeless identity, they also have a larger goal of eradicating homelessness. This shows a larger form of temporality being the organization’s whole being as temporary. In our interview, Stacy said:

Our mission is to end hunger and poverty in the surrounding neighborhoods… it’s a bold, ambitious mission going to take a lot to get there. But I think when we decided that that was our mission, we wanted to really acknowledge that it's not enough for people to
forever be in perpetuity. Like actually the just right thing… The equitable thing is that no one should be hungry. No one should face poverty.

As stated previously, the mission statement of the encompassing organizations have much bigger missions than the parcel organizations. This is purely as a result of the fact that these are large organizations where people spend their lives trying to foster wide-sweeping change, where-as the parcel organizations think more about the small ‘day to day’ difference they can make. With this being the encompassing organizations mission, it holds the whole organization to a temporal mindset. Many critics of non-governmental organizations in the past have built their arguments around the idea that the organizations are a business and need to sustain themselves. As a result of the organization’s possible need to sustain themselves, they ultimately are not trying to fully solve the problem that they are seeking to fix. These organizations need people to rely on them in order to continue. This is an interesting paradox that exists within Stacy’s organization.

Additionally, by not admitting that homelessness as something more than a temporal state, providers choose to ignore ways of helping clients that would possibly relieve clients of structural problems.

Additionally, Saint Francis Shanice’s rehab program seeks to alter the manner in which they view temporality. Doug illustrated this shift in the interview I conducted:

So the job training program, they work five months at the Dining room or at the face house at the dining room there. There's a lot of positions either in the kitchen or the prep kitchen and warehousing. And after those five months, they do one month of job prep. so that's like resume building, job search mock interviews and such and then they do six months of where they -work and get their own job and then they still live at the facility for that six months but then after that, they can choose to… after the six months they graduate and they can choose to other they want to get an extension.
This format of having a “graduation” means that clients have to stay for a certain amount of time. There is a difference in tone when the clients are in rehab because they are under more stringent rules. Scholars in the past have called this type of rehab “punitive rehabilitation” which connect to Goffman’s “total institutions”. The dining hall that Saint Francis Shanice operates seems to be more like a public space where they accommodate and accept people in whatever physical state they are in. In fact, they have ways of working around sanitation laws that would otherwise not let people into the dining hall.

The rehab program has much more stringent rules which keeps the men in the program for six months, but also has a large recidivism rate. Doug explained that many of the guys are discharged from the program due to a zero tolerance policy regarding men fighting or threatening each other. This further challenges the ideas of temporality. The men in the rehab program are likely to be constantly in fear of being discharged from the program. This is a different form of temporality than the dining hall, where providers have to be wary on the temporality that they believe their clients to have. Doug has more control on the time frame of his clients, and therefore, a more definite way of putting this timeframe into language. The rehab creates a better understanding of the homeless timeline since the clients have less autonomy of when they are able to leave the organization’s physical space. The providers still work in the frame that the clients will move on, but the clients also are faced with the idea of temporality with the threat of getting kicked out and also having a set time period for their stay the organization before they graduate. There is a paradox between Saint Francis Shancis’s dining hall and their rehab in regards to many things, including time. Firstly, because the rehab has a timeframe, Doug is able to talk about the intended future of the clients. In the organization’s cafeteria, there is free come
and go of clients. Within these different time restraints, there is a different way of referring to the clients. Doug holds a different kind of authority over the men in the rehab program, which allows him to prescribe the clients a future. Doug has more vocabulary to talk about his desires for the future of his clients. On the other hand, providers working at the dining hall are so afraid of undermining clients autonomy that they are not able to predict the same type of future for the dining room clients. Comparing the two programs within the one organization shows a clear distinction of the importance and presence of the temporal ways of viewing the homeless.

Parcel Organizations - Temporality

In regards to the parcel organizations, service providers have less time and resources to help clients. As said before, the providers explain the relationship comparable to a substitute teacher relationship, where the service provider has much more of a temporary relationship with clients. A substitute teacher may not offer the same support or maintain the same relationship that a full-time classroom teacher or college professor has.

Additionally, the substitute teacher is only with the students for an abridged amount of time, so the relationship between the parcel service providers and the clients who are equally temporary. The parcel service providers usually “get” their clients through a bigger organization. This way, the provider have very little context of the client. Like a substitute teacher, the parcel providers are only there to transcribe information that the bigger organization has passed down to them. The parcel shelters usually only have a relationship with the clients for the one night. Lisa explained to me, “I don't like try to stay in touch with the women or anything.

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90 Vision Sake’s way of phrasing
I'm going to say I wouldn't do that with most. Not on purpose. It just doesn't happen organically. But there have been a couple over the years that I have wanted to keep in touch as I have kept in touch with”. Some clients may go to the parcel organizations more than once, but there is no regularity to the shelter. As Lisa explains, “You might see the same woman for a month or two and then we don't see them for quite a while because they put them in another place so that everybody gets a chance to try different places..”. There is a lack of autonomy that is carried with this statement in regards to the clients. I wonder, do they get the option of where they sleep? If they like the shelter they are transported to, are they able to advocate to keep going back there? These are questions that I did not ask, however, based on other points in the conversation, it seems as if the clients do not have a say in where their bed will be for the night. “Everyone getting a chance” equates to the idea of the deserving and the undeserving. What is the criteria for getting a place to sleep at the shelter for the night?

The security of having a place to go even seems temporary. A relief for a night, but a fear the next. The parcel shelters are not responsible for this, but it does not seem like the employees or volunteers think further into the scenario either. The care of the parcel organization is so temporary. Lisa’s quote explaining her lack of communication with clients shows disregard and lack of interest for what clients do after the night they spend in the shelter.

As a result of the parcel shelter relying upon aid provided by volunteers, there is an additional temporality that occurs due to the lack of consistency. Whereas in the encompassing organizations, the time span of the relationships made between clients and providers is less temporal. When explaining her role in the organization, Lisa said, “I run the program, I sleep over sometimes. I try to get other people to sleep over because I have back issues. So as often as
they can have other people sleep over, they do. If they can't, then I will fill in. Um, so we have different volunteers… sometimes it's the same people.” The lack of consistency in the parcel organizations results in a strange internal turmoil when considering (in the next chapter) how providers attempt to create community. How is it possible that a community can be built in a limited space that does not have any consistency except for the physical space itself? Is it even possible? These are questions that you will have to wait to be explored in the next chapter. In regards to this chapter on temporality, when neither the providers nor the clients attend the organization consistently, there is less room for growth in the relationships. The comparison to the substitute teacher illustrates a possible lack of understanding within the physical space. While this is not Lisa’s fault- she has no control over who comes to the organization and who volunteers their time- it still reflects on the dynamics within the organization.

