5-14-2020

Human Social Services in Central Illinois: Making Sense of State Divestment and the State Budget Impasse

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149 Pages

The state of Illinois underwent an historic budget impasse that lasted 793 days from July 1, 2015 to August 31, 2017. By not signing the budget, the former Governor Bruce Rauner used a form of shock therapy at the state level to implement his reform agenda. The human social service sector was particularly hit hard. I wanted to investigate how an ecology of homeless service agencies in the central Illinois area strategized and prioritized their decision-making in response to an active crisis. During semi-structured interviews of agency executives and program managers, more was revealed about how they responded to state divestment and the precarious nature of funding in general. The focus was on how agencies sustain their missions. In many ways, the impasse was 'business as usual.' This is partly in response to the fact that there was a trend of minimal direct reliance on state funding in my sample. There was also heightened collaboration brought on by a sense of shared tragedy. An agency's religiosity and use of government grants impacted how they structured services. Tensions or dualities emerged in some informants regarding how they thought about the work that they do and the clients they serve.

KEYWORDS: Human Social Services, Homelessness, State Divestment, Neoliberalism, Interviews

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

2020

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank my chair, Dr. Chris Wellin, and the rest of my committee, Dr. Maura Toro-Morn and Dr. Frank Beck, for helping me through this journey in completing my thesis. Their wisdom, patience, and kindness helped me through my challenges with the process.

I also want to thank other faculty in the Department of Sociology & Anthropology who helped me intellectually in the classroom, hallways, and at midnight in my office. I want to thank Dr. Marion Willetts for being the first to convince me to not drop out my first semester of graduate school.

Dr. Wib Leonard helped foster my sense of independence and confidence. It was a pleasure to TA for 3 semesters for you in social statistics.

My time in the graduate program was enhanced by being able to constantly visit and have lunch with my grandmother, Dr. Marjorie Jones of the Department of Chemistry. I appreciate her review of my thesis work and unconditional support throughout my time at ISU.

I thoroughly enjoyed my cohort and they helped me understand myself and the work I strived to complete while in the program. It was wonderful to live with J.D. Lewis for 2 and half years and always be available to discuss thesis related work or anything sociological.

Lastly, I want to thank my partner Elise West who I met in graduate school in the department. Thank you for your love and support, as well as your patience. I very much love our son, Maxwell, and will always be thankful for that hiccup in the flow of my thesis work.

E.W.Z.

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CHAPTER I: SIGNIFICANCE AND RELEVANCE OF THE ILLINOIS STATE BUDGET IMPASSE FOR SOCIAL SERVICES

Illinois recently experienced a crisis. It went without a budget for 793 days. The length of the impasse became historic for the entire country (Business Insider 2017). This manufactured fiscal crisis[1] affected several aspects of Illinois' economy because of unpaid bills to contractors and vendors, the state's credit rating, and the public's confidence in the government to function properly. For the most part, the middle class was able to move along during the impasse as if it were not happening.[2] However, of those hurt and dislocated by the crisis the most, human social services and the people they serve were hit particularly hard (WGLT 2016; WJBC 2016; Mendoza 2018; Hynes 2019).

Under normal conditions, human social service agencies do not have sufficient funding because of a sustained assault on the industry (Lipsky 2010). One reason for this is financial: governments seek to cut social services because of how municipal budgets are structured. Many expenses are inflexible (e.g., pension plans, benefits, capital expenditure commitments) and therefore the plan to reduce (i.e., 'balance the budget') effectively means to trim social services (Lipsky 2010). Another reason for the assault on social services is the concern of fraud and abuse of services; this made the sector an easy target for reform. Bureaucratic accountability measures as well as new eligibility requirements were implemented to control the provision of services as well as constrain who is able to seek out the services in the first place. In terms of poverty programs, if one is not eligible for food stamps or rent assistance, they are then forced to seek remediation through the market by finding employment.

The impasse intensified the financial concern for agencies that received state funding through contracts.[3] Without that money, agencies had to figure out what to do to function.

Questions on making payroll, whether to cut or eliminate services and departments, or having to make staff layoffs came front stage for executive directors and other managers grappling with what to do. In this situation, however, the complete lack of a budget offered up new terrain for agencies to figure out what they were going to do to survive and how they would make sense of new service demands and budget constraints.

When the social service sector is hit, then the most vulnerable people in society, who rely on these crucial services, are left to struggle. Their lack of sufficient income excludes them from the market and governmental support, and non-profits are unable to help them with an adequate safety net. This is a counter cyclical problem: as the need for services increase, the funding available decreases. This dynamic impacts many kinds of services, such as: domestic violence, drug and alcohol addiction counseling and rehab, childcare, food assistance, income assistance, and help staying off the streets. Of these, one of the most important things for citizens to thrive in a society is a stable place to sleep at night that is suitable for human habitation.

Everyone needs a place to live. Without that, other needs are more difficult to meet. A safe and stable place to sleep at night allows for the ability to store food. It is relief from the climate and weather. A stable address is often required for employment. It is also a place for healing, self-development, and raising a family. The social problems of homelessness, then, cannot be overstated. Many families and individuals experiencing homelessness seek assistance from social service agencies that provide direct emergency shelter, food assistance, and potential housing options. Case Management and Outreach efforts from various agencies also help those who are homeless in figuring out how to navigate the complexity of the network of available services in a community.

It is well researched and established that reduced budgets for services- or worse, no cash flow at all- has jeopardized the quality of care and the existence of some services to recipients (Lipsky 2010). The Chicago Coalition for the Homeless stated that the impasse caused a great deal of suffering for homeless and housing organizations (2017). In fact, the impasse did reduce the total number of people seen and cut programs for many organizations across the state (United Way Survey 2018; Mendoza 2018). In some instances, given the lack of cash flow, services can cease to exist. A transitional living facility that helped homeless youth in Hardin County had to close down due to lack of payment by the state back in 2016 (Mendoza 2018). These surface level responses to crisis have become predictable. What is not clear, however, is how the people in these organizations make sense of and respond to the changes coming from the government and other key funding sources.

The following are my central research questions for my study. How has the Illinois State budget impasse, as well as consequent cutbacks, impacted the social service sector within the context of homeless services? The recent budget crisis in the State, which reflects a broader ideological agenda promoted by former Governor Rauner, has intensified a much longer-lasting trend, dating from the 1980s, to reduce government's role in human services at the federal, state, and local levels. Theoretically, how does neoliberalism impact social service providers down on the ground? Additionally, what strategies are social service providers using to resist cutbacks and counter the disinvestment of human services? For example, I will seek to shed light on a debate as to whether such austerity creates greater competition among providers, in line with a market metaphor or, alternatively, greater interdependence and collaboration, as providers seek to maximize resources.

I chose to interview people in agencies in the Central Illinois area, although there was a focus on McLean County. In order to better understand the responses of the people in this area, some political and economic context is needed at both the local and national level.

Local and National Contexts in Business and Politics

The state budget impasse can only be understood within the political and economic contexts in which it arose. Particular histories and experiences color how an area can respond to any crisis. Not all areas have a rich network of agencies to benefit from; one reason for the breadth of services in my chosen location is the rich material history of the area. In McLean County, there is the State Farm headquarters and Country Financial. Together, these two corporations employ some 16,000 people – roughly 10% of the population of the twin cities. There are also two universities among many other businesses and organizations. Even when the Mitsubishi auto plant closed, Rivian Automotive came in, bought the property and set up business. Peoria County has the Caterpillar headquarters, two major hospitals, and another university. Having two major companies' headquarters in the area alone brings economic benefits. Due to this economic activity, the area has the lowest levels of unemployment in the State and the region. Those benefits to non-profit agencies can take the forms of corporate philanthropy and individual donations and time volunteered.

Politically, both counties are conservative. There is a long history of voting in Republican representatives, or moderate Democrats, at all levels of government (McLean County Clerk; City of Bloomington Board of Election Commissioners). Given the Republican Party's emphasis and platform on creating a business-friendly environment, having lower taxes, and reducing welfare options for people who need it, an interesting contradiction for social services unfolds. On the one hand, there are rich material resources available that have the potential to keep organizations afloat. On the other hand, the historically conservative political perspective forces organizations to compete with one another to access these resources.

This contradiction is also found in national trends, which also have their influence on Central Illinois. According to Mishel et al. (2012) since the 1980s, most Americans have experienced rising income and wealth inequality and stagnated wages, while most economic gains were funneled to the top. The Great Recession complicated this further. Additionally, economic outcomes differ by race and gender, making it harder for some groups than others in the United States to be self-sufficient. Despite the apparent wealth brought into the two counties by major companies and by students who flock from the Chicago-land area and elsewhere with lots of buying power, there is still poverty. Currently, 14.5% of individuals in McLean County and 15.9% in Peoria County live below the federal poverty line (US Census Bureau 2015). By comparison, for the State of Illinois, 13.5% of individuals live below the federal poverty line, and the United States overall has 14.6% in poverty (US Census Bureau 2015). These measures understate the levels of material deprivation in the area. Even though there are opportunities and wealth, certain people appear excluded from directly enjoying those benefits.

Many have labeled these national political and economic trends as neoliberal (Harvey 2005).[4] Attempting to disentangle conservative logic from the neoliberal project is a sticky matter. A hallmark of both conservative and neoliberal perspectives is that market solutions are seen as more effective at helping people than other mechanisms and the role of government is best minimized. Personal responsibility, entrepreneurship, individual liberty, and limited government characterize both conservative and neoliberal values. In its effect, neoliberalism is an economic project for the elite. It is a departure from the former ways of thinking about the roles of the markets, government, and how citizens respond to each. While neoliberalism is undergirded by conservative values, its departure from that political philosophy is in its pursuit of economic growth at the expense of other aspects of an organization's mission (e.g., see Garrow and Hasenfeld 2014). In a neoliberal order, draconian cuts to social services are the mainstay logic. This is because markets are seen as a better avenue than government welfare to alleviating social problems. In general, if welfare is to be provided at all then work requirements are instituted, personal responsibility is emphasized, and larger social forces are ignored in service provision. Social services are therefore prone to various austerity measures from the government to curtail spending on welfare expenditures.

Faith-Based Organizations Responding to Unstable Housing

Historically, faith-based organizations and initiatives have played an important and consistent role in the provision of services to those that are poor and experiencing homelessness (Jansson 1993). The presence of these organizations, as well as policy that highlights their involvement, are part of the national context for the human social services sector. The religious perspective also influences the typification process in how those organizations come to understand the social problems of homelessness. Many agencies in the central Illinois area subscribe to Judeo-Christian values in their mission statements and visions. The extent to which they emphasize certain aspects over others varies in degree by the agencies. One important distinction regarding faith-based organizations are those agencies that use religious principles to advance pro-social goals (e.g., housing) compared to agencies that place a high priority on proselytizing.

Locating the Problem Within an Ecology of Services

This context shapes what is considered an ecology of service providers. In any given geographic location, we can determine whether an ecology of services exist and what that means for those receiving services. For this study, these are agencies that in some way or another provide assistance to people who are experiencing homelessness. The major expected nodes of this network are the emergency shelters, outreach, transitional and permanent supportive housing, mental health, and substance abuse organizations. This network can be understood as having an ecology because what happens to one organization will invariably impact the others. That also means balance can be discerned in this group of providers in how they collaborate, compete, and communicate with each other. This network is also bolstered in formal ways. Many providers are active in what are called Continuums of Care (CoC), as mandated by various funding requirements from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Any provider of some service to people experiencing homelessness are encouraged to join. I anticipate that the impasse will impact the normal ecology of how these providers interact with each other.

One of the reasons for doing this research is that I have personally done work in an ecology of providers. Therefore, my research attempts to join community needs with scholarly initiatives about important sociological themes regarding human social services. My study investigates how human social services respond to neoliberalism down on the ground. When community needs and academic research coalesce, participatory action research becomes a fruitful research perspective to guide the study. While there are varying degrees to which research projects reflect the ideals of participatory action research, there are some basic guidelines. In general, the more involved the community or agency with which one is collaborating is able to moderate the process of determining the research question, or guiding the research process, the better (Stoecker 2004). This line of research has its built-in tensions regarding the needs of the academy for research vs. the needs of social agencies in trying to enact positive change. For this study, given my previous background working at a homeless shelter in Santa Fe, NM for a year, I had an insider perspective. I had my questions about why agencies would not work together when their mission statements were so similar or why the needs of clients were sidelined by certain agencies for a variety of reasons, some of which appeared overly punitive.

I used my knowledge as a springboard into the types of questions and research design I wanted to pursue. Keeping in line with the spirit of participatory action research, I also wanted to use the results of my study to give local service providers a mirror held up to the work that they are doing in a broader context. They are fully immersed in doing direct service work, finances, and administrative responsibilities; however, this study can ideally help them see multiple perspectives out there on how other agencies make sense of neoliberal constraints. My intention is that my research could satisfy the needs of both the community that my research is about, as well as satisfy the standards of sociological research.

Theoretical Guides

Throughout my paper I focus on two major theoretical sociological concerns: claims-making activity and the relations of ruling. The former is a focus on the process in which claims on putative conditions are developed and transformed into social problems; in turn, this process frames what are seen as viable ‘solutions’ (Spector and Kitsuse 2009). This helps explain why certain conditions become ‘problems’ or ‘problematic’ and other things do not, regardless of any objective referents. The latter refers to an important linkage (Smith 1987) concerning the ability to make sense of ground level behavior and thought and trace it beyond the local. This extralocal influence compels behavior in particular ways because it has the power to do so. The origin of this power is obfuscated because it is not always clear what is creating the policy. Relations of ruling are typically thought of in terms of the government and its various bureaucracies. Through rules and regulations as textually-mediated social relations, examining the government is a clear means to determine the pathways of neoliberalism and to what extent they are successful. However, as this study brought to light, relations of ruling also include various faith-based organizations and their religious and spiritual rules regarding morality and prescriptions for living. Notably, one major prescription for living is reading the Bible and a submission to God. Anything short of that means that you are just "scrubbing the surface" of the problems in people's lives.

In terms of mapping out the relations of ruling, institutional ethnography is utilized. The emphasis on texts and the relations of ruling help explain social phenomena. Its perspective also complements participatory action research because it focuses on figuring out the problematic that is rooted in actual, lived experiences down on the ground.

My informants were also my theoretical guides. They were the ones fully immersed in this work and have expansive perspectives on what is going on down on the ground. Through my interviews, I was able to get a snapshot of how they viewed these many issues. They helped me understand what's happening with social service agencies in response to neoliberal change. Thus, I document and juxtapose their perspectives and claims with those of more powerful actors in the discourse regarding the budget standoff.

An Assessment of Neoliberalism Down on The Ground

My study attempts to investigate how neoliberalism is experienced at a local level by people within a specific time, location, and sector of society. It is a case study. Lobao, Adua, and Hooks (2014) argued that research on neoliberalism tends to focus on macro understandings of the political economy and makes assumptions about the degree to which those trends spread.

Similarly, some studies (e.g., Schram and Silverman 2012) emphasize the totalizing power of neoliberal logic and its transformative abilities.

In my study, it turns out the impact of the state budget impasse was not as prominent to the agencies I spoke with as I suspected it would. For agencies that received state funding, and were not being paid on time, the impasse was catastrophic in predictable ways given it negatively impacted cash flow. However, this impasse represented in a lot of ways ‘business as usual.’ For this reason, in my data section I include how agencies understood day-to-day actions and activities before the impasse took place. Then, I add how those agencies tried to make sense of the impasse in light of these more pervasive and durable elements of the social service sector. I add to the literature by showing how people providing aid to the most vulnerable in society make sense of state divestment and state dysfunction.

This has import for human services in how these organizations conceive of themselves and the function they have for society. In the spirit of participatory research, this study allows for a community of people down on the ground, feeling the strong tide of neoliberalism, to reflect on their experiences and to see how their current actions could influence future possibilities. In the spirit of participatory action research, this study can be used to help the local community to examine themselves and reflect on the forces that are compelling them to act in various ways. Given the importance of the human services for the homeless, and other vulnerable populations, how the budget impasse affected communities and these organizations will determine several things: the types of services offered, the scope of services, and the quality of services. To what extent then are human social service organizations able to use their agency to resist the tide that pulls everyone in? My study connects to an understanding about larger political economic arrangements of society and how that impacts the human social service sector.

End Notes

1) I argue that the budget impasse was intentional and neoliberal (this political economic phenomenon will be expanded on in Chapter 2) as evidenced by a few key statements by former venture capitalist and millionaire, Governor Bruce Rauner.

a) During the George W. Bush Institute's 2012 summit, Rauner made statements about "changing the direction of the state [of Illinois]." Panel members discussed the general business climate of Illinois as being unfriendly and detrimental to entrepreneurs and corporations. Rauner warned that Illinois was in "the early stages of a long-term death spiral…and [that] we got to rise up and take the state back for the benefit of our entrepreneurs, our value creators…." Rauner mentions that the "business community has been held hostage" to "horrible policies" because of "union control of our government." Further, Rauner articulates his strategy that would become materialized in his bid for Governor of the state of Illinois (as evidence by his 44-point Turnaround agenda). I quote him at length:

> "In Illinois, there has been a long-time history of what I would call social service, social justice; a bigger role for government in a safety net than in many other states. We can all argue good or bad about that, but that is true. And what's interesting, I think there's a wedge issue here…that I want to emphasize. We cannot afford- we will crush our economy if we try to spend money on both high-cost, inefficient, bureaucratic, heavily unionized government, and a social safety net to help the disadvantaged, the weak, and the poor which many of us would like to be able to do. We can't afford both. We will crush the economy. All the wealth creators…will leave, and we will be done. We have to make a choice. I think we can drive a wedge issue in the Democratic party on that topic. And bring the folks that say, 'You know what? For our tax dollars I would rather help the

> disadvantaged, the handicapped, the elderly, the children in poverty. I would rather have my tax dollars going to that than the SIEU or AF-SCAMY who are out there for their own interests.'"

Rauner explicitly states how to use the social service sector and the most vulnerable people in society for the political advantage of the business community.

b) According to the Chicago Tribune (2018), as Rauner pleaded with the citizens of Illinois to allow him a 2nd term to "save our state" he mentioned some of his earlier thoughts he had at the beginning of his first term. He wanted to "turn Illinois around by changing everything at once" to "shock state government into shape and bring Illinois back." Preventing a budget from passing would dramatically impact the social service sector and the people who benefit from those services; this was used as political leverage. It certainly did shock the system and create disarray. Shock is not an uncommon strategy for the promotion of neoliberal policy to help the business community. Naomi Klein (2007) describes this use as the shock doctrine: a method of creating distractions or making use of disasters to push forward policy. Klein documents how neoliberal change from Chile to Hurricane Katrina happened through the use of 'shock.'

2) This is because the process of dealing with the impasse in the short-term meant creating ways (e.g., court orders and stop-gap measures) that allowed life to go on as usual. Government employees were still getting paid, schools continued to stay open, and roads continued to get repaired. Since they do not use social services as much, because they are ineligible, the effect of the impasse on their lives was less apparent. (Bosman and Davey 2017).

3) Not all non-profit social services agencies receive state funding or any governmental funds that could be impacted due to impasses. Many agencies rely on the generosity of individuals, churches, and businesses to ensure their fiscal longevity. That being said, irrespective of the

source of money, all social service agencies are left to figure what exactly a government budget impasse means for their organization, the services they provide, and how they view the government and communities that they are in.

4) The relevant definitions of neoliberalism will be explained in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Particularly since the 1980s, an ecology of social service agencies has become available in communities to respond to the complex and vast needs associated with the growth of homelessness. Currently, on any given night there are approximately 567,715 people experiencing homelessness in the United States (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2020). Of those, about 35 percent are unsheltered and are living rough in places not meant for human habitation. The experience of homelessness is psychologically traumatizing (Goodman, Saxe, and Harvey 1991), creates a great deal of existential anguish that must be managed (Snow and Anderson 1993), and causes a range of health problems and shortens life expectancy (Hwang 2001). Social service agencies respond to that trauma and crisis daily. How professionals make sense of their work, and the claims they have about homelessness, are influenced by the political and economic context, the changing contours of social service provision, and interactions with people experiencing homelessness.

Social Constructionism as A Theoretical Orientation

The social constructionist perspective acknowledges that multiple realities and claims exist. It is the process of meaning-making in everyday life; constructing and re-constructing reality through social interactions (Berger and Luckmann 1967). Claims made by social groups or individuals are about subjectively understood conditions that are declared to be bad in some way from the reference point of the claims-makers. This process of ‘constructing’ problems involves typification, wherein an orientation to the problem and its possible solutions are provided (Best 1989). The social construction of social problems therefore focuses on the meaning making activity of the problem, not on any objective condition (Spector and Kitsuse 2009). Context for problems (i.e., explicitly stated assumptions about conditions), however, is needed to make sense of the nature of claims-making activity (Best 1989). Certainly, for claims-makers, the conditions they talk about are 'objective' from their point-of-view. In order to steer away from an assessment of conditions, social constructionist perspectives examine how those conditions are understood and talked about. In the process of claims-making, multiple realities interact with each other to persuade others that their perspective is more valid and worthy of urgency. In order to make sense of the claims made by social service professionals about their work and the Illinois state budget impasse, further context is needed.

Neoliberalism: Thought and Actually Existing Practice

Within the mid-20th century, especially by the 1980s, neoliberalism emerged as a new epoch of global capitalism, which promulgated a reconfigured political and economic theory about the interactions of the state and the market (Harvey 2005). Neoliberal theorists extolled the virtues of the free market, and capitalism more generally, and cautioned against the dangers associated with government intervention (Hayek 1944; Friedman 1962). Essentially, the neoliberal state's ideal function is twofold: promote free market fundamentalism through various mechanisms to roll back the involvement of the state in market transactions and maintain and protect capital (Harvey 2005). Therefore, the state exists to uphold the integrity of free trade internationally, free markets generally, individual liberty for consumers and entrepreneurs, and the protection of private property. In other words, at its core, neoliberalism is a critique of state intervention in the economic sphere: markets are better, and more efficient, than governments at determining how people should live their lives.

Neoliberal discourse also entails smaller government and lower taxes for corporations and the wealthy since taxes are alleged to hurt innovation and the entrepreneurial spirit. The narrative that the welfare state is bad and mismanaged became prominent, as well as the quintessential quality of personal responsibility. According to neoliberals, their most salient claims are that economic freedoms lend themselves naturally to political freedoms (Friedman 1962). Therefore, the more a society can get government out of markets, the better that society will be in terms of individual happiness, economic growth, and personal liberties. A tax-funded social safety net, therefore, would not be needed.

Over several decades leading up to the 1980s, the values and ideas of neoliberalism gradually became 'taken for granted' and 'a natural way to do things.' This can be best summarized by the popular 1980s slogan of the former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher: There is no alternative. What this meant was that there was no alternative to free markets, free trade, and global capitalism if one wanted prosperity and stability (Munck 2005). For these reasons many researchers consider neoliberal thought to be hegemonic (Harvey 2005). The reification of neoliberal thought was aided by the fact that it is undergirded by a return to individualism, conservative values (e.g., personal responsibility), mathematical modeling of economic and social life, and power over the media to spread of those ideas (Bourdieu 1998).

Researchers have pointed out, however, that a gap exists between the theory of neoliberalism and what actually ends up happening in society (Harvey 2005; Boyle, McWilliams, and Rice 2008; Peck, Brenner, and Theodore 2018). An 'actually existing neoliberalism' occurs. As it turns out, many of the positive benefits of neoliberal capitalist organization are not bestowed upon the public. In fact, the opposite is happening: stagnating wages, decreased unionization, increasing income and wealth inequality, and increased poverty (Bourdieu 1998). The right hand of the state, concerned mostly with financial equilibrium and market logic, is ignorant of the social and psychological costs associated with their activities that the left hand of the state (i.e., social services) is tasked with taking care of (Bourdieu 1998).

According to Harvey (2007), this divergence between neoliberal thought and practice exists because neoliberalism is a class project that attempts to restore class dominance by transferring wealth from the public to the private sector that was lost due to the creation of the modern welfare state. In the US, this new form of capitalism started out as a response to rising globalization and a critique of New Deal and Great Society era policies that primarily benefited the most vulnerable and poor (Centeno and Cohen 2010). Those policy programs aimed at the working class and poor to mitigate the adverse effects of the market created a reactionary backlash. The dominant economic class, through the corporate community, has been able to increase their wealth tremendously and regain lost power (Domhoff 2010).

Neoliberalism as it is practiced is about economic rationalism and valuing thinking in terms of economic outcomes (e.g., productivity, efficiency, profit, growth) over any social costs (e.g., unemployment, alcoholism, suicide, general suffering) that may come with such policy (Bourdieu 1998). This disconnect from social costs, and disregard, is one of the major reasons that a gap exists between neoliberalism as theorized and spoken about as rhetoric and neoliberalism as it occurs.

Moreover, Wacquant (2010) has argued that neoliberalism is less about 'small government' than it is about state craft and restructuring the state to the benefit of the economic elite. Part of that is to manage the population of people living at the economic margins, who are often considered to be unruly and irresponsible. The neoliberal state has addressed this problem by criminalizing and imprisoning massive numbers of people, many of whom experience mental illnesses and unemployment. The boom in the prison population since the 1980s is evidence to this (James 2016). Another key aspect of the restructuring of the state is to alter how the welfare state is managed: it must devolve, retract, and reorganize itself. The change in welfare as well as the expansive penal system targeted at the economically insecure are both punitive in nature. Neoliberalism then creates a state that dramatically treats the wealthy and the poor differently (Bourdieu 1998). A key institutional logic that bolsters these neoliberal changes that punish the poor is the trope of personal responsibility.

The moral values and goals pushed under neoliberalism for welfare reform are all intimately connected to the idea of personal responsibility. It's the simple idea that families should not depend on the government for assistance. Additionally, if government must have a safety net at all it will be limited and push people back into the market as quickly as possible. To be personally responsible (i.e., economically self-sufficient) means that one is gaining their own income through the market. President Bill Clinton (2006) stated that intergenerational dependence on the government for welfare provision was a severe problem and that people needed to transition into employment and self-sufficiency. A strong work ethic, an entrepreneurial spirit, and financial prudence in money management are all morals that could support that transition from government aid to financial independence. These values became important to transform the welfare state.

The process of neoliberalizing the welfare state saw several major changes. Because of the emphasis on economic rationality and market logic, it effectively blurred the lines between government, civil society, and the market (Schram 2018). Austerity measures were implemented to social programs and service provision was restructured (Abramovitz and Zelnick 2015). Welfare saw changes under President Reagan that culminated with President Bill Clinton's Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. The bill attempted to promote responsibility among poor recipients of aid, pushed for the transition to work (i.e., workfare), and continued the devolution of services to the state level by allowing more flexibility for states to reform their welfare systems (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation 1996). The emphasis now was on dependency on government aid, not poverty (Schram 2018). It also helped continue the individual perspective on poverty: if personal responsibility was at issue, then individual bad decision making ultimately is the cause of poverty (Schram 2018).

The altered political and economic landscape since the 1980s has led to a new vision of safety nets and welfare provision for struggling families and individuals. Market logic became the standard way of making sense of poverty and government programs for people in the US federal and state governments. With policy changing from the top, this restructuring created new dynamics for the social service sector.