Lisa and the other volunteers are unable to get to know the women in the shelter on a deeply personal level because they only spend a couple hours together before it is “lights out”. In the morning, clients are shuffled out at 7 a.m, returning to the bigger organization by a chartered bus. The parcel organizations that I examined exist as a transitional ground for people that do not have a current home. Although they aim to make the most of what they have, the temporality of the parcel organizations is daunting. Spending the night in a new space always calls for an adjustment. It does not seem like the parcel organizations take this into account. The providers that work or volunteer at the the shelter do not consider the negative effects that the inherent temporality of the physical space could induce.

Furthermore, it seems as if the clients do not have a lot of autonomy and input in where they will spend the night. As I stated before, there is not a lot of understanding in the ways in
which the temporality of the space could lead to a lack of comfortability. Some parcel shelters only open once weekly and providers do not question client’s options for other nights of the week. Once the clients leave the space, the providers do not contemplate what will happen to them next. Clients are not a primary priority of the caretakers or even in the thoughts, of the providers.

The providers are hesitant about getting to know the clients within the organization to a certain degree as a way to encourage people to not remain in their current situation. In this sense, service providers are trying to form a tight-knit community while also trying to balance people coming and going. As a result of this, while a lot of the providers discuss the importance of community within the organization, they also do not emphasize trying to form a community amongst the provider and clients. Many of them allow the atmosphere of the group to occur naturally without a lot additional facilitation.

Additionally, the lack of discussion of client’s futures ignores the fact that homelessness is a cycle that is very hard to get out of. The providers do not mention the future of their clients, resulting in a lack of acknowledgment that homelessness actually becomes an lifelong battle for some people. Encompassing providers implement a stable space for people who lack consistency and order. The encompassing providers ensure a performance by being open at the same time everyday, even on holidays. But as a whole, encompassing providers lack important insight by being so conscious of not stagnating clients process of escaping homelessness.
Stigma

An article written by a staff member of Coalition of the Homeless (a coalition based in New York City) explains “6 things I want you to understand about being homeless in America”. Number 4 on this list is “people who are homeless are not lazy, crazy, drug addicts that can’t be helped”. They go further into detail normalizing these names; “I dare you to look at your circle of friends and tell me that you don’t know a person who is lazy, a person who may be a little “off” mentally, or a person who does not use drugs. We all have those people in our circle somewhere, so don’t try and think you’re so above a person who is homeless just because you’re not the one begging for change”.91 We tend to label people's behaviors based upon our preconceived ideas that are commonplace in our society.

The social construction of the homelessness labels the homeless as actors with corrupt attributes associated with failure. By making these negative claims, the homeless are labeled with unfavorable attributes that many other people in society have and attribute them to homeless failure. By doing this, we construct a person who is bound to fail. Much of the time, providers are aware of this stigma but they still talk about situations involving their clients in stigmatizing ways. Especially parcel providers talk about their provision as something that clients should be thankful for which insinuates stigma. Additionally, it excuses providers for ways of treating clients that prevents the autonomy of clients within the organization.

Our society operates on ideas based on what people believe instead of what is true. Howard Becker’s Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance explains the way that we label people in order to keep social control. Informal agreements in society enforce these

characteristics in which “Outsiders”, as Becker calls them, are people who are expected to not follow the rules. “Deviants” are another name for this group of people “who are the infraction of some agreed-upon rule”\textsuperscript{92} that was created by society. By this, Becker refers to, “social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction continues deviance”.\textsuperscript{93} This all being said, the homeless are seen as one of the most deviant groups in society. They check all the boxes for what our definition of deviant because of the stereotype of who a homeless person is. We characterize the homeless in a way which excludes people from society. People who are deviant are viewed as not worthy of the rights that other people have. Further, because we form opinions on people that create barriers, it is almost like a “self-fulfilling prophecy”\textsuperscript{94} where the person morphs into the image that others have of him.

This theory is an important one when discussing service providers. Because providers are people that pride themselves on doing good, their construction is legitimized in society. Therefore, how the providers stigmatize the homeless is crucial to their social construction. In general, stigma is a huge problem in regards to the ways in which society characterizes people but the providers hold a lot of responsibility in how they stigmatize the homeless. Most of the homeless community are people of color who are already up against extensive stigma and negative notions of social construction, making it impossible for them to escape the confines of this setting. Being that most of the providers I interviewed are white, it makes their position in the matter especially fragile. It is of utmost importance that providers do not adhere to their preconceived notions of homeless people and to understand the circumstances that have forced the homeless into this predicament if they do not personally relate.

\textsuperscript{93} Becker, 9.
\textsuperscript{94} Becker, 9., 35.
The absence of this preconceived notion is an indicator that the providers do not stigmatize the clients. When someone is stigmatized in society, it is because we have created that path for them. We say, “this person is this way and so, this is what is going to happen to them”. As stated in the temporality sections, the encompassing providers do not think of any limitations to what will happen in someone's life. The lack of reference creates a stubbornness with the way in which the providers are able to talk about the situations that the clients are in. They are there to guide people but not to tell them where their life should go.

Parcel Organization - Stigma

Vision Sake is founded on the hypothesis that people in society should “do what they can” to help in small ways. The organization solely runs through volunteers from the neighborhood that spend a Friday evening contributing to the shelter in some way. Sometimes, this involves making dinner for the ten women who will be spending the night and sometimes it involves sleeping over and waking up to serve breakfast. Both church shelters I interviewed consisted of community members who made up the congregation and wanted to help out in the ways they could. Because of this, parcel organizations hold a deeper stigma than the stigma that is apparent at the encompassing shelters. Lisa explains the ways in which the experience of volunteering changes their understanding of homelessness. The new understanding of homelessness seems to be in a narrow scope. This is a one sided relationship where clients are used as informants who have the task of going into the organization for the night to change someone’s mind on a homeless person identity. Thinking about the parcel organizations this way sounds like a tiring task.
Many times in the interview, she discusses a type of ranking of homelessness which was discussed earlier in this chapter. The shelter only receives people in a temporary form of homelessness, which only informs knowledge regarding certain people’s situations. Therefore, the parcel organizations are able to separate the type of people that they help from other, more stigmatized forms of homelessness. These are not people who are typologized by Kuhn and Calhane as chronically homeless who are “entrenched in the shelter system”\textsuperscript{95}. The chronically homeless that Kuhn and Calhane discuss are more systematically oppressed and have less opportunities to exit the shelter system. This leads me to believe that the people who are relying on the parcel organizations are non-minorities who have more systemic opportunity to exit homelessness.

Additionally, because these shelters are so temporary, the people operating the organization have less of an opportunity to change their own opinions and beliefs. The shelters seem to operate only to help the “person who fell off”. These are the people in society that are not addicts. They are not the people that are affected by Becker’s labeling theory. People undergoing temporary homelessness are “the person who fell off” in society and not the people who are systematically oppressed and conditioned to endure. They are the people that exist in society normally but something externally knocks them down. They are not the people who are internally addicts and cannot exist in society. There is a big difference between the two and because the parcel organizations only receive people who are undergoing homelessness because of external, out of the blue reasons, there is still a stigma that the parcel shelters hold towards other forms of homelessness.

\textsuperscript{95} “Applying Cluster Analysis to Test a Typology of Homelessness by Pattern of Shelter Utilization-Results from the Analysis of Administrative Data.Pdf,” n.d., 211.
In Lisa’s words, these people are “famous artists, but then never really promoted themselves”; these are the people sent to parcel shelters. Lisa explains them as people who had something and lost it. They are the people who were not deviant in society but somehow slipped through the cracks. She says, “you look at them when you talk with them a little bit. Like you think there’s just no way a person like this one should be homeless.” She describes many of her clients in a way of a reflection of herself. But I wonder if that means that she is only helping people that look like herself. Or only connects and feels sympathy for the people that reflect attributes of herself. She described artists, people who were too old to keep up with the technology of their jobs, people who worked on “park avenue”, someone who got hit by a bus. These are all people that do not fit into what people see as the “deviants” of society. She labels her clients as people that tried hard to fit into society but something went wrong. Clients who rely on the church shelter are the “temporary homeless” who will hopefully fit back into the puzzle piece that was assigned to them again soon. And while she is making a case for who her clients are as people, she demeans other groups of homeless individuals who need her help just as much; “you know, you just feel for people and you realize he's just, that they’re not crazy people. They’re not drug addicts. They're not like that at all. It's just so many different circumstances that can happen.” In this statement, Lisa is looking at herself and her own situation. This could have been her. Lisa could have probably ended up in one of the bed shelters from the way in which she discusses her clients.

Additionally, by categorizing the homeless into sections and strictly supporting the least stigmatized group, she follows the trope of what Julilly Kohler-Hausmann calls “civil death-- the loss of particular civil, social, the loss of particular civil, social, and political rights—that vary
widely and wildly depending on criminal offense, jurisdiction, and historical period”\(^{96}\). Civil death is the concept that people who have “been deviant” in society do not deserve the rights that all citizens are guaranteed. They are viewed as people who have not honored laws and therefore, do not deserve the same respect. Lisa understands forms of homelessness by viewing the worthy and unworthy; “It's a privilege to me to be able to have a church bed. Not everyone qualifies for a church bed” Lisa explains. But what is this “qualification” to be able to stay in the shelter? I am sure it is important in every place of living that there needs to be some way to ensure safety. People do not let strangers that need a place to sleep into their home because of a fear that the person is not trustworthy. I do not put her at fault insisting on these qualifications, but I do feel a lack of understanding of the other groups of homeless. Because the parcel organizations are only “making the homeless more comfortable”, they are unable to give the “privilege” of a church bed to everyone. There is a realistic side to the homogeneous, transitional homeless population being that the other forms of homeless are in more permanent shelters. This does not excuse the lack of understanding on the parcel providers part of the group of homeless that are more stigmatized in society. Because of the homogeneity of the shelter, there may be even larger stigma against the people that are addicted and homeless, from the providers.

Lisa’s stigmatization mostly appears when she mentions homeless addicted people. She explains that “they're screened for TB, they’re screen for drugs and alcohol and they get counseling too. So, as I say, we pretty much get just general population people who maybe, you know, maybe they've had problems, but they're, they're well under control.” The way that Lisa says “they’re well under control” makes it sound like she is talking about a group of people that

\(^{96}\) Kohler-Hausmann, *Getting Tough*, 16.
have been tamed from the wild. She thinks about the homeless population as people that need to be tamed through counseling and drug tests to prove that they should get the “privilege” to stay at the shelter.

In other words, Lisa is only granting people who are not in the deviant group access to a place to sleep in the shelter. This is also a form of social control where the client is rewarded if they sustain a “valued behavior”\(^7\) in order to be granted access to positive reinforcement being the comfort of the parcel organization. Lisa very clearly has feelings towards people who use drugs as “immoral”\(^8\) and “distasteful”\(^9\). While in 2017, about 38% of adults had a illicit drug disorder\(^\)\(^1\), Lisa looks at the people that use drugs as the people that are excluded from the general population. From this quote, one can understand who Lisa thinks the deserving and undeserving are. Furthermore, Lisa aims to define and pinpoint who she feels deserves her help. People who she feels deserve her help are people that are off drugs and therefore, “under control”. Susan Starr Sered and Maureen Norton-Hawk call this “victim mentality”\(^1\) where the person is blamed and furthermore, stigmatized for their problems. Addicts are thought of as not having a “moral sense of self”, making it so that they do not deserve the help and further, that they are untreatable so they are unworthy of the services provided.

Sandra from Saint Paul’s Church exhibits stigma in the way that she discusses the dynamics of the shelter. The organization’s rules are set in place due to a lack of trust of their clients. She explains, “We have different conversations and we make sure that we also have

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\(^7\) Becker, 60.  
\(^8\) Becker, 60.  
\(^9\) Becker, 60.  
\(^1\) Susan Starr Sered and Maureen Norton-Hawk, *Can’t Catch a Break: Gender, Jail, Drugs and the Limits of Personal Responsibility* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2014), 70.
rules. I mean I don't mean to sound so so strict but we do have… Because believe it or not their homeless and they do have the money to buy cigarettes because because that becomes their I guess addiction. So you know we have certain rules.” Sandra’s correlation between rules and cigarette habits shows a lack of understanding for the clients. Anyone could have a cigarette addiction, yet not everyone is obligated to rules because they smoke cigarettes. There is not a direct correlation between there needing to be rules in the one night shelter because people prioritize cigarettes before other things. This rhetoric carries stigmatic references by believing that clients are not able to efficiently direct their lives and need rules to do so.