Social Service Sector

Non-profit social service organizations have historically been the advocates of social rights and social equality for the most vulnerable people in society (Hasenfeld and Garrow 2012). They have held a strong ethic of social caring (Baines 2006). Advocacy for those who lack power was done in a legislative sense and pushed the visibility of problems toward the national level. Victories were made with the New Deal and Great Society (i.e., War on Poverty) programs. However, since the advent of neoliberalism, the political, economic, and institutional context that these organizations operate in has threatened their ability to advocate for, and maintain, those social rights.

Given the retreat of the state under neoliberalism from the provision of services, a vacuum in service providers was created. That has partially been filled by faith-based organizations. While historically, religion has played an important role in providing these services (Jansson 1993), after advancements in the welfare state, government departments took on those roles and responsibilities. Neoliberalism has now seen a reversal in that trend: faith-based organizations are beginning to take greater a larger role, and sense of control, in the provision of services. These are agencies that primarily value Judeo-Christian values and perspectives in how they organize themselves and how they provide services.

Politicians, government departments, and national homeless advocacy groups have highlighted the importance of faith-based organizations in the human service sector since the 1980s. George H. W. Bush's 'thousand points of light' was a call-to-arms to the public, particularly faith-based organizations, to do good in their communities without public finance (Bush 1989). This idea was actualized into official cabinet positions under George W. Bush's tenure; one of his first executive orders in 2001 created the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. This was done to 'level the playing field' in terms of what types of agencies (i.e., secular vs. religious) can apply for federal grants. In many ways, the government also pushed secular organizations to collaborate with faith-based ones, particularly those that do not get federal dollars, in order to maximize resources and opportunities for their clients (HUD 2019). These changes in policy regarding the presence of faith and religion in organization at the top coincided with other neoliberal transformations of the social service sector.

Social service organizations have undergone a market-oriented reorganization (Baines 2006). Neoliberalism impacts social services on two fronts: it widens the base of those who would need a safety net and it makes it more difficult for social services agencies to provide benefits. Other neoliberal policy changes (e.g., tax cuts for corporations and the rich, deregulation for businesses and the financial sector) created increased income inequality, poverty, and concentration of wealth at the top. This widened the base of those most in need of human services. At the same time, proponents of neoliberalism helped reduce the welfare state's ability to help more people, reduced the benefits, and made it more difficult to access those benefits.

The reduction and restructuring of the welfare state created by neoliberal ideology is a pulling tide on social service organizations and how they operate. Organizational changes occurred by isomorphic processes that were coercive, memetic, and normative (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Coercive tactics come from the authority of government rules and regulations, which saw various changes as ‘welfare as we knew it’ was altered. The majority of non-profit organizations that do social services use grants or contracts to pay for it. In order to qualify for these awards, organizations must first meet initial requirements to qualify. Then they must demonstrate at audits, monitorings, and reviews, that they are following all the rules on eligibility, services provided, and financial management, at pain of losing money or the entire grant itself. When organizations are responding to the uncertainty and crises created by neoliberalism, memetic responses occur. This is a type of imitation derived from uncertainty. The importance of funding and finding new avenues of funding, due to austerity measures, causes organizations to respond to that neoliberal policy environment in unclear ways. Lastly, because neoliberalism has created organizational and institutional change through the first 2 processes, it has impacted how professionals must respond to this. This is a normative change. The formal education and training of social service professionals try to prepare students for the realities they might face. As such, the professionalization of social service providers, especially for upper administration, reflects the neoliberal focus on corporate governance, fundraising, and responding to bureaucratic accountability measures (e.g., Schram and Silverman 2012).

Researchers argue (Baines 2006; Hasenfeld and Garrow 2012) that the non-profit human service sector internalizes the logic and goals of neoliberalism in a stage of Managerialism

(Abramovitz and Zelnick 2015), which arises into what is called New Public Management. This amounts to thinking of the service agency as a ‘business’ and creating a corporate governance structure that is able to fix the problems associated with the welfare state. In order to do that, agencies adopt corporate strategies of management, use performance measures or best practices to measure outcomes, productivity, and efficiency, and view clients as consumers to create competition among non-profits. Therefore, New Public Management is the culmination of market logic and economic rationalism. These all become the new norm of management for social service agencies. From a new neoliberal perspective that sees welfare agencies as wasteful, inefficient, overly bureaucratic, costly, and open to fraud, it makes sense to find ways that have worked to improve those areas in other parts of society, namely in the for-profit corporate sector.

Since most social services agencies are non-profit, the ‘shareholders’ companies are beholden to are the funding sources for their operations. Those can be government grants and contracts, other non-profit funding agencies like United Ways, or the corporate and individual donations.

The most popular statement of New Public Management for non-profit social services agencies to date is Robert Lupton’s (2011) book, where he states that an important part of non-profit governance is the ‘return on investment of aid.’ What this means is that volunteers and funding sources want to know their volunteered labor or funding, respectively, amounted to something that was not wasted. Anything other than this effectively enables bad decision making among clients that agencies try to assist. This perspective has been popular with, and originated from, faith-based organizations.

Bureaucratic accountability measures often have the unintended consequence of goal displacement. This means that rules become ends in and of themselves. Fulfilling the requirements of the rule is the duty, not the original goal and intent of the rule (Merton 1940). Thus, organizations become rigid and lack flexibility in the interpretation of how to apply them.

How social service professionals provide their services is ultimately a matter of street-level discretion (Lipsky 2010). Front-line workers must make sense of what is expected of them. Ultimately, discretion allows them to navigate the tension between administering services that are flexible and compassionate versus services that are impartial and follow the rules rigidly (i.e., fairness). Direct services workers navigate bureaucratic accountability measures and attempts to measure outputs, although there is limited evidence that this completely controls worker practice. Market forces that promote efficiency and productivity that influence public policy can create value conflicts within workers because it goes against their professional ethics in the provision of care (Gallina 2010). Because of the street-level discretion inherit in the work of front-line professional, they create public policy that can circumnavigate those value conflicts. Ultimately, this can deviate from any written standards and expectations. While the top-level and increasingly neoliberal administrative positions dictate policy that social service providers are supposed to follow, the reality of front-line work is often different from written policies and procedures.

It is important to remember in neoliberal social welfare policy that it overvalues economic concerns (e.g., efficiency and outcomes measures) at the expense of the social costs associated with such practices, which could undermine quality of care. It matters on the use of these mechanisms: social domination against the poor and control over agencies that provide such services. The political and economic context clearly shapes and constrains quality of care for people needing help in the social services field.

Homelessness

In the most essential way, to experience homelessness is to be without a home (Liebow 1993). Being without a home, however, can take on many different forms. The best way to conceptualize homelessness, according to Lee, Tyler, and Wright (2010), is to think of it as a continuum of housing instability. Within this continuum, people live in poverty conditions, one of the major determinants of homelessness (Rossi 1989; Elliott and Krivo 1991; Liebow 1993; Snow and Anderson 1993; Kozol 2006; Lee et. al 2010). At the bottom, people sleep on the streets, benches, parks, and other places generally not habitable by people. Next are those ‘at risk’ of experiencing that literal homelessness. These people are within the process of eviction or foreclosure. The marginally housed are people living in poor conditions, trailer parks, and primarily rent (especially with slum lords). Lastly, there is the ‘hidden homeless.’ These people are ‘doubled up’ or ‘couch surfing’ with friends or family who might also be marginally housed or at risk of becoming homeless. In some instances, people double up with family who are a little more economically stable (e.g., working class, middle class families). Given that most types of homelessness are transitional or episodic, not chronic, this continuum demonstrates the ease in which people move between stages of housing instability.

According to Snow and Anderson (1993), there are two additional important dimensions of the experience of homelessness. The lack of familial support networks is one of those dimensions. One can certainly be displaced by natural disasters, war, or just unemployment, but still have their family intact as a safety net. Some of the more chronically homeless, however, lack those ties and are isolated from the community. The other dimension is the role-based moral worth and dignity attributed to the different types of homelessness. To be homeless is to have a master status, which impacts all other areas of life. Depending on how people become homeless (e.g., drug addiction versus a stroke of bad luck by being laid off), and even how they look when homeless, will determine how people attribute moral worth and dignity. Taken together, the continuum of housing instability regarding residential status, familial networks, and moral worth help researchers determine the different varieties of homelessness.

As mentioned above, the eviction process is a major pathway into homelessness. Families across the US find it increasingly more difficult to afford everything. Desmond (2016), demonstrated this continuous struggle between the poor trying to survive and their landlords, who attempt to profit at their expense. In this sense, eviction is a relationship. When examining how the poor get to that position it is important to ask, 'Why are rent and bills so high?' The private rental market, as well as utility companies, are fundamental in shaping and maintaining poverty conditions for millions of people. When housing is a commodity, and companies and individuals who rent out properties are guided by the pursuit of profit, then the conditions of poverty set in because their limited income is consumed quickly. This makes it easier to evict them because these families fall behind on rent since they are constantly trying to determine where money needs to go in that moment (e.g., do you pay your rent on time or do you pay your electric bill that is already late?). The high demand for rental units also makes it easier to evict. This creates instability in individual families and entire communities. And once evicted, the blemish acts as a significant barrier to getting housing again. This fuels the pathway into homelessness and keeps families within the continuum of housing instability.

There was a spike in foreclosures during the Great Recession in 2008. Compared to 2006, there was a 225 percent increase in foreclosures in 2008; a total of 861,664 families lost their homes (Christie 2009). The United States and the rest of world felt a “global economic meltdown” (Treas 2010:3). While large corporations bounced back because of government bailouts, ordinary people were left without homes or much hope for their future. During this time, Treas (2010) points out that victim blaming was used as a strategy by various experts and pundits to pin the problems experienced from the Recession back onto the choices made by the individuals. This in turn neglected an influence of structure. In several ways, the Great Recession was due to neoliberal change (e.g., financial deregulation) and then set the stage for a continued neoliberal narrative.

Foreclosures and evictions, while leading families into poverty and homelessness, are framed as individual problems. The neoliberal trope of personal responsibility frames the understanding of poverty: if only people paid their bills on time or were financially prudent this would not happen. This individualistic perspective typifies how people experiencing homelessness are thought of, which in turn influences what possible solutions are available to help people.

When the general public currently thinks of homelessness, people sleeping in parking garages and alleys, in tents, or panhandling for money is the typified version. HUD’s (2011) first, and main, definition of homelessness (i.e., “literally homeless”) is how most people view homelessness. If someone is in a “public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodation for human beings” or “a publicly or privately operated shelter” then they are homeless (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2011:76,017). Jencks (1994:7) adds that when people think of the homeless, they think of “the people whose existence most worries the public.” In other words, the level of vulnerability within the continuum of housing instability matters. Historically, that has not always been the case. The typifications of ‘homelessness’ has changed over time. In the US, the homeless or ‘bums’ used to be single white men who drank alcohol in excess, were disaffiliated with their familial and social networks, and either did seasonal migrant work or were unemployed (Lee et al 2010). With the advent of neoliberalism in the 1980s, a new visibility and face of homelessness emerged.

Compared to previous estimates of those experiencing homelessness, currently children, single women, female headed families, and African Americans constitute the ‘new’ face of homelessness (Lee et al. 2010; National Alliance to End Homelessness 2020; Wilkey et al. 2019). The life experiences, and therefore causes of homelessness, of these new social groups are markedly different from single white men. Women and African Americans, for example, have different economic opportunities and make less than white men (Mishel, Bivens, Gould, and Shierholz 2012). African Americans face structural racism in all facets of their life that impact their ability to find decent housing or good employment (Shapiro 2017). Desmond (2016) has found out that African American, single-headed families and single African American women were evicted at higher rates than their white counterparts. Women are more likely to enter homelessness due to domestic violence (Jasinski, Wesely, Wright, and Mustaine 2010). And families are struggling to afford basic necessities: rent, utilities, food, transportation (Desmond 2016).

Part of the typification of the homeless is due to how the news media report about their experiences. The news is by and large how most people in the public are exposed to homelessness. The past 2 decades have had stories that are harsher in nature: people who are homeless are deviant, create disorder, and must be managed (Lee et al. 2010). They are also considered lazy and responsible for their situation (Tsai et al. 2018). Many people often hear of NIMBY (Not in my backyard) responses on the news regarding the placement of emergency shelters and other service organizations in communities. Those frustrations create fear in other community members regarding property values, safety, and public health concerns (Dear 1992). These fears and news stories that demonize the condition of homelessness and poverty leads to the stigmatization of people experiencing homelessness and those people are correspondingly blamed for their situation (Phelan et al. 1997).

Despite typifications of the homeless rooted in fear by the public, many find homelessness to be a major problem that is rooted in structural and health causes (Tsai et al. 2018). These attitudes are influenced by gender, income level, and political affiliation. Tsai et al. (2018) found that women, lower income families, and Democrats expressed more compassion for those who experienced homelessness and believed in structural and health factors as causes that led people into that situation. These groups of people also believed the federal government had a responsibility in helping people experiencing homelessness. However, even with greater compassion, some report fears about certain policies that allow panhandling or sleeping on the streets. Clearly, fears stoked around the homeless by the news causes even well-intentioned people to have some reservations. Jencks (1994) echoes that the political climate for a given location is important for how the homeless are perceived and how they are treated and what solutions are considered legitimate and desired. Ultimately, political context and the standpoint of people's lives determines how the homeless are typified.