Stigma is exhibited in the parcel organizations through small comments that providers make about their clients. In conclusion, the clients are expected to be grateful to have a place to retrieve parcel services and as a result, are expected to adhere to strict rules in order to receive services. Clients are thought of as deviant and have to prove themselves otherwise by cultivating positive relationships with volunteers in order to gain approval from parcel providers.

*Encompassing Organization - Stigma*

A good comparison to Sandra’s quote about smoking cigarettes is one by Tiana, who also discussed client’s addiction to cigarettes,

I stopped by all the different places where I know everyone hangs out and they know that when they see me, you can ask for food. You can ask for money and I will say no. You can ask for a beer and I will say no but I will buy you a sandwich and a drink. So I bought some guys a drink and "well can you spare 50 cents for a cig”? Well I will buy you one cig. It's not gonna break me. You know? and that's 50 cents. I am not contributing to your drug habit. I am not gonna buy you a beer, but I will buy you a cigarette. It gives you a little bit of joy. You know?
This rhetoric of buying someone a cigarette to “bring them a little bit of joy” shows more of an understanding for the client’s overall desires. Maybe because of a lack of space that Tiana has to organize, Tiana has less of a need to control what her clients want and need. As I have stated in the past, Tiana does not have any office or private space at the moment, so in a very obscure way, Tiana’s physical presence is almost like an aura of a lack of stigma. Tiana explained her interactions with clients in a humanizing way by thinking about client’s desires instead of labeling it as a deviant quality.

This being said, there are clear examples of stigma throughout Tiana’s interviews. When referring to her personal past, Tiana brought up many bias she had during phases of homelessness and addiction, “...So I was hanging out in Black clubs. There was a point in time when I was homeless and addicted where I was down in the Rockaways and I was living as a Puerto Rican. From you know, East New York. Which is craziness. When I think about it, it’s like what are you even saying out loud? But it was the mask I wore. Because it was what I had to do to stay alive”. Tiana is white from an upper, middle class family. She talked extensively about the bias she had and the way that her family thought about race relations. She explained earlier in the interview that she was dating a black man to which her parents got upset by. She stated, “I ended that conversation when I said ‘I could date a black woman if you would rather that”. And while she talked about her past in relation to stigma, it does not come up when she talks about her current life.

Tiana stands out from the other interviewees though. She, herself, has previously been homeless and addicted. Unlike any of the other interviewees, Tiana uses her own experience to shape the ways in which she helps her clients. This becomes problematic when her own
experience was trying to imitate a “puerto rican” person as a white person. Her experience being homeless was different as a white person. Because Tiana relates other peoples experiences to her own experience as a homeless and addicted woman while trying to service women, she does not discuss systematic oppressions that make it harder for people different from her to get out of the system, “My job was to raise and then trust the guys, kind of do good names and that they’re going to hopefully stay on the path and when they fall off path that they'll get back onto that because God's got it took care of me through what's he not going to do to that shit later.” The lack of understanding of other situations further stigmatizes people because Tiana does not attribute homeless situations to anything but their will to get out. This can further normalize ideas of homeless people being lazy and unmotivated.

Doug mentions the ways in which his coworker, who has also gone through recovery, operates differently than him when working with clients,

I would say that my coworker, the other job coach, we operate differently. He has gone through recovery and I haven't, so he has a different idea. You can kind of see that through other guys who have been through recovery and working with guys that are in recovery, they very much, not to take anything away, but they very much see how they went through recovery as the same way as a guy should be going through recovery. And actually a lot of recovery work has changed its thinking behind it. It is more trauma-based and trauma-informed instead of more disciplinary recovery based programs… I mean my Fellow job coach … he is good but he's definitely a little bit more on the stricter side. He will do rounds and make sure that nobody is doing anything against the rules. While I don't necessarily do things out of my way to get guys in trouble. Doug discusses this difference between the way that he thinks about his job versus the way in which someone who has gone through recovery themselves thinks about their job. Doug believes that because people that have gone through recovery themselves have gotten out of addiction, they believe that their way of going about recovery is the answer which is not necessarily true.
That being said, Tiana’s understanding of homelessness and addiction also helps her to understand people and stigmatize them less in other ways. She is able to empathize with what they are going through more than other service providers. Like anything, there are pros and cons to having similar experience. When providers have a similar experience, they may ignore new ways of rehabilitation and operate under older methods that helped them. Tiana does not grasp that there are varying experiences within being homeless in regards to race, class and gender. When talking about her own experience, Tiana claims that being a woman only ever helped her. And while that is okay for her to think about her own experience that way, it may obstruct the way that she views other people’s experiences.

Regarding the other encompassing providers that I interviewed, they seem to have histories that inform the way that they work with clients in a positive way. Because they do not have their own experiences being homeless but they have worked and learned from many different settings, they think about the people they help in a very balanced way. The providers that have this type of academic background are more aware of what they are saying throughout the interview. Doug explains his background in tutoring at a prison made him rethink the way he understands the system and stuck in the system. Doug is a white man who has not had the same experiences that many of his clients have had, “To just understand that a lot of these guys who are incarcerated, they're given kinds of an unfair reputation… they're pretty exceptional. And that kind of prepares me to to know like a there's going to be a mix of guys but the guys are coming from incarceration, it's not always fair to judge by their past right?” For Doug, there is an understanding and sympathy for the people he is working with. The sympathy he feels is not because it directly affects his own community or him but because of experiences he has seen.
which he has empathy for. He seems to understand his positioning as a strange one, with racial power dynamics. Doug is the only provider that fully acknowledged his whiteness and power in his work. Again, I suspect this being because Doug serves as a different form of service provider from the rest, which forces him to acknowledge structural barriers. Additionally having an end goal of employing men in the program, he has a framework to talk about his relations with the men.

**Systematic**

Throughout interviews, providers did talk extensively about systematic problems. Much of the time, they only referred to it when being asked. In every interview, I asked the broad question of, “how do you think we can best reduce homelessness?” Many of the answers regarded homelessness as an “affordable housing problem”. Stacy referred to DeBlasio’s new affordable housing act as a failed proposition for housing Doug talked about safe injection sites as a way of promoting dignity. Here is an overview of the answers to my question:

Stacy: “stronger rent regulations and protections because part of what happens that causes one of the assets that caused, we'd come up this is like there are predatory landlords and, and people who are trying to get their lower income tenants out of the buildings that they own in order to bring in higher paying tenants.”

Doug: “The plan is to build more housing but there is always tough with all the bureaucracy in the city but I think to help reduce homelessness we have to be more supportive. we need to have more services and help bring people up instead of criminalizing them because that is a classic thing with criminalizing and that you're never going to fix the issue.”

Tiana: “The Housing for homelessness system, the housing system that puts them where they are and think, well, if we say that we remove our own responsibility, nobody's putting everybody loving some people who prefer to live on the fringe.”
Lisa: “Try to keep people from losing their apartments in the first place. Yeah, I think it's huge. But give assistance quicker. Yeah. While they're still in a place agree and or help them find a smaller place, maybe they can't afford the larger apartment.”

In all of the providers responses, they point out systematic issues that could better help people who are losing their residencies. Meanwhile, only Stacy implements this into her actual provision. Encompassing providers all acknowledge problems within the policy, health care systems and opportunity which keep clients from escaping homelessness. Most of them recognize these parts of society throughout our interviews. Within encompassing provider’s ideas of the homeless, there is also recognition for the fundamental systems that depress the homeless. But, the systematic barriers that they acknowledge are not always there when they construct necessary provision. Most of the encompassing providers (and parcel for that matter) do not account for systematic problems in finding ways to help. By addressing that their clients are systematically oppressed, they can interact with clients in a sympathetic way within the day-to-day provision they provide but does this ultimately help their clients in the long run?

**Conclusion**

In chapter two, I discussed ways that the encompassing and parcel providers construct notions of the homeless in order to better provide services for them. I used the concept of temporality and stigma to explain the constructions. Temporality is present in homeless/provision life in many ways. First off, temporality becomes a way to define the homeless. Encompassing providers think about their clients in a temporal manner in order to give their clients more agency over their own lives. They are afraid to categorize homelessness in a
oppressive manner in order to allow hope for the future. In this way, the providers avoid talking about the future as a way of giving agency and respect for client’s futures. By framing the homeless in this temporal manner, they prioritize agency over addressing systemic problems through their provision. The parcel providers also categorize their clients by disregarding all other homeless groups except for what Kuhn and Calhane (1998) call the “temporally homeless”. Encompassing providers use of temporality is a way to avoid stigma of their clients, while parcel providers enable the stigmas by only allowing themselves to help the one, less systematically oppressed group. There is a big divide in terms of the stigma that the two types of providers have towards their clients. By only providing for the temporary homeless, the parcel providers construct the homeless with huge connotations of stigma. They clearly define who are the worthy and unworthy clients. The encompassing providers create less of a stigmatized image of the homeless by not trying to place them in any category.

Chapter 3:
The Destruction

This next chapter seeks to answer the question the question, “How do the service provider’s goals affect their construction and outcomes as providers?” Throughout this chapter, I examine in which both parcel and encompassing providers execute their jobs dependent on their unique goals and missions. While encompassing organizations are able to clearly chart their goals, the parcel organizations do not utilize the same language to articulate their own goals. The parcel organizations are able to excuse themselves from having a mission by presenting themselves as a minor organization within the larger picture. Meanwhile, encompassing organizations pride themselves as being the main support system for the homeless, so their goals are concretely set in stone. Subsequently, I link the organization’s goals to the ways in which I described their construction of homelessness in the previous chapter. Many of the constructions that the encompassing providers create contradict their goals as an organization. Meanwhile, the parcel organizations do not present same concrete goals, which limits their capacity to deconstruct their own constructions and examine them critically.

In the interviews I conducted, three main themes appear when providers discuss objections in their jobs; community, agency and dignity. The themes expressed all correlate and respond to each other and share similar attributes. In order to have a community, one needs to feel that they have agency and dignity. Additionally, to feel dignified in a space, there also needs to be a sense of agency. A space which lacks freedoms, also most likely lacks a sense of dignity. Additionally, themes that I stated in the last chapter which dictate the construction of homelessness further dictate how the spaces of service provision are constructed.
The providers in this study are all paralyzed by the need to create community or feelings of a home in order to produce an organization which can reach their goals. To do this, providers have a desire to produce a a communal, open environment within a space. In any gathering, community is emphasized. The definition of community being “a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals” and home being “a familiar or usual setting” or “a place of origin”.103 By explaining interactions between providers and homeless, as well as the ways the providers discussed the goals of the organizations, we can see ways in which themes from chapter two (stigma and temporality) interact with attributes of the organizations.

*Encompassing Organizations*

Encompassing providers stress community more than the parcel organizations do when talking about the environment of their organizations. They thought about ways that they can make the space more open and accepting in many interviews I conducted. I found that the encompassing providers discussed community in a much more thoughtful and well rounded way than the parcel organizations did. In fact, community, agency and dignity are all main components of the encompassing organization’s missions. It makes sense that the encompassing organizations think more about community as many of their goals are to form communities for people that much of society ignores.

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Tiana laid it out to me the moment we started talking about her organization, “The organization’s mission is to restore dignity to homeless addicted women with love and grace. That’s our mission. Whatever that looks like is how we do it”. This is a goal that she sticks to and can be seen in the way that she exhibits activities.

When Tiana described the respite center she planned on opening in the near future, she explained the atmosphere that she imagined for the space, “You can take off the street. Wash it off with a fresh pair of clothes. Maybe do an art project, maybe decorate a f****** cupcake. You know what I mean. Have a puppy, a kitten, a bird and a turtle or some s***. You know just somewhere, if we could all imagine our favorite place to go that's what this would represent.” Her words bore a feeling of warmth and comfort. A place where someone can go that is revitalizing and calm away from the rest of life, which can be erratic. The activities Tiana explains correspond to therapeutic practices commonly used. “Pet therapy” is a way of reducing anxiety by letting people play with pets.

Additionally, pets are a sign of home. Pets are a form of responsibility which happens in a household. The psychology of having a puppy or kitten is with the pet to have a momentary relief. The same goes for art; art therapy is a creative technique to improve self-esteem and other forms of self-improvement. Tiana’s mention of these two classic forms of creative therapy is not a coincidence. Both baking and pets are two activities which trigger images of “home”; Home being the one thing that separates the population who would utilize the respite from the rest of the population. Tiana actively thinks about ways in which she can incorporate what is

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lacking in client’s lives into her work. It shows the thoughtfulness of Tiana’s mission and goals for what she wants to do with the organization that she currently runs.

While the respite would have rules similarly to the parcel organizations, Tiana’s attention to possibilities show the ways in which she pushes boundaries in order to achieve her visions. Home offers one a place to reset. It functions as a place to go to when one needs a comfort from the long day behind them. Tiana describes activities that will do this, even if the physical space does not represent traditional notions of home. Even if the clients are temporarily at the respite home, Tiana’s vision incorporates ways to form community and home in ways which parcel organizations do not.