As mentioned earlier, how those experiencing homelessness are viewed influences the types of solutions that are available to combat the problem. It also determines how people think of the causes of homelessness. In the field of sociology, Lee et al. (2010) point to the consensus that poverty is a major cause of homelessness. To be poor means to lack the finances to pay all bills, afford food and transportation and health care. It also means that when something unexpected happens, there is little to assist people from losing their home and entering homelessness. Snow and Anderson (1993) called this the ‘accumulation of troubles.’ One bad event (e.g., their car breaks down) can exacerbate other areas in people’s lives.

There is also agreement among sociologists that the causes of homelessness are both structural and biographical (Snow and Anderson 1993; Jencks 1994). Notwithstanding that interaction, structure has been observed in research studies as the more fundamental problem (Lee et al. 2010; Royce 2015). Structural reasons include the lack of housing affordability (both the decline in the stock of low-income housing and the inflation of the cost of housing), mental health deinstitutionalization, unemployment, deindustrialization (Snow and Anderson 1993). Elliott and Krivo (1991) echo the findings of increased homelessness caused by economic dislocation (e.g., high poverty, poor economic conditions, unemployment, lack of affordable housing). Liebow (1993) called these ‘system failures’ of capitalism and the free market. Given the importance of work in sustaining oneself, the capitalist system is unable to provide jobs to everyone that wants one. Additionally, even with employment, low-wages and precarity (i.e., temporary work) are increasingly more prevalent. Liebow (1993) also described another system failure within the welfare system in place, which often shamed people for taking assistance, which was paltry. Rossi (1989) and Jencks (1994) both discuss how reductions in cash welfare benefits led to an increase in poverty more generally and homelessness specifically.

Conversely, the more individual causes are voluntarism (i.e., the personal choice to live on the streets), disabilities and other health pathologies, a damaged familial network, and just bad luck (Snow and Anderson 1993). Jencks (1994) adds that substance abuse and declining frequency of marriage among women with children increased homelessness. As mentioned earlier, the individualistic perspective of personal responsibility dominates neoliberal discourse and is part of the typification of the homeless by many people. This perspective helps them understand why people are homeless in the first place. In this instance, people find the homeless to be lazy and responsible for their situation and plight due to bad decisions they have made. Tsai et al. (2018) corroborated that such attitudes existed currently: 62 percent of respondents believed the homeless make bad decisions and 42 percent believed the homeless to be lazy. The individualistic perspective is also heavily tied to a conservative perspective. Conservatives take on a variety of individualistic perspectives on poverty ranging from genetics, culture, bad decision making, and limited human capital to find employment (Royce 2015).

There are homeless careers; different trajectories and movement between stages in how one becomes homeless. Adaptive and survival strategies vary by the different kinds of homeless careers. The difference in the experiences of these homeless are emergent in their interactions with the shelter systems, various other non-profit organizations, housing organizations, welfare offices, the police, and the general public who pass by them on the sidewalks every day. The social service sector is important because it contributes to "the texture of street life," and thus has important implications for how people experiencing homelessness navigate their lives (Snow and Anderson 1993:77).

The presence of faith-based organizations in the network of homeless service providers impacts those homeless careers as well. This is particularly because of the fact that they have what Snow and Anderson (1993) call a salvationist perspective which lends itself to prescribing certain morals and standards of living. A well cited study in religious circles states that organizations of faith are at the forefront of program innovation of the homeless services sector as well as providing up to 60 percent of the emergency shelter beds (Johnson, Horst, and Alvarez 2017). These initiatives are also praised by this study as providing huge savings in taxpayer dollars and emphasize one way to evaluate programs by their return on investment. This demonstrates that services can be provided without the government investing money in it- a goal of the neoliberal project.

HUD emphasizes that Continuums of Care, the network of federally funded organizations providing homeless services, should partner with faith-based organizations who do not receive that money (HUD 2019). They explicitly mention that funding from the government is insufficient and that these partnerships can assist with that by tapping into the church and volunteer networks of these other agencies. The National Alliance to End Homelessness (2017) mentions the important role of faith-based organizations in filling in the gap to provide services. According to them, these organizations provide nearly 30 percent of all emergency shelter beds; this account is at odds with the Johnson et al. (2017) study. Despite the disagreement on the quantification of how much agencies of faith help in the networks of homeless service providers they both point to the important presence they have in the provision of services. For people experiencing homelessness, that means that they are very likely to encounter these organizations and navigate those sets of expectations and rules to qualify for services.

Resistance

Bourdieu (1998) argued that resistance against neoliberal policy and thought has been strongest in geographic places with strong preexisting traditions. Those traditions, social and cultural, would be ways of understanding and valuing social rights as well as the rules created to maintain those rights. Given the evidence of uneven development of neoliberalism across geographic space (Harvey 2005; Boyle et al. 2008; Peck et al. 2018), that highlights the importance of place. Alternatively, it could be argued that networks, as opposed to geographic places, are the location for the forms of resistance. As Baines (2006) pointed out, social services historically are practiced by people who have strong convictions about social justice and doing good for people. They have a strong ethic of social caring. It is likely then that we would see more sites and incidences of resistance against neoliberal thought and change in the non-profit social services sector. Additionally, those in the social services sector are part of many networks in their practice. Those networks serve as a way to transmit ideas, which can lead to increasingly similar organizational forms and practices (e.g., see DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Taken together, the geographic place with its history, culture, practices, and institutions as well as the types of networks available determine the extent of resistance by agencies. That resistance likely would be targeted at the managerial expectations of New Public Management and various bureaucratic accountability measures.

One method of resistance is through public and hidden transcripts. James Scott (1990), explains that social groups that lack power disguise their true thoughts and intentions by adopting the language and rhetoric of those in power. This is accomplished in the public transcript, frontstage for all to see and hear. How well a group knows the rules of the game can be determined by what is said in the public transcript. Alternatively, the hidden transcript is acted out by groups lacking power behind closed doors. People do not blindly accept 'mainstream' or seemingly 'taken-for-granted' notions about how the world operates. In other words, hegemonic ideologies can appear as accepted dogma because that is what is expressed in the public transcript. This hidden transcript allows people to critique the dominant discourse safely. It is a practical resistance to ideas and plans seen as unfair and unjust. Just as the relations of ruling attempt to control behavior and thought, there are corresponding relations of resistance.

Similarly, Lisa Dodson (2009) documented practical acts of resistance in the workplace. She found that people's acknowledgement of extreme unfairness at work and in the economy led to what she called the ‘moral underground.’ Supervisors and employees would fudge paperwork or not follow regulations in order to do what they believed was fair and beneficial to clients. Strategies of avoiding detection in small ways were developed in order to help people. This finding was not ubiquitous: there are still supervisors that blamed the poor for their (perceived) deficiencies.

In the context of neoliberalized social services, professionals do resist in these small, practical ways and engage in a moral underground. Abramovitz (2005) documented how staff would be creative in managing their ethical conflicts regarding how to best serve the clients they saw. Front-line workers would break the rules, not follow regulations, assess clients as more vulnerable to give them more service time, or find new ways for allowing clients to be admitted (i.e., challenging strict eligibility requirements). The 1996 neoliberal welfare reform led to staff putting themselves on the line more and more in this way. The welfare reform had increased job dissatisfaction, demoralization, burnout, and feeling less able to help, prompting service professionals to participate in the moral underground and utilize the public and hidden transcript. This happened especially when staff felt needed by the clients they worked with, felt a sense of accomplishment with helping people, and wanted to make a positive difference in people’s lives.

When examining the potential for resistance against neoliberal social welfare policy, we can follow at the spread of those ideas. Lobao, Adua, and Hooks (2014) found that the acceptance of neoliberal social policy change is not as widespread as previously thought. Their findings showed that at the local level, policies do not necessarily place emphasis on business goals or cut back on social service programs. Given the popularity and power of neoliberal policy at the federal level, we might expect localities to adopt those policies. This means that it is possible that certain locales find ways to resist the implementation of policy that erodes quality of care for the people they assist.

Despite these possibilities for resistance, Schram and Silverman (2012:143) argue that front-line workers who transgress against the expectations of New Public Management do so "at their peril." The neoliberal transformation of social service policy has ushered in the "end of social work" (Schram and Silverman 2012:128). Discretion, which allows workers to resist the relations of ruling, has been undermined by the pulling tide of bureaucratic accountability measures. This trend of decreased discretion, as well as the increased reliance on volunteers who are not as trained as employees, has also been documented elsewhere (e.g., Baines 2006). The extent to which claims of the end of social work are true, is unclear. If they were, then the organizations that have survived the continually evolving social service terrain would be expected to have embraced New Public Management and not find strategies to subvert it.

CHAPTER III: DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The method most appropriate to answer my research questions was the in-depth interview. It allows the informants to tell their perspective and lived experiences in response to several open-ended questions. Because of the semi-structured approach I took, it allowed them the flexibility to be their own theorists in their organizational field of human social services. As such, I try to make sense of what is said in an interview on the informant's own terms, while also interpreting what is said through my own theoretical understandings of the social world. In other words, the interview becomes a method to co-create knowledge (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009).

I also followed a general framework of institutional ethnography (e.g., DeVault 2006) which prompted me to be aware of how texts influence their work as well as obtain information from texts they created that I received from agency websites and, after the interview was conducted, in the form of various pamphlets and paperwork. There I found more about mission statements, agency programs, rules to obtain services, financial statements, or network alliances, among other things. This information allowed me to add greater context and richness to my interviews. How agencies present themselves through texts are a collective enterprise of claims-making activity, and constrain the actions of staff and clients alike. Additionally, that information allowed me to see how locally determined behavior is shaped, or prescribed, by extra-local institutions.

In order to demonstrate that my findings are authentic I have been as transparent as possible in how I engaged in the entire research process from start to finish. This effort toward transparency helps bolster and lend support to the conclusions and arguments I make from my data. While there is often skepticism and confusion about qualitative work around its robustness and veracity (Mahoney and Goertz 2006), this long-standing debate of quantitative and qualitative perspectives on method yields more similarities than differences. As Becker (1986) elucidates, there are more similarities than differences in the methods we choose to talk about social reality. Interviews or statistical tables or documentary films and music are all different ways of *telling about society*. Each way is an incomplete, albeit useful, piece of a larger picture.

Data

My informant group is made up of administrative workers from human social service providers who aid the homeless either directly or through ancillary services and programs. Because of their organizational positions, I was able to get a top-view perspective and the big picture on the work the agency does on a daily basis. They help ensure operations run smoothly, money is flowing in, create and/or implement policies, have a direct influence on workers who do the direct-service work with the homeless, as well as interact with other social service providers in the community. They also engage with the public, the media, and various political leaders. Given the importance of their role within the agency, their perspectives become a pulse on the myriad issues of the budget impasse and state divestment vis-à-vis neoliberal change in human social services more generally.

The interviews took place from June 2017 to August 2017 in Bloomington-Normal as well as Peoria, both of which are in the Central Illinois area. Three informants were interviewed before a State budget was passed and then the remaining eight were done after a State budget had legally been passed.

It is worth noting that at one agency I was able to interview four different people. This was from Redemption Ministries, one of the faith-based organizations. I was able to get so many interviews from this location because they all referred to one another for my snowball sample and were willing to be interviewed. This was the first and only agency to allow me to gain access to other staff. When the other organizations gave me clues for my snowball sample they always referred to places outside the organization as opposed to referring internally like Redemption Ministries. My first interview at Redemption Ministries revealed many important, and stark, differences from all of my other informants. This organization was primarily concerned with proselytizing as a top priority. While it is convenient to have easily accessible informants willing to speak to me, I also wanted to see how staff in other positions of the organization made sense of the goal of proselytizing in order to and gain greater understanding. It also allowed me to have more informants who shared the unique social service perspective that salvation and sin were at the forefront of their work, while other agencies (even those that were religious in nature) had mission statements that sought to advance pro-social goals.

Overall, my informants represent a group of human social service administrators who are very experienced. Not only have they been working in the service world for a long time, but their time in their current position indicates that they have a wealth of knowledge about local and extra-local issues regarding how their agencies are able to deliver services to the homeless. This means that they are ideally situated to theorize and articulate their positions about the Illinois state budget impasse as well as cutbacks and other trends in social services in general.

Formally, almost every informant received some kind of college education. Several were more credentialed and had master's degrees or some extra type of certification in social work. These were typically liberal arts degrees such as social work, sociology, or psychology. This is a standard educational pathway for many people in the human social service sector (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020). Despite that, there were others who had no educational credentials or whose training was more from a religious standpoint. From their learned experience, my informants took their pathways and corresponding attitudes and values into administrative work for human social service organizations and applied it to how they make sense of the work they do and what it means to 'help' the homeless. This individual-level variation in pathways to this kind of work operates and influences how the agencies are run.

Conversely, the goals and mission of the agencies impact how the individual makes meaning about homelessness and the work they do. The organization acts as a backdrop to contextualize their responses to things. Despite the fact the administrators are uniquely positioned to alter and change how an organization operates, they still are influenced by the tide of neoliberalism that impacts organizational logics and trajectory.

The organizations in my sample are 4 emergency shelters, a community resource center, a family resource center, and a housing authority. Of the 7 organizations in my sample, there were 5 that concerned themselves explicitly with the homeless population. The other 2 organizations helped low-income families and individuals, some of whom could be homeless. For all of the agencies, those served included adults or children, individuals or families.

Many of the organizations in my sample had organizational backgrounds that were religious. My sample showed an important and relevant distinction between faith-based organizations that build on principles (e.g., hope, love, faith) meant to advance pro-social goals versus those where the primary purpose and mission is to proselytize and highlight the primacy of sin. Only one agency in my sample, Redemption Ministries, prioritized proselytization in this way to combat homelessness.

In order to find the people in my sample, I used my previous knowledge of the local McLean County community of homeless shelters. Once I located my first informant who agreed to an interview, I then asked her what other service providers are part of her formal and informal network. This allowed me to snowball from her and find more informants. I continued this process until I had 11 interviews, which I found to be sufficient to hear the different voices of these service providers and how they were making sense of the State budget impasse.

I obtained IRB approval and was able to go out into the field. I used both email and telephone calls to recruit my informants. In almost all cases, interviews were conducted on site at the agency in their personal office. In only one interview was there another staff member present. This was due to limitations of space in their agency. I gained the consent of the person I was interviewing that it was okay that another person was there as well as the other staff person who at one point in the interview contributed verbally. Another interview took place at an informant's home for his convenience. In every interview I had an interview guide with my predetermined set of questions I wanted to ask (see Appendix A). Because I was following a semi-structured approach, I had the flexibility as a researcher to follow my informants in telling their story, while also being attentive to making sure particular questions were asked. Once the informants read and understood what my study was about they signed an informed consent form, and we both received a copy (see Appendix B). This form explained that I would do my best to maintain their confidentiality vis-à-vis the use of pseudonyms for their names as well as the names of the agencies.

From the time I spoke with each informant, whether through email or phone call, I was trying to establish rapport. Considering that my study took an ethnographic and participatory action research perspective, I was continuously gaining rapport with all of my informants and allowed myself to be open and accessible to them. As is standard for interviews, there were many times when after an interview was completed our conversation continued. It was often an opportunity for them to ask me questions and for me to share with them.

All interviews were digitally recorded to allow me to transcribe the interview material at a later time. This allowed me to be more attentive and responsive to what my informants said. My shortest interview was 52 minutes while my longest was 1 hour and 47 minutes. In total, I had 14 hours and 35 minutes of audio file data across my 11 interviews. This produced 330 pages of transcripts. Once my transcripts were completed, I created memo cover sheets for each interview that contained the important aspects of the interview, particularly parts that bore most directly on my research questions. Then I open-coded (also called line-by-line coding) every interview, staying close to the data, in order to continue to make sense of each interview. Open coding also allowed me to see new aspects or lines of inquiry in the data, more inductively, that could have been missed had I used only memo notes or followed a more predetermined coding schema. Using these initial codes, and memo notes, I was able to create new codes or consolidate others. In this process I was able to identify themes that I felt best capture and describe the data I had obtained.

Analysis

It is important to note that, during the data gathering process, I was able to conduct some informal analysis. Put simply, data collection and data analysis are not separate, linear stages of the research process. What I mean by this is that as I completed each interview I was able to take with me new things I learned and apply that new knowledge to subsequent interviews – it was a recursive process.

The codes and memos I created came about through analytic induction; it is a perspective used by grounded theorists which states that how we code should come directly from the data, not preexisting literature (Rubin and Rubin 2012). While no one is a tabula rasa, using this perspective can help the investigator stay open and find new insights (Charmaz 2006). In every interview, I see the informant as their own theorist about the work they do and the experiences they discuss with me and how it can all make sense in light of my own theoretical perspectives. I pull my arguments from the data and see how certain findings may be similar across informants or whether or not something is anomalous and contradictory.

The conclusions that I draw from the data can be used in several ways. On one hand, I will be able to make a nuanced sociological argument about the work these people do in an increasingly neoliberal world. On the other hand, my project as a whole can be useful directly for those who participated in the study. The spirit of participatory action research attempts to push toward action from the new understandings that have come from the study. In making this meaningful to them, I emailed all of my informants a copy of their transcript for their own personal use and to see if they would like to add anything else that was not mentioned during the time of the interview. I also offered to share my findings with them if that was something that was of interest to them. While it may not be possible to have all of the elements of the ideal study that follows the tenets of participatory action research, it is possible to try to make sure that both the researcher and the informants benefited from the study and that we can all make greater sense of state divestment for human social services and continue this dialogue. My hope is that through the analysis of my data, my conclusions can help accomplish this.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

This first part will stay close to the data by focusing on what was said in response to my interview guide. Additionally, I will take codes I created that are relevant to help show the perspectives of my informants on a range of issues. This will make it more descriptive. I will then give my own observations of the data that go beyond what was said in order to theorize how my findings make sense with previous literature.

Informants and Their Places of Work

I would like to briefly describe the informants and the agencies in my sample. This provides a structural account that will be useful in orienting the responses that will be presented below.

General information about my sample of informants is found in *Table 1*. All informants were given pseudonyms to protect their identity. This overview shows how long they have worked in social services, their educational background, their gender, as well as the position they have within their organization. Length of time working and the position they occupy in their agency's hierarchy are particularly important. This shows how much influence they have on programming and the direction of the agency (i.e., position) as well as their experience and exposure to this line of work (i.e., length of time working).

Of the people I interviewed there were five women and six men across seven agencies. Racially, my sample was white apart from one informant who was African American. This makes a racial discrepancy between staff and the people who are being served. I have several reasons to believe this ratio mirrors broader patterns in this geographic area. Many people

Table 1. Sample Information

Agency (Pseudonyms)	Individual (Pseudonyms)	Gender	Job Position	Tenure in Current Position	Tenure in Human Social Services	Formal Education
New Life Ministries	Lori Mathis	Female	CEO	9 years	40+ years	Master's in Social Work and licensed clinical social worker
Grace United	Melinda Ellis	Female	Social Service Director	9 months	5 years	Master's in Human Services and Undergrad in Justice Studies
	Alan Hopkins	Male	Tri-County Social Services Director	1 year	15-20 years	Bachelor's in Criminal Justice
Early Journeys	Jimmie Elliott	Male	Executive Director	44 years	44 years	Master's in Sociology and Undergrad in Anthropology/Sociology
Faith Village	Jacquelyn Green	Female	Executive Director	8.5 years	Undisclosed	Some college (human services classes)
Second Chance Living	Diane Rowe	Female	Family Self Sufficiency Grant Manager	22 years	25 years	Bachelor's in Social Work and Licensed social worker
Family Community Center	Marcia Klein	Female	Quality Coordinator	3 years	29 years	Master's of Psychology and Bachelor's of Psychology and Licensed Child Welfare Specialist in IL
Redemption Ministries	Leroy Harrington	Male	Executive Director	9 months	9 months	Bachelor's in Biblical Studies and Biblical Languages
	Brett Martin	Male	Director (Work Program)	28 years	30 years	Various ministry courses
	Frank Craig	Male	Director (Emergency Shelter)	16 years	25 years	Some College courses and Bible Study from a Bible Institute
	Edgar Simmons	Male	Assistant Director (Emergency Shelter)	3 years	7 years	Bachelor's in Human Interaction and Expression

experiencing homelessness in the area are African American and experience homelessness at a higher rate than their white counterparts (HUD 2019). Many staff in the area, as observed by my personal experiences working within this network of providers currently, are white. At least for the central Illinois area, many people who are providing the services are not of the same racial or ethnic background as many of the service recipients. This could contribute to a possibility to perpetuate narrow or distorted typifications of the clients being served.

When we try to make sense of agencies and how they interact in the ecology of providers, as well as respond to the impasse, it is important to be cognizant of their sources of income. *Table 2* shows a breakdown of the type of money (grants from the government vs private donations) each agency in my sample receives. This is very important in determining the provision of services, reporting requirements, and various rules that are expected to be followed.

Table 2. Primary Money Sources

Agency	**State Grant**	**Federal Grant**	**Private Donations**
New Life Ministries			x
Grace United	x	x	x
Early Journeys	x	x	x
Faith Village			x
Second Chance Living		x	
Family Community Center	x	x	x

Accordingly, the agencies in my sample had a wide range of services, which are summarized in *Table 3*. Many of the services, as to be expected, are guided by the various funding streams the agency has available to them; some of which are expected to be monitored for outcome-based accountability measures. Closely connected to the types of services offered are the theories and typifications my informants hold about poverty and homelessness. A summarization of these are found in *Table 4*. While structural accounts are provided as causes, rarely do providers find ways to act on those perspectives in their day-to-day work.

Table 3. Services of Agencies

Agency	Services
New Life Ministries	Emergency Shelter; Case Management for shelter guests; Food (shelter and community); Food Co-op; Clothing; Mobile Health Clinic; Classes (faith, finances); thrift store
Grace United	Emergency Shelter; Case Management for shelter guests; Jobs Program; Clothing Closet; Food
Early Journeys	Early and Prevention work in community and schools; Temporary Emergency Shelter; Host Families; Street Outreach; Transitional Housing; Pregnancy Services; Case Management
Faith Village	Hispanic Outreach; Senior Program; Afterschool Program
Second Chance Living	Low-income Housing; Case Management.
Family Community Center	Adoption; Foster Parenting; Support Workers for new families; School for children with disabilities (cognitive or emotional); Autism programs; Vocational Education Training (Jr./Sr. HS work program with business partnerships in community).
Redemption Ministries	Emergency Shelter (shelter, food, clothing, informal case management); Work Live-in Program (pallet, forklift industry, Biblical counseling); Pregnancy Center

Table 4. Perspectives on Poverty & Homelessness

Agency	Individual	Causes	Comments
New Life Ministries	Lori Mathis	Employment Issues; Lack of Affordable Housing; Domestic Violence; Disabilities; Evictions	Disconnect between wages paid and cost of housing
Grace United	Melinda Ellis	Intergenerational Poverty; Mental Illness; Substance Abuse; Trauma History; Lack of Income; Disability; Natural Disaster; Life Style; Lack of Education; Lack of Coping skills	Homelessness could be caused by almost anything.
	Alan Hopkins	Mental Illness; Substance Abuse; Lack of Affordable Housing; Poor Credit; Criminal Records; Poor Social Skills; Poor Landlord History; Lack of Education; Lack of Skills for Jobs; Domestic Violence; Intergenerational Poverty; Poor Choices	Mindset change and change of bad environment is necessary to exit homelessness.
Early Journeys	Jimmie Elliott	Trauma; Unequal Education; Low Minimum Wage; Lack of Affordable Housing; Political Disagreement on How to Address Homelessness; Institutional Racism	Difference in causes between youth and adult homelessness.
Faith Village	Jacquelyn Green	Cyclical Poverty; Loss of Jobs; Personal Choice; Ostrasized from Family	Every individual has their own story for why they are homeless or poor.
Second Chance Living	Diane Rowe	Generational; Absence of Fathers; Broken Families; Low Self-Esteem; Domestic Violence; Struggles with Children; Sexual Assault; Childhood Traumas	Generational issues and absence of fathers are huge factors on homelessness.
Family Community Center	Marcia Klein	Lack of Affordable Housing; Employment Issues; Costs of Living are Up; Lower Levels of Education; High Income Inequality	Politicians do not understand poverty because they have not experienced it or they have forgotten what it's like to struggle.
Redemption Ministries	Leroy Harrington	Spiritual Reasons; Educational Reasons; Employment Reasons; Abuse; Addictive Behaviors	Complex set of reasons lead to homelessness. Fixing homelessness doesn't fix the person. God is the solution.
	Brett Martin	Sin; Substance Abuse; Concerned with Human Acceptance, not God; Family Discord	Sin is primary reason for poverty and homelessness.
	Frank Craig	Entitlement Society; Not Interested in Working; Employment Issues; Divorce; PTSD with Veterans; Transience	Only a small percentage 'fall on hard times.' There is an entitlement society that creates dependency on social services.
	Edgar Simmons	Stranded; Poor Choices; Abuse; Mental Health; Substance Abuse; No Father in Family; Release from Prison; Being with the Wrong Guy (for women)	All causes of homelessness are related to Sin. Mainly due to poor choices, but he mentions the environment lends itself for people to make bad choices.

Organizational Characteristics

The organizational context in which my informants work influence how they make sense of the budget impasse and state divestment. This allowed me to situate what my informants said, and theorized, about funding issues, the Illinois State budget impasse, politics, and advocacy for the homeless.

How Would You Describe Your Central Roles and Responsibilities in This Position?

Each of these administrators have central roles and responsibilities that they must adhere to in order to make sure the agency is operating smoothly. These responsibilities reflect the needs of the organization and how they choose how they operate on a daily basis.

For the top-level administrators, they have the most contact with their Board of Directors, the governing body of the agency. The administrators have to ensure the policies and practices of the agency are correctly reflecting what the Board decides. This means carrying out the mission statement for the agency. Mission statements tend to be broad goals or objectives that the agency works toward.

Relatedly, by virtue of their position, most of these administrators increasingly worry about money related issues: having a balanced budget, making sure expenses do not exceed the budget, grant writing, securing donations, working with funders, keeping funding coming in, and demonstrating that the agency is responsible with the funds they are given. In other words, fiduciary concerns take up a lot of their time. The trend towards a focus on finance makes sense given the level of state divestment from human social services and the Illinois State budget impasse. Alan, an upper level administrator from a larger social service organization, explained a standard example of how time is spent:

> But there always seems to be something due in a week for me. I spend a lot of my time- a lot of my time reporting on grants, writing grants, collecting data, and only on occasion

> am I going to be managing staff. So I have a couple of other coordinators and directors that will manage those front line staff that operate the shelters. And work more with the budget, I work more with the finance department, I work more with senior leadership…to create a program desire or cultivate a new program. I think now it's 10 different grants that I have my fingers in that I have to either write or report and those systems seem to change.

Alan is mired in having to report on the status of several grants. The constant focus is determining the current status of the budget and how grants will be fully spent down. While it was not mentioned in our interview, many grants operate on a reimbursement basis. Agencies must incur expenses and then request to be reimbursed for the work that they have done. In order to be reimbursed, documentation is required to demonstrate that funds were spent on eligible expenses and that the regulations of those grants are being followed in terms of record keeping requirements (e.g., what kinds of documentation is required, how long to keep records). These tasks have become necessary to ensure cashflow for the organization.