Additionally, Tiana expressed that community involves a space of listening with a lack of judgement. A communal setting requires a lack of judgement in order for people to feel like they are able to be apart of it. There needs to be a way to push what is being done already through listening to people instead of silencing them. In the interview I had with Tiana, she gave me an example of an interaction she had with a client on the corner when serving food. Tiana explained to me that the volunteers at the corner every Sunday make bags of necessities for the clients. In the bags are socks, underwear and other basics that one may need. One day a woman came up and asked for a bag but Tiana was out. Tiana promised the woman that she would get one the following week. The next week, when Tiana gave the bag to her, the woman asked Tiana why she took the time to do something so thoughtful. Tiana said,”Because I love you” and the woman, puzzled, asked, “well why do you love me?”. Tiana responded by saying, “because I am loved so I can love you”.

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The woman then started telling Tiana about the shelter that she was staying at. Tiana told me that at one point during the story, the woman looked at Tiana and asked why she was not blinking, “You are not taken aback by what I am saying”, the woman said to Tiana. “You are sharing a part of your life with me. I am listening.”, Tiana recounts saying to her. Tiana looked at me very intensely after explaining the story and said, “The impact of being heard without being judged is what changes people”. After she said this, Tiana and I sat in silence for a few minutes.

Tiana’s anecdote with the client is an example of the ways in which community is formed. While the previous chapter discussed ways in which Tiana specifically has possible stigmas towards groups of people she intends to help, she understands the elements of community. Tiana talked about all homeless experiences as if they are were all comparable to how she experienced homelessness. Meanwhile, Tiana also tells me stories like this where it does not really matter what she thinks her clients experience or her experience is like. Tiana gives clients a community regardless of other conceptions she has. It is important for people to have human experiences like this where they understand what it is like to be being heard.

Many other providers shared the same devotion of giving clients a platform to speak. Listening is another therapeutic tactic which has always been involved with rehab and therapy in general. Giving people a space to be heard further gives people autonomy to express what they want and need in a setting that is there to do that. Because Tiana does not have a physical space for people to resort to, she uses her own physicality as an inclusive space. In fact, the lack of place strengthens Tiana’s necessity to listen to people in order to gain trust as there is no physical space that Tiana can rely on. As a result, Tiana’s concept of community does not have the same
reliance on space that other organizations do which strengthens her own responsibility to form a community beyond the limitations of a space.

The yearn to create a sense of security without a home comes from a history of Tiana having to do this for herself when she also did not have a home. She explained how she made every space she was in a safe space, even when the physical space did not portray the feelings of a dependable and secure space. She explained to me, “One of the things (that I reminded myself) when I was going through rehab and everything was ‘live in the moment and accept where I am’, so when I was in jail, I made myself my safe space. When I went up to rehab, my half of the room was my safe space. So wherever I go, I am safe because I have made myself and my existence my safe place”. In each of their own ways, the providers try to mold themselves into a safe space in order to build a community. The trust the organizers build cannot just be reliant of the space of the organization. Each provider within the organization has their own community that they have formed. By hearing their clients, the providers are able to build trust.

Stacy, too, pointed out that she builds a mutual understanding by listening to what clients want instead of inserting what she thinks they should do, “really trusting that people are the experts in their lived experience and like day has the best solutions for the problems they're facing and helping them to build their power to make that change”. In another part of our interview, Stacy said, “people so rarely get listened to who are who are struggling to make it through all these systems that they're involved with, for better or worse. And they think really taking the time to listen to someone and we get to know them and their story, what their challenges are, what their hopes are. It really helps to build trust and feel like, you know, there's a mutual exchange…”.
Susanne also discusses the same understanding when interacting with clients. She mentioned being attentive to client’s needs a couple times throughout our interview. One of the quotes that I have derived from my interview with her encompasses a couple different themes. Susanne explains her own feeling of community in the organization between the providers. Say emphasized the importance of diversity within the workplace in order to bring many different concerns and suggestions, “I love it. I'll like walk into a room. I think having gender, any kind of diversity, is so important because it's the perspective, right?” When Susanne first got to the organization, she said that they would only give out one tampon to women that asked. As a women, she questioned this. Why only give on feminine hygiene product when the person will clearly need to come back to ask for another one later that day? “...are you kidding? … can you imagine being on the street and having your periods and someone giving you a Tampon and then you had to go and ask for another one and then you have to an aspirin can you mentioned, I need to ask every time you wanted one. Yeah. I have to ask probably a man for it. The same way that Tiana talks about saving a bag for the woman that didn’t get on the previous week and then listening to her story without judgement, Susanna advocated to give multiple feminine hygiene products to women who asked. It is a way of listening to the people who they are providing for interectly.

Instead of giving what the providers think the clients need, they ask not what they would like when someone requests a feminine product. Interactions like this break down stigma. Hearing stories like these show that the providers are not only thinking and talking about breaking down stigma but also acting on it. It shows that they practice what they preach. Additionally, Susanne acknowledges the need for diversity in order to fully listen and understand
clients needs. She explained another dynamic of her tampon example, “I would probably have to ask a man for it”. Susanne exhibits the understanding of discomfort that clients feel having to ask for what they need from someone that does not necessarily understand where the need is coming from.

A provider having a preconceived stigma about a person would limit the way they would feel about listening to someone. For example, if a provider thought of the women that were clients of the organization as gross, inhumane, lazy, they would not be able to humanize them and think to ask them if they need more than one tampon. While I discuss Tiana’s lack of understanding for homeless individuals who identify differently than herself, there is a basic level understanding in common experience of stigma that she relates to and understands. This understanding gives the a knowledge amount of resources to her clients. Tiana’s concept for a respite with activities exemplifies a level of understanding for clients ensuring the foundations of a community.

Agency is also a significant theme that correlates to community. Emirbayer & Mische (1998) argue that agency is “a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment)”.

Emirbayer & Mische see agency as a social process that is informed by temporality and time. The freedom to decide where one is focusing on is how agency is created. Being able to place oneself where they are in their timeline

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gives them agency. In this way, encompassing providers are successful in their endeavors to keep homelessness a temporal manner. They give their clients the agency to have ideas of their own futures.

Listening to clients grants agency by giving clients the opportunity to talk and express themselves in order to receive the appropriate resources. Many of the positive conversations I had with providers came from notions of granting clients the necessary tools to do what they want to do. By not only permitting clients the opportunity to express themselves, but encouraging them to, service providers create a space of free agents. In this manner, providers see themselves less as the end all answer to problems and more as providers for client’s needs.