While Alan has a larger organizational structure to allow him not to work directly with clients or staff too often, smaller agencies typically get exposure to both. Jacquelyn presents a fairly standard response for smaller agencies:

> As Executive Director it's to oversee the programs, the day-to-day operations, networking with other agencies, looking for funding, keeping funding coming in that we already have, and a support to the staff.

Administrators like Jacquelyn, from smaller agencies, are in the daily grind with their other support staff such as case managers and shelter aides. However, the emphasis still lies in funding issues as well as trying to collaborate with other agencies locally.

Despite a focus on money, most administrators mentioned the responsibility to provide the best services they can to service recipients. They also expressed the need to be supportive for staff and hold staff accountable in making sure they treated clients correctly.

Informants from Grace United, Early Journeys, Second Chance Living, and Faith Village all mentioned networking as an explicit aspect of their responsibilities to their agency. This comes out of the recognition that as a single agency with limited funds, typically in competition for funds with other agencies, there is a need to work with others. Jacquelyn from Faith Village explains the need to collaborate as part of her job: “And I’m sure there’s ways to collaborate that we haven’t even thought of yet. And that’s what we’re- it’s the name of the game now because we’re all fighting for the same money.”

Other responsibilities include maintaining licensing standards in order to receive some state or federal resources. Marcia from Family Community Center explains: “I do a lot of data analysis. I help [staff] work on quality improvement projects, action plans, helping them make sure we stay in compliance with licensing standards, accreditation standards, because we are accredited by 4 different outside bodies to do the work that we all do here at Family Community Center.” For this agency, Marcia helps them maintain their good standing with governmental bodies that give them funding. Without proper accreditation, funding will be at risk. By following the bureaucratic accountability measures to maintain their licensure, they are altering the structure of their program to conform with the standards of these various associations. This is part of the process of institutional isomorphic where guidelines to maintain funding are used to create conformity among agencies. This creates additional pressures on the agency to make sure staff are compliant with standards in order to maintain their accreditation, which acts as their gateway to funding sources.

Most agencies in my sample had Christian values reflected in the mission statement of their organization in one way or another. One agency in particular, Redemption Ministries, understood religion as being more integral than the rest. The assistant director, Edgar, of the emergency shelter for Redemption Ministries states:

> I'm a follower of Jesus Christ. And my responsibility is to serve him. Now the great thing about that is that overflows into serving man. And so I'm called to love and disciple others. And that's my main focus. That's my main responsibility. But as far as the social work, my responsibility is to treat every man with dignity and respect. When they come to the door, we don't want them to feel homeless. We don't want them to feel marginalized. We want them to feel loved and welcomed. So, my main responsibility is making sure that's done and done properly.

Edgar did more direct service. These more expansive principles (i.e., being a follower of Jesus Christ) help people to avoid burn-out even if or when agency efficacy is low. Even for the top administrator for the agency, Leroy, religion influenced how he viewed his job. He conjoined his ideas of religion and business together to make sense of what is important for the role he has for the agency:

> Yeah, definitely. I mean obviously from just a business standpoint this is a staff of over 40 people with a budget of approximately 3 million dollars. So it is- there is a lot of business aspects to it. Budgeting and marketing, promotion. So there's a lot of corollaries to that. Certainly just management, business management in general. So it's sort of a- we say it's a- I call it 'busintry.' There's a lot of business aspects to it and a lot of ministry aspects to it.

These range of central aspects and responsibilities are due in part to the particular role itself and what the needs are of the agency. The roles my informants had helped them achieve the central goals of the agency they worked for and to continually make sense of work in the social service sector.

How Would You Describe the Central Goals of Your Agency?

Most agencies have broader goals that are more difficult to measure as well as practical ones that are more easily enumerated. The former are typically elaborated in their mission statement. For example, in my sample these tend to be about hope, love, saving people, creating self-sufficiency and independence, providing affordable housing, and building community.

Several of the agencies also discuss how faith and religion inspire the work that they do. Alternatively, practical goals are about shelter, food, and clothing.

For the shelters in particular, Melinda Ellis of Grace United has a representative point of view about the major goals they have:

> Our goal is to provide care for our clients that are homeless. We want to make sure that they are provided with dignity and respect. And during that process we are looking at ways to help them to be independent, to be sustainable in the future whether it's helping them with employment services or helping them become stabilized with mental health services, getting income through Social Security/Disability. So just making sure that we help them transition them from homelessness into housing.

On the one hand, there is a drive to make sure service recipients are treated with respect and not discriminated against. While certain rules are in place that determine who gets to receive services, the goal is that once they enter the shelter and receive services there is an emphasis on treating people right. On the other hand, there is a push to make people independent and sustainable. The agencies in my sample were all, in one way or another, trying to disrupt the episodes and cycles of poverty and homelessness. Given that they cannot address the structural causes of homelessness, they focus on altering individual behavior, which becomes reflected in organizational agendas. Accordingly, they want to try to get people to a point where they do not need services anymore. From their perspective, in order to accomplish that people need to acquire skills of self-sufficiency and independence. Despite that, all of the agencies recognize that moving from homelessness to being housed is not easy and can take a long time with many setbacks.

Other agencies, such as Second Chance Living, a housing authority, also place emphasis on developing self-sufficiency skills for the residents there. Even though many residents are staying several years, there is a push to get them to be able to function at home, which requires the ability to budget, acquire income, and develop and complete goals. For Second Chance

Living in particular, the requirement for self-sufficiency skill training is mandated by the HUD funding they receive. For other agencies, particularly those without state or federal funds, they have adopted the mindset to push for those skills as the gateway out of homelessness and poverty.

While it is important for agencies to know what their goals are, it is equally important to know what the agency can no longer do. Jacquelyn of Faith Village puts it this way:

> …we just in the last few months we have narrowed our focus on what we are doing. Partially because of funding, but then we've also realized we can't be everything to everybody and we can't do everything real well, especially with a small place. Let's do what we do well and keep doing it and try to get better at it each day.

When funding issues arise, agencies have to decide what their strongest services are and focus on those while discontinuing or putting less focus and money on other services. In this case, Faith Village discontinued their food pantry to lend their support to another agency that funs a pantry: Grace United. When organizations reduce their services, not only do other organizations provide those former services but they also control how they make sense of eligibility requirements. In an increasingly neoliberal landscape where personal responsibility is a major ideological tenet, when agencies are concerned about 'duplicating services' they abdicate their ability to challenge how services are provided. In other words, while the food pantry at Faith Village was open, accessible, and not bound by specific eligibility and reporting requirements, the new agency providing the service could very well be pressured into enforcing stricter eligibility requirements because of their reporting duties. There will also be an increase in demand as there are fewer places to get free food. Agencies have to be able to manage people that come by for help and this ultimately leads to stricter eligibility requirements. The constriction of services at an agency has ripple effects within an ecology of social services. Efforts to 'deduplicate' services may have unintended consequences that make it more likely for agencies to respond in neoliberal ways.

Unlike other agencies, the emergency shelter of Redemption Ministries has a major goal of leading their shelter guests to come to learn about Jesus Christ and that he will lead them to salvation both in a spiritual sense, but also in a material sense in their present lives. Frank Craig explains.

> Central goal is to make sure everybody that comes in contact with us knows that Jesus loves them and that we believe he is the way to eternal life as well as a better life here on Earth. And he will help these men through skills and decision making and confidence that they need in order to change the decisions that they've made in their life to have a better life, actually have a life outside here. To get out of poverty.

For the workers of Redemption Ministries, faith and following Christ will help individuals get out of homelessness and poverty. Faith is also what helps maintain the very existence of the entire organization as their executive director points out: "Now how we do that is the fact it's a great ministry opportunity to be able to do that because we can't provide anything- we're dependent on God to show up for the provision of food and funds and anything like that. So that's part of how we get to do that." From their point of view, God allows them to do the work they do. Their perception of God also allows the members of the agency to mitigate anxieties related to uncertainty of funding due to cutbacks and other crises. Neoliberalism may be altering the social service landscape, but religion helps the staff at the agency make sense of their place in the social service ecosystem. If they continue to get funding, that is God's will. If they continue to exist, then the work they are doing is justified and validated.

At first glance, it appears that having a central goal of having clients come to Christ is at odds with neoliberal doctrine. After all, many staff express the need for personal connection with clients and to care for them. But that is in order to foster that connection to Christ. Given their Christian ideology focuses on personal responsibility, 'coming to Christ' is a method to have clients comply with the expectations of getting out of poverty on their own. It allows clients to gain human capital and learn how to ‘make good decisions’ in life. By itself, neoliberal doctrine does not leave room to adequately care for clients and their needs. Engaging in this Christian perspective serves as a buffer, allowing them to believe that the work that they do and all the expectations that they place on clients is still after all rooted in caring. However, their method of caring has unintended consequences.

The clients who are most self-sufficient end up getting served and helped the most because they are easy success stories. The “typical homeless guy from 30 years ago,” according to Edgar Simmons, was that they were “the guys that are easy to help because they’re willing to help themselves.” He laments that is no longer the case for their standard clients. Today, they see more “nitty gritty” types of clients who present with more barriers and problems. The perspective of Redemption Ministries unintentionally leaves the most vulnerable out in the cold.

To What Extent Do You Feel You Are Meeting These Goals?

All agencies stated that to some degree they were meeting their goals that they had described to me. However, as Lori of New Life Ministries points out, how you measure your goals will determine how you are able to see if you are accomplishing them. Given that their funding is private, they are able to create their own measurements for their goals they have created. Other agencies that have grants have to follow the guidelines and measurement standards created from afar. Their private funding allows them to have more autonomy to determine what to measure and how to measure it. Despite that, they still have to convince their funders that their agency is competent and worth the donation. She provides an example that to many who lack the experience and knowledge of homeless services may consider an example of not meeting their goals: “So for instance, if somebody comes here seeking shelter and they come back again, and they come back again, and they come back again. You might think that we are not achieving our goals. That doesn't mean we haven't helped them along their journey. Even if they have needed to use our services again. Yeah, I believe we are meeting our goals." Through this example, we learn that understanding 'success' in homeless services is complicated and not readily apparent.

Alan from Grace United echoed her sentiments. He gives the example of a homeless man who reported to him that he was two days sober from alcohol. From the standpoint of organizational goals, this is a small feat and not sufficient evidence to funders that goals are being met. However, from the perspective of that man, he was successful because of the help he was getting from the services of that organization. These high-level administrators, most of whom have done the front-line work as well, can recognize small successes that the public or those not familiar with their work, may not. This is a disconnect between homeless service providers and the public or various funding organizations that do not engage in direct service with people who experience homelessness. This means that the public or funding organizations can impose unrealistic expectations on providers, especially if they are using benchmarks from New Public Management.

How one defines success is a crucial point. Alan from Grace United points out that terms of success imposed on you, mainly due to funding source, are jeopardized by external factors such as the availability of affordable housing.

> If you want to define how successful you are, that depends on how you define success. Are you moving people into positive housing placement? Yes, we're doing that. Are you moving people into permanent housing? Yes, we're doing that. But it's not going to be as great a percentage because the permanent housing or permanent supportive housing options aren't there. They're not, there isn't enough. Right? There's a lack of affordable housing. And the folks we serve don't make enough to afford those homes.

While the organization of Grace United is moving in a positive direction, if there are certain quotas imposed on them externally, but the environment does not have the resources to support the success of their goals, then they fall short of their goals. New Public Management looks at the efficacy of individual agencies to provide results. Structural perspectives that look toward the external environment are not prioritized here. If an agency cannot produce desired results, then the organization is not functional or seen as a good investment of limited resources.

Jimmie from Early Journeys states they are serving their goals, but gives the caveat that this is true only for those whom they are able to serve. This means that because of lack of funding for their programs and the staff to implement them that the program cannot meet the demand for services.

> Well, we're meeting the goals just fine for those youth we're able to serve…. For the homeless youth, we try to assist everyone we become aware of. But our resources are limited. For youth that we actually help get into apartments, and help subsidize and give them life skills classes, and help them transition, at any point in time right now we probably have about 15 youth that we actually have in the apartments. And probably theoretically, well not theoretically, we can probably house 75 if we had the resources.

In no small terms funding is the major impediment to them helping serve young people in need of housing. This predicament creates a catch-22: agencies need more funding to create the desired results of funders, but agencies need to show they can produce results before funders will increase funding for those projects.

For most agencies, outcomes and measure requirements mean that agencies must track services at a variety of levels. Ideally, those numbers show front-line staff and administrators that they are indeed being successful. In real time they can see how much of a service is being utilized or underutilized. Based on my data, upper-level management from agencies tend to have an optimistic view toward reporting requirements. However, this perspective demonstrates two things. First, because reporting is required, the necessity of reporting becomes rationalized and accepted. Second, in a perfect world, tracking and various measurements of outcomes can be used to determine how well something is working. However, given the constraints of time, and lack of staff, reporting is mainly done to satisfy funders and is not used as much to inform front-line staff of the intricacies of 'what is working or not.'

Most agencies that deal with the homeless must report into what is called Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Even agencies that do not receive HUD funding can participate in reporting their services to the local Continuum of Care's selected HMIS system. Each CoC has a vendor they work with who maintains the database. All client interactions must be recorded in the database because 'if it is not recorded it did not happen.' The forms and questions are predetermined by HUD. This database offers agencies a lot of information. Goal displacement is evident here. The collection of data and focus on data quality become the desired ends and what is important because it is what allows agencies to continue their funding. This is not to say that data is not used to inform how well a system is working or how well an individual agency is performing. However, lack of time prevents agencies from utilizes the vast troves of data and they are prevented from determining what data they should be collecting in the first place. The data collected and required by HUD does little to determine quality of services (i.e., how well providers connect with people), but instead focus on other aspects (e.g., demographics, length of time homeless, successful exits to housing, number of returns to homelessness). HUD's emphasis on what data is collected compels agencies to value those measurements and pushes them to 'improve those metrics.' In order to maintain those funding sources, which neoliberalism pushes agencies to do given the scarcity of opportunities, they collect that data and accept it regardless of whether or not they agree with it.