Stacy’s role at the organization is in the community action program which connects clients to legislators. By simply organizing meetings with clients, Stacy is able to give clients the freedom to express what they want change to look like for themselves;

the key action program, which is called our members and talk to legislators, community organizing and leadership development and really getting people to be the change makers from the things that are affecting their daily lives. So really trusting that people are the experts in their lived experience and like day has the best solutions for the problems they're facing and helping them to build their power to make that change.

What Stacy explains is giving people who do not have the same resources the organization may have those resources to create change for themselves. Clients are given the tools and the space to inflict change on their own lives.

While they may not be doing the same type of advocacy work, the other encompassing organizations are doing this as well by the ways that they approach the needs of their clients. By understanding that people have their own individual problems that they will articulate when given the opportunity, encompassing providers do not clump clients into having all the same
needs. Likewise, Sharron made a point to ask women their preferences and amount of feminine products needed. Tiana acknowledged the same theme when talking about the girl who was missing at the time of our interview, “And that's human behavior... She's an adult,” she said. This recognition gives the woman credit for understanding that she is doing what she wants to do. Tiana does not stigmatize the woman but allows for the same trust that Stacy talks about with community organizing.

By saying she is an adult, Tiana does not pass judgement and gives her the agency that other people in the community are not allowing her to have. Tiana talks about the amount of worried phone calls that she has gotten regarding where the woman has gone but talks in a calm manner about the situation. I presume that this attitude allows Tiana’s physicality to be the safe space, organically form a sense of community with her clients. She understands more than other people that there is not one way to go about life and it does not make someone a bad person to be deviant to the standards that people are supposed to live by.

In the same way, Sharron explained the ways she approaches situations that do not seem healthy within the organization.

What we try to do is to advocate for people by saying, ‘you know, it seems like you're overwhelmed right now. Is there something we can do to help you, you know, where are you getting resources for your child?’...When someone comes in and asks for formula five, six days in a row, it's like, where are you getting your resources? How can we stabilize this? You know, where are you living? Are you inside? You outside, you living in a car?

This quote deals with a moment of temporality and agency within the organization. Sharron refers to a moment where she does not feel like she has the right to intervene on the client's situation. She does not talk about the long term negative effects of the client's situation. She continues by keeping the client as a temporary community member by using words like “right
now” and talks only about current situations. Meanwhile, Sharron also gives the client authority and agency in the conversation by asking the questions of how she can help. While the temporality that the providers see within the clients could stunt progress, it is also intersected by the provider’s mission to create a space with agency.

Parcel Organizations

The parcel organizations do not have goals in the same ways that the encompassing organizations do. Their goals are simply to contribute basic needs to people who do not have. They see themselves as a contribution to a larger problem by supplying people with a place to sleep and eat. Therefore, they cannot counteract the constructions that they produce about the homeless.

Parcel organizations have a clear difference when it comes to understanding the clients lives in terms of a community. They have less resources to understand what the clients need as human beings. They are giving a bare sense of community for a short duration of time. Additionally, the parcel organizations have more of a stigma and bias of their clients that limit the amount of community that can exist within the shelter. None of the parcel providers mentioned anything about limitations to their services that the clients may suffer from. For example, all parcel organizations mention that they serve dinner and breakfast for the clients, but there is no thought of if clients have food allergies or further limitations. While the parcel providers do mention listening to clients stories and complains about the bigger organization that sends them to the parcel organizations, they do not talk about asking clients about how they
could make clients experiences better. The lack of interest in clients desires stagmates the formation of community within the parcel organizations.

Lisa explained to me in our interview that she does not ask clients questions about their lives or give advice, (“What advice to I have to give to them? I have never experienced what they are going through.”) but she explains that sometimes their concerns and problems come up in conversation. While it is good she does not push her beliefs onto clients, it does not seem like she tries to push herself to better understand what the clients that come to the shelter want. The parcel organizations are too temporal to have time to better understand their clients needs. Additionally, in the encompassing organization section of this chapter, Stacy has a quote that talks about a “mutual exchange” between the provider and the client which builds trust in the relationship. The parcel organizers do not see their work in this way. parcel providers do not see their work as a trade off, but simply as providers. They do not give their clients the credit as being the teachers that they are conducted to be for the volunteers. In the last chapter, I talked about the pressure that the clients are under when going to parcel organizations due to the stigmas that volunteers have that they are responsible for breaking. There is a mutual exchange happening between the providers and the clients, but the providers do not see the exchange which is happening.

Because the parcel organizations only supply the basic needs of life, they do not go further to try to understand what is beyond that for the homeless individuals. Their lack of missions and goals limits them from pushing themselves past the construction that they have built about their clients. The parcel organizations only see themselves as stepping stools, which limits them to pushing themselves beyond the constructions they have built of their clients.
Encompassing organizations create limitations through their constructions based on temporality and stigma, but use their missions to try to escape these goals.

The ways that the parcel providers discussed community in the interviews were by explaining the physical space that they provide. They talk about how the space is bigger than other shelters which the clients enjoy. They are able to move freely around the space how they desire. There are ten beds in each of the parcel organizations with a chair next to it allowing clients to have a sense of their own space in a way, “they have access to the bathrooms. And as I said, the things that we give them, um, have a meal. They can chit-chat either with us, without us. They could just go back to bed if they want. It doesn't matter. ...they do what they want in the space.” What the providers are implying here is a sense of mutual trust that they have within the space. This seems to build a mode of community within the limitations that the parcel organizations hold themselves to.

It may be that they do not have the resources to push themselves further to understand the clients needs. But from the tone in the providers voices, I took it as a way of excusing themselves from needing to help past their basic services. The parcel providers mostly talk about providing food and shelter for clients. Ways which the encompassing organizations push themselves to best serve their clients, parcel organizations lack. The temporality of the space seems to hold parcel providers back from pushing themselves to create an inclusive environment where clients feel like there is a real community. Because parcel providers do not have an overarching goal that guide them, they are limited in the ways that they help.

While I have never seen the actual interaction of the space, the ways in which parcel providers refrain from pushing themselves to think of community in my interviews demonstrates
a lack of community for clients. The stigma that they have towards clients which I discussed in
the previous chapter seems to hold them back from viewing clients as people with desires and
needs. They all talk about how appreciative clients are for their services which prevents
providers to challenge themselves to take their provision further.