Other informants, like Marcia from Family Community Center, know they are meeting their goals when they pass their accreditation standards "with flying colors" as well as receive positive feedback from the State. This means more contracts from the State, as well as the State recommending other agencies go to them for training. Those external cues are important because they rely on them for continued funding.

The Family Community Center, as with many other agencies, also know they are doing well with their goals with positive feedback internally. They provide trainings and support their staff continuously. Melinda from Grace United points out that important feedback comes from the open communication they have with the clients they serve themselves. This is done through case management and exit surveys from their program, as well as the many unsolicited opinions from those who serve, both negative and positive.

To some extent, some agencies report that the success of a program is predicated on the choices their clients make. Those who work directly with the clients are not able to coerce them to follow through on case management or stay in the shelter to benefit from their programs. Once people are sent off into the community for referrals, it is up to the service recipient to follow through unless the referring agency is able to send staff with them or provide transportation, both of which are often difficult to provide. One agency in particular, Redemption Ministries, placed the most emphasis on choice of the service recipient. For them, it is a matter of if "they're willing to accept the help" they are offered. The way they see it, the program is only as successful as the service recipients' ability to recognize the help being offered. Even more, since their agency's first goal is to show service recipients the way of Jesus Christ, it's up to God to determine how people change from a life of sin: "I can't make them receive it. And therefore, I can't make them change. Neither can anyone else. Neither can the program. It's God's business to change them." Therefore, the goal of the agency is to present the opportunity and then it's up to the individual whether or not they will adhere to the rules of the program.

This perspective places a lot of emphasis on the individual choices and responsibility of the clients being served, an important tenet of neoliberalism. The problem is that people experiencing homelessness and abject poverty are in a compromised position to make good decisions and generally lack the resources to continue to make good decisions if they present themselves. This outlook does not highlight the myriad ways that programs, and the system of programs available, impacts and influences the 'texture of street life.' Placing responsibility onto the vulnerable population they serve accomplishes two main things. First, it displaces feelings of sadness and burnout by staff who, despite all their good intentions and efforts, are not able to 'help people' in the ways that they wished they could. Staff who enter this field have a strong desire to help people. It is a common saying in the social work field that 'you cannot save everyone.' These pithy sayings allow staff and managers to rationalize their program's and system's inability to resolve the many problems experienced by the client. Second, it pushes agencies to think about programming that highlights how they might get clients to be self-sufficient and productive. That in and of itself is not controversial or a problem, but what it does is create barriers for people that have a greater severity of problems and they become systematically excluded from the availability of services.

Edgar Simmons from Redemption Ministries also believes that the success of their agency is tied to the participation of people in the church in the local community. Redemption Ministries needs the monetary donations as well as the time spent volunteering. Since building relationships is a major part of their overriding goal, both building a relationship with people and with God, this agency tries to seek out more from the local churches:

> So that's where I think the church can do better. I think they've done a great job. I mean, if you look throughout history, the church has been the driving force behind the social services. Now the government got involved, and it's turned into a great big bureaucratic mess. But when you've had the church involved, they've had very good success….

This statement reflects the neoliberal critique of government. Not only is higher church participation in helping people get out of homelessness and poverty necessary, but Edgar believes that in order to be successful one must get the government out of social services. He uses historical precedent to make his point. From his point of view, the government is an impediment to successfully accomplishing their goals. Given that the government does not valorize religious approaches to assisting people, or mandate that clients engage with chapel or discipleship, this impacts the type of financial assistance that is available to organizations like Redemption Ministries. In this case, in order to stay true to their organization's goals they cannot take on government grants, or other grants that operate in similar ways, because it would cause a fundamental shift in how they believe people need and desire help. Therefore, they must rely on private donations and the support network of churches to assist them in being successful in their mission. When neoliberalism cuts back on social service funding, and preventing certain religious organizations from implementing certain policies, it gives a better context for why agencies like Redemption Ministries have so much distrust for the government.

What Are Some Barriers for You Attaining Your Goals?

Intimately tied to the success of the agency, as has been alluded to already, are the barriers that these agencies face in trying to fulfill their goals. For many of them, the number one barrier to be successful in their goals is funding. This has been the trend of state divestment from human social services for decades during the period of neoliberalism. Jimmie from Early Journeys sums it up: "Well, there's a lot of barriers, right, I'd say funding is a really big one. It's probably the number one. In order to assist young people or homeless, they have to have housing, they have to have some resources, they have to have food, and somebody has to pay for that." A context of precarious funding makes it difficult for agencies to plan for the future and to know to what extent, if at all, the kinds of services they can provide for the community.

Redemption Ministries views the biggest barrier differently. While they also mention the perennial problem of funding dilemmas, their biggest barriers for people to be successful in their program is sin[1]. It is not until someone comes to God that the issues in people's lives begin to change in a positive way. Until that point, change in individual attitudes and choices will not happen. Brett Martin, the director of the work live-in program summarizes that individuals who resist their programming and are not compliant with the work and learning requirements, or who do not accept the ministry of the gospel of Christ, pose the biggest problems for the success of their programs. "[Those are] the biggest barrier[s] there are besides Satan himself. He's in control of that too." He also underscored that people are born with sin and make bad choices in life. Satan tempts. But it is God that will set someone straight and go out of homelessness and poverty. Clearly, religion is the cognitive framework by which the administrators and others at Redemption Ministries make sense of all of the work that they do. While other agencies also incorporate Christian values into their mission statements and how they run their organization, Redemption Ministries takes a particular stance that makes them stand apart from the rest of the agencies I spoke with.

Seemingly a departure from the more Biblical and religious perspective on the barriers that face the people they serve, several people from Redemption Ministries spoke on the issue of mental illness. The perspectives of staff at each agency are complex. Every other agency mentioned mental illness as well. Mental illness, especially when unmedicated, makes shelter life difficult. It makes trying to find or stay in housing difficult. Depending on the nature and severity of the illness, almost all functionality, at least in the terms set forth by most of these agencies to learn to be self-sufficient and gain independence from services, is gone. Since the current mental health infrastructure is inadequately funded, these folks are far more likely to end up on the streets and stay on them or become enmeshed in the criminal justice system.

Other types of barriers come from afar. Jimmie Elliot of Early Journeys said that HUD does not understand youth. Federal typifications of the homeless reflect a limitation of current policy. Jimmie explains that HUD could understand adults, since most people experiencing homelessness are adult men, but the specificities of youth homelessness are not captured in HUD policies. For example, youth typically need a lot of support services even once they get into housing. Rapid Re-Housing and other similar programs lack those elements. This means that even when youth may make it into housing, because they lack the skills to be successful with budgeting, maintaining their apartment, getting food, or getting a job, they can become evicted and be back out on the street.

As mentioned earlier, a major barrier for organizations that help the homeless is an external one: the lack of affordable housing. Without affordable housing, either through the market or through programs paid for by HUD, these agencies cannot permanently and stably house people. If local, affordable housing options are full, yet the demand is high, these agencies can do nothing. Given that almost all of the informants discussed the lack of affordable housing as a major problem related to their work shows that management is able to recognize both structural and individual level reasons for the cause of homelessness. However, since these agencies lack control over the stock and price of housing, it makes sense that they would turn to more individual level approaches like case management that emphasizes the need for self-sufficiency.

Edgar Simmons of Redemption Ministries states that a major barrier to the success of the organization he works for is the government itself and its corresponding bureaucracy:

> I think that the bureaucracy of the whole social services agency's making things so difficult for people to get the help that they need. There's so many hoops they have to jump through, and then not holding that person responsible.

It's not clear whether Edgar meant that strictly government agencies (e.g., food stamps or Medicaid) are the issue, or whether he means social service agencies that receive contracts from the state to perform those services. Regardless, both have the bureaucracy that Edgar is referring to. There are guidelines, sometimes by funding sources like HUD or other governmental agencies, that dictate who can be served and how. With the increase in accountability measures for social service providers using tax-funded money, the documentation standards can become a barrier when certain agencies that have more flexibility, Redemption Ministries are referring their people out for other kinds of services. These schemes of accountability created dysfunctional fragmentation of services.

Edgar Simmons was not the only person to speak on the excesses of bureaucracy in the work that they do. Marcia Klein from the Family Community Center discussed this as a challenge to the work they do:

> Another barrier, which is always going to happen and always be there, is we have to focus so much on paperwork and documentation it takes away from that in-person, really impactful contact that you need to be having with your clients. When you take a look at what we do, 70% of that time is paperwork [and] 30% is with the clients. So to me I feel like that's taking away a lot of the good stuff that the workers could be doing instead of just [being] so worried about making sure I do all the correct reports, I do all the ACRs, I do all these meetings, and document correctly. I feel like there's some issues with that and they always talked about, "We'll reduce paperwork, we'll reduce paperwork." And it just continues to grow!

When there are limited staff for several people who need services, and a majority of the time is spent on paperwork, then the service recipient is the one missing out. That would have been time for staff to get to know the service recipient as a person, not a transaction and compilation of paperwork.

Edgar Simmons also explained a more general problem that has entered the minds of many of the people looking to receive services. He calls it an entitlement society: “I think we've created an entitlement society. And now you have a lot of people think they're entitled to something they never earned to begin with.” From his point of view, especially as an assistant director who does a lot of direct service and helps the director with the more administrative aspects, certain men who come to the shelter act entitled. This presents a problem for their overarching goal of leading them to God and to transform the men into Christian men. The expression of an ‘entitlement society’ suggests that clients must earn the services in order to benefit for them. Alternatively, as Hasenfeld and Garrow (2012) point out, the provision of these services is a social right guaranteed by the government to protect the most vulnerable (or at least it ought to be). However, the privatization of social services has led to many different ways in which service can be delivered. In this case, Redemption Ministries does not get any government funding, and arguably it is not their responsibility to guarantee the social right of shelter: they will provide the service to those that work towards self-sufficiency and that do not create too much trouble.

What Are the Services That This Organization Provides?

Emergency shelters are the major organization that provide direct services to the homeless. They provide temporary lodging for adults or families with children. They ensure that people have a primary night-time residence for a certain period of time (e.g., 8 weeks for Grace United), which often can be extended based on the decision of staff. At the very least, breakfast and dinner (and many times lunch) is provided at these shelters for those who stay there.

Sometimes the street homeless can come in at meal times as well. Showers and other hygiene issues are addressed during their stay at the shelter. Many shelters also assist with trying to provide clothing as well. Case management is a crucial aspect of the shelter stay because it allows staff to work one-on-one with shelter residents. In case management, barriers to housing and sources of income are addressed, as well as healthcare issues or other matters, with the ultimate goal of getting people housed and employed. All the homeless shelters in my sample provided these kinds of services in one way or another. In the case of Redemption Ministries, they provided case management informally. However, they were just in the process of creating a formal, paid position to have a case manager to ensure this service was being provided to the men at their shelter.

In order to enter the shelter, one has to meet the rules for eligibility. One basic feature of eligibility is the type of household they take in. For example, New Life Ministries takes families and individual men or women while Redemption Ministries only takes adult men and Grace United takes adult men and women. Other eligibility requirements impact the ability of people accessing these services. For New Life Ministries, one has to be sober and pass the shelter background check. People must go to the local police department and obtain a clearance card that shows their criminal history to the shelter. Grace United, on the other hand, has fewer barriers to entering, such as not having to be sober, although they also require people to get a clearance card but are more lenient in their admission rules.

While safety is a serious concern for staff and other clients, the requirement of clearance cards from the police force people experiencing homelessness to interact with the police first before they can receive any services. This makes the police department the gateway to services, at least for these particular agencies. In effect, this disregards the fact that clients may have had negative interactions with the police in the past, which may deter them from seeking any help at all. The requirement to go to the police first also gives the impression that the experience of homelessness is a criminal act and that they could potentially be dangerous. This can have negative repercussions for their identities. It can reinforce or reinstate the identity of being a criminal, something which these clients are trying to move beyond. Additionally, if there were active warrants for people they would not seek services at all because they would get arrested on the spot. This entrenches them in experiencing unsheltered homelessness. The requirement of clearance cards, while originating in the need to protect people, has the deleterious effect of preventing people from obtaining valuable help. Although there are no funding rules from afar that stipulate the requirement of clearance cards, it is important to recognize how these two agencies in particular created their own institutional barriers.

In order to get services from places like Second Chance Living, a local housing authority funded by HUD that provides low-income housing, there is an application process and an enormous waitlist. The application process creates a new set of barriers, requiring legal documents of identity (e.g., birth certificate, valid ID, valid driver’s license, or social security card) as well as other kinds of documentation. Application-based services, especially housing authorities, have long waitlists sometimes lasting several years. This clearly shows the high demand for affordable housing and that most applicants are not able to receive those services. Additionally, because of the high demand, this housing authority must be selective and exclusive in deciding who to serve. Because of their HUD funding, this helps guide preferences and rules for deciding how people are selected. However, street-level discretion is also exercised in determining how to pick a few applicants. High demand creates pressures on front-line staff to determine who is most vulnerable and in need of services. And this leaves those that are not the most vulnerable (i.e., those weeded out) to think that they are not perceived as deserving of assistance.

For other kinds of agencies, their services can only be accessed by referral only from another agency. This is in response to a real problem faced by providers on the ground, which is the shear volume of phone calls, assessments, and intakes that come into these agencies. A referral-only based system allows agencies make the most use of their limited time and resources. For example, the Family Community Center has some services that help new young parents that can only be obtained if the people needing the services are already working with another agency.