Additionally, the stigma that parcel providers have towards the clients based on the
categorical ways of dividing types of homeless people creates further limitations to what the
providers feel they need to do to create community. Because their clients fit into the “temporary
homeless” category, providers feel that they do not need to assist people in anything but the
basics that the people do not have at the time being. The temporality of the temporal homeless
creates limits to the support that the providers feel like need to supply. The stigma that is
produced through the category of temporary homeless also limits the type of community that the
providers are able to create. Because they only accept “a person who has fallen off”, they only
see people in this way and do not feel like they need to support them in any other manner.

When conducting my interviews, I scheduled a time to interview with another provider
who fit into the category of parcel organizations. The organization was a shelter in a private
school in New York City. We got on the phone and were talking about the organization. When I
started to ask her about herself (one of the first questions I asked every interviewee), she
immediately wanted to stop the interview. She told me, “I don’t see how this has to do with
anything. I actually really don’t have time for this right now”. The other providers I had
interviewed all indulged in this question. They talked about their experiences openly with many
side stories and laughs. I saw this as a failure on my part to allow the provider to feel
comfortable in talking to me. Now, looking back on the interview, I realize that she felt
threatened by the question. In a way, she did not have a stance on the work she was doing. Her lack of enthusiasm shows me a lack of personal goals for her organization. Other providers, especially encompassing providers, were able to easily see how they fit into their work.

**Conclusion**

While in chapter two, it was easier to analyze the ways in which parcel providers construct the idea of homelessness, I found much more evidence for encompassing providers in the ways that they react to situations. In general, the encompassing organizers have more of an understanding of who they are helping, so they are able to focus more on the ways in which they help. While this is certainly a better and more constructive way to provide help, the parcel organizations are doing a completely different task. As Lisa describes it, they are not curing homelessness but they are providing a “band aid” for people currently enduring it. It gives them the opportunity to go about their services the way they personally want to go about it.

Encompassing providers have goals to work off, which skews and possibly hides their own constructions more than the parcel providers do. Additionally, by allowing the clients to be free agents, providers give clients the opportunity to make what they want out of their provision instead of telling the clients how to work within their provision as the parcel providers do.
Conclusion:
A Cycle

In my introduction, I talked about a rally that I went to in the beginning stages of my project. It was inspiring and really illuminating in many ways, seeing the ways that providers and clients interact in real form. Last week, I got the chance to talk to two currently homeless people working for an organization in the city. In the same way that the rally gave me some context in the beginning of my project, the conversation I had at the end of my research out provided me with a sense of ease for the end of my project. After only legally being able to talk to service providers because of the IRB, it was really refreshing to hear another side of the relationship between the homeless and the service providers.

One thing that we talked extensively about is the profit that service providers make. One of them explained to me that a CEO of an organization based in New York City makes 400k a year. What I do not go into detail about in my paper is how the service provision industry is a profiting business. According to a report that “Picture the Homeless” released in 2018, a record high amount of people were in shelters last year. Additionally, the city has spent a record high of $1.8 billion on shelters alone. In 2014, DeBlasio created a plan to designate 200,000 units to affordable housing, but the plan was flawed as it was geared towards people making between $34,000 and $68,000.

The shelter system operates much like the prison system. In fact, the two feed into each other. Approximately 50,000 people a year enter the shelter system after getting released from

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107 Picture the Homeless Research Committee.
one member is working over 35 hours a week, single adults who have a disability, households in
who do qualify for the programs are a slim proportion of the shelter population, “families where
people have to qualify for the programs in order to get the affordable housing voucher. The ones
the programs do not make it any easier to escape the confines of the shelter. These are assistance
Aspects like the food in NYC shelters is the same food being provided in NYS prisons. There are
many parallels between the prison system and the shelter system. Much of the food has been
reported expired and are small portions that cause many residents food poisoning.\footnote{111} As a result,
many residents choose to get their food outside of the shelter system. Most shelters do not have
kitchens, making it hard to cook bought food. This causes many people to rely on soup kitchens
and other service provision.

Additionally, recent research on rental assistance programs in New York City shows that
the programs do not make it any easier to escape the confines of the shelter. These are assistance
vouchers which supposedly help people exit the shelter system, but these program are flawed.
People have to qualify for the programs in order to get the affordable housing voucher. The ones
who do qualify for the programs are a slim proportion of the shelter population, “families where
one member is working over 35 hours a week, single adults who have a disability, households in

\footnote{108} The New York Prison-to-Shelter Pipeline,” accessed May 1, 2019,
te-prisons-going-into-nyc-shelter-system.
\footnote{109} Kohler-Hausmann, Getting Tough.
\footnote{110} Homelessness and Incarceration Are Intimately Linked. New Federal Funding Is Available to Reduce
the Harm of Both.,” National Alliance to End Homelessness, March 29, 2018,
https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-incarceration-intimately-linked-new-federal-funding-available-
reduce-harm/.
\footnote{111} Picture the Homeless Research Committee, “THE BUSINESS OF HOMELESSNESS: Financial &
Human Costs of the Shelter-Industrial Complex.”
which one member is a documented survivor of domestic violence”. These qualifications follow the same adherences as previous discussions of the worthy and unworthy homeless. Here, we see the “worthy” being the people that we can sympathize for, while others are somehow unworthy of receiving affordable housing. The people getting the vouchers are the same people who go to the parcel shelters temporarily. Former inmates out on parole are unlikely to be rewarded with the only thing that could give them a stable lifestyle.

And this is true for every person who is currently homeless. The only thing keeping most away from stability is affordable housing. The rally that I went to at the beginning of my research was due to the absurd nature of how hard it is to get affordable housing. De Blasio promised affordable housing, but it is still mostly unaffordable for the homeless. This is De Blasio’s version of the who the worthy are.

While the providers that I interviewed impact the problem of homelessness in a positive way, these organizations could achieve more by implementing ways to also plan for the future. And although the encompassing providers stay in a temporal mindset in order induce agency into their practice, they should focus on their client’s future by advocating for systemic injustices such as the lack of affordable housing. No matter what type of provider one is, they should have goals and missions in order to level the way that they construct the homeless. Every organization is going to construct a way of understanding who the homeless is and they need profound goals as an organization to do so.

One could argue in fact, that by having parcel services, it distracts and limits the possibility of change. If service providers made more of an effort to communicate both with the

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112 Picture the Homeless Research Committee.
homeless and across types of providers, there would be a more efficient way of solving the problem. Provision work needs to challenge their constructions of who the homeless are in order to help them in more deep-seeded ways.
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