This underscores the importance of the ecology of the social service sector. In this instance, clients are not able to directly advocate on their own behalf for services. Referrals processes like this allow an agency to reduce the number of clients seeking assistance. The assumption is that the clients in most need are getting the referral and the services. This is because using referrals allows the service delivering agency to know the service recipient qualifies because they have already been working with another agency. It allows agencies to know the need is ‘legitimate.’ However, this process creates additional steps for people that are lacking stability, and in some cases have moderate to severe cognitive disabilities. It is unclear whether those people are accessing these resources. Lastly, this process only solves the time and resources dilemma of one agency. It creates additional work for the referring agency and the clients.

Further removed from agencies that have a direct connection to helping the homeless in explicit ways, there are agencies that are often considered community centers. Their work lies in working with the poor, although they will often work with people who are homeless. These types of agencies provide useful resources that help stave off homelessness by helping low-income children, families, or adults with various issues. Faith Village, for example, has a program to help those who are Latino/a. They provide translation services to assist them with legal issues, navigating other services agencies, and a variety of paperwork that is in English where English is not the native language of the person. Faith Village also provides services to children in the form of afterschool daycare and senior program that allows seniors a place for fellowship and to avoid alienation.

Although not in my sample, substance abuse counseling and rehab agencies, are an important community resource that do not necessarily target the homeless. However, they are used heavily by those experiencing homelessness. This is particularly important in this local area given the requirement of sobriety at New Life Ministries. Even Grace United will require documentation of rehab and a treatment plan regarding one's substance abuse for certain clients that have been banned for breaking the sobriety rules during their shelter stay.

Sometimes receiving services means that work is required by the client. For most shelters in my sample, those who stayed in a shelter had to do some kind of daily chore. This was to help ensure that the living spaces did not fall into ruin. There is not enough staff to also keep the entire shelter clean. The types of chores typically revolve around keeping communal areas clean such as sweeping, mopping, cleaning bathrooms, etc. Over at Redemption Ministries they are lax on chores and it is technically not a requirement of shelter stay:

> We have chores around if they want to help with some chores, we've been doing that. But typically, most guys, after being out there stomping on the streets, you just kind of want to sit down, and veg out, watch TV for a little bit. So they do.

In this situation, Edgar empathizes with the clients, realizing how difficult it is to be out on the street. Chores were also not a requirement for Early Journeys. They provide services and shelter youth with foster homes or hotel stays given that they do not have a physical emergency shelter.

New Life Ministries, on the other hand, has found ways to extend work-for-service in their operations. Under most circumstances[3], service recipients must volunteer a few hours at the food co-op in which they then earn a voucher to receive the service during 'shopping hours.'[4] The CEO explains how she believes the model to be successful and that other organizations should to start using that model as well:

> We encounter a lot of organizations that are interested in our model for the Food Co-op. And we think it is a really terrific model. That it is doing a great job. Because it's not just getting food to people, it's really helping people realize that they have the capability, they have the ability to provide for themselves through their own work.

Similarly, in order to get clothing, service recipients must volunteer time in New Life Ministries' thrift store before receiving a voucher for clothing. The logic is that labor is exchanged for service as opposed to freely giving away certain things. The agency's direction toward work-for-service is seen as innovative internally and by some service recipients. In a promotional video from the website for New Life Ministries, the Chief Operating Officer explains a core principle of their approach in that "through their own efforts, [people can] feed their families." From their perspective, working to earn your food or clothes, or any service, preserves dignity. From the same video, a member of the food co-op (i.e., a service recipient) elaborates that the experience "brings more value to my mind. I worked for this. It wasn't just given to me. I earned it. I feel good about myself when I'm doing something productive." This perspective makes sense culturally in the United States. Working to earn something is part of the American work ethic; we judge ourselves and others judge us on the work we do and therefore work transmits status (Hughes 1984).

New Life Ministries has directly drawn influence from the work of Robert Lupton, whom they brought to the community to speak back in 2015. Lupton's (2011; 2015) seminal works focus on ways to transform the welfare sector and charity as we know it. Essentially, it highlights the need to give a 'hand-up, not a hand-out,' and to avoid creating dependencies in clients on assistance. Lupton's work inspired this shelter to transition their food pantry into a food co-op in order to actualize this ideological perspective, which permeates the organizational culture of this agency. This perspective attempts preserve dignity in people by requiring that clients work for the assistance. Labor exchange is the fundamental element in the provision of services. Explicitly, this perspective is stated to be Christian. However, I argue that the major components of Lupton's perspective is an expression of the most popular neoliberal stance on how social services agencies ought to operate. The major assumption in Lupton's perspective is that the down and out have lost their work ethic and that revitalizing that will allow people to bring themselves out of their problems. If only the work ethic could be restored, then everything else would fall into place. Restoring work ethic in people, in and of itself, is not inherently a bad thing. However, when this perspective is applied to everyone, then the most vulnerable suffer and are excluded from these services.

As mentioned above, shelter stay typically has chores involved. However, New Life Ministries go beyond just the daily maintenance of living in a place communally. As Lori Mathis explains, at this agency shelter guests add to the operation of the entire organization:

> Another expectation is that all of the adults that stay here must contribute their labor in some form or fashion. So everybody has what's called Work Service. They are required to work a certain number of hours per week, as their contribution to the operation of our facility. So they may do custodial work, they may work in the kitchen, they may work at our donation receiving area over at our thrift store.

Everyone who stays at their shelter does their part in the entire operation. In effect service recipients become unpaid staff. This blurs the lines between service recipients who are those experiencing the trauma and instability of being homeless and the staff that are providing the services. This approach does two things. First, it helps with staffing issues. Second, in an implicit way, the shelter reinforces the emphasis on introducing or maintaining a work ethic in their clients. The assumption is that having a strong work ethic will lead to self-sufficiency and independence from services. The emphasis on work pushes the client to serve themselves, thus abdicating responsibility away from the service provider to assist the client. This system in place at New Life Ministries was created to alleviate a variety of pressures on staff.

In addition to alleviating pressures, the implementation of work requirements is also an ideological one. This can be observed from the nature of the language used in the texts such as the rules and guidelines given to shelter residents. For example, in their section on expectations of the client it discusses the 'two hours work daily' and states the following: "Failure to participate in this program will result in termination of services for 60 days." This same page discusses the importance of effort at their stay: "You can expect your time at the New Life Ministries to be shortest if you invest yourself fully. This is also a requirement to receive our services." This shows how heavily the staff rely on clients to do their work because they do not have the appropriate staffing. It also shows that the strong emphasis on work requirements at this shelter demonstrate it is not a place of respite, but rather it is a place of training and gaining human capital. From their perspective, this will lead to successful outcomes and ending the cycle of homelessness.

Most of the agencies I interviewed in some way had an emphasis on self-sufficiency and independence. In some cases, the program names themselves were imbued with this as in the case at Second Chance Living where the title of the person I spoke with was a Family Self Sufficiency Grant Manager. The programs she runs are the Resident Opportunities and Self Sufficiency program as well as the Family Self Sufficiency program. Her goal for the clients she works with is to make them self-sufficient, meaning connecting them with the right resources to be successful or eliminating barriers to success. Then at some point in their stay they would move out of the subsidized housing in order to allow other clients with greater need to move in. Regardless of the client's duration in the program, the goal is to get people the supportive services they need to be successful.

All of the emergency shelters spoke about self-sufficiency and independence as skills or values that lead people out of homelessness and poverty. Melinda from Grace United explains the role they have in trying to get clients to become independent:

> We are looking at ways to help them to be independent, to be sustainable in the future whether it's helping them with employment services or helping them become stabilized with mental health services, getting income through social security/disability. So just making sure that we help them transition from homelessness into housing.

As mentioned above, the clients at a shelter are not completely alone in this endeavor. There are case managers who help connect them to other services in town and provide emotional support along the process.

How Do You Define, And Determine, Those Who Receive Services?

Every agency has some way to determine who is eligible to receive services. In most cases, funding dictates this. In the case of grants, whether from the government or elsewhere, there are stipulations on how the money must be used. These rules define for the agency what populations can receive the services as well as how that must be documented. For example, anyone who receives money from HUD for homeless services must follow their definition of homelessness as well as their methods of documentation. HUD (2012) requires due diligence to obtain 3rd party documentation when possible. Their definition specifically defines who is and is not homeless (e.g., couch hoppers).

For most programs, especially supportive services only, clients are Category 1 Literally Homeless. This definition includes what most people determine to be homeless: those living in a place not meant for human habitation. Importantly, this set of definitions excludes people who are couch hopping; according to HUD they are not experiencing homelessness despite not having stability in their housing. If someone is paying for a hotel or motel on their own as their primary nighttime resident, they are not considered homeless. However, if a church or agency was paying the hotel bill they would be considered homeless. In terms of the provision of services, there are realities of the instability of housing that are not captured in the definitions put forth by the major funding agency in the United Stated. This means that people are excluded from services.

The aspect of couch hopping, for example, is a critical issue in the determination if someone can get assistance. Many people experiencing homelessness are resourceful, especially during the winter months, and use whatever limited family and friend networks they have. However, if couch hopping is their primary nighttime residence, then staff would like not provide services to them. In terms of getting into emergency shelter, however, people just need to present themselves as homeless at their door and they would qualify. Case workers have to follow specific recordkeeping requirements to show at an audit that those determined to be experiencing homelessness are the only ones provided assistance from that source of funding. Due diligence must be followed to prioritize the order of the types of evidence to document homelessness. For example, third party verification is the top standard, followed by case worker verification and then self-report. If it is discovered that those aspects are not being followed per grant rules, typically through an audit, the agency could be sanctioned or denied the grant in subsequent years. They may even have to repay some or all of the grant funding they received.

In the case of private donations, agencies have greater freedom to choose how they determine who receives services. Places like New Life Ministries, Faith Village, and Redemption Ministries are almost exclusively funded from private individual donations. Jacquelyn Green, the executive director of Faith Village, states that because they are "without those outside constraints with state and federal funding" they did not have to answer to those accountability mechanisms. That means that the Board and the administration can determine the best way to choose what services are even being offered (e.g., Faith Village determined they would get rid of their food pantry and supported Grace United's food pantry) as well as how someone can receive those services.

For places like Grace United, at least in Bloomington, they rely on another agency in town that verifies who the homeless are[5]. This is only to receive some kinds of services at Grace United. To receive shelter at Grace United, one only needs to self-report as homeless. To receive the day services that this agency has, the other agency would document evidence of homelessness according to HUD's rules and guidelines and provide a verification form of their homelessness to the service recipient to give to Grace United. This relies on good communication and rapport between the agencies and encourages amiable relations in the network of service providers to the homeless.

What If Any Changes Have You Seen Over Time in Demand for Your Services?

With almost a complete consensus, my informants believe that there is a constant demand for their services. What is interesting, and unexpected, is that no one ascribed the demand, or its increase for some informants, to the state budget impasse. Rather, the demand for services was just business as usual. The demand has always been there. While most saw the demand as steady or increasing (due to other factors than the budget impasse), some saw their use of services as moderate or decreasing. A couple of informants also expressed their fear that the demand will always exist, mainly because of the difficulties in housing the chronically homeless.

Many informants articulated demand in terms of long waiting lists of people wanting access to their services. There are only so many beds in a shelter, apartments in a housing authority, spots in an afterschool program, or foster families to help meet these human needs. There is also only so much money being used to support the limited availability of services that already exist. Jimmie Elliot from Early Journeys explained that if they had more money they could attempt to meet the actual demand for their services for youth homelessness. This leaves staff with having to say 'no' even to people who may qualify for their services.

Additionally, Bloomington-Normal is located on an Amtrak train station line that connects to the large metropolis areas of Chicago and St. Louis. This means that it is possible that those who cannot get services in those places migrate to Central Illinois in hopes of shelter stay and other services.

Alan Hopkins from Grace United was someone who felt that the demand for services was actually decreasing. This is because his numbers from the previous year are down. He explained that, at least theoretically, if they are meeting their goal of housing people then the number of people needing their services should be decreasing. From his perspective, this should be happening all across the country because a lot of money from HUD is being put into rapid rehousing or permanent supportive housing, with other agencies not funded by HUD creating their own models of Housing First[6]. At least at this point, it is difficult to determine the cause in the change in numbers.

Leroy Harrington of Redemption Ministries stated that they operate on about average capacity. They are never quite full. He explains that, at least historically, when other homeless shelters and services in the Peoria area sprouted up, that helped mitigate the demand for their services. It is important to note, however, that Redemption Ministries has a strong emphasis on strict program rules once the men get into the shelter. It is likely that not everyone would benefit from ‘coming to Christ,’ yet that is the major goal of this organization. Chapel service is mandatory. It could be that some people experiencing homelessness do not agree with the programmatic rules and expectations placed on them at this shelter and thus try other shelters or remained unsheltered.

Several informants spoke about the constant need to help the chronically homeless. As a special population of the homeless, they are the most difficult to get housed, stay housed, and utilize various services. Many think that even if certain programs get the homeless housed, those left behind are the chronically homeless who often have severe mental health issues and/or substance or alcohol abuse problems. The severity of these problems and the existence of the chronically homeless has led several of my respondents to believe the it is impossible to completely eradicate homelessness.

Perspectives on Homelessness and Poverty

The constant demand for services can be explained in part based on how my informants theorize about homelessness and poverty. As mentioned earlier, *Table 4* shows how my informants make sense of poverty and homelessness. Their responses are causes as well as aspects that maintain poverty and homelessness. Their understanding of homelessness operates in a typified way that locates the cause in either individual or structural terms, and occasionally using both to make sense of particular subpopulations. Knowing how people and agencies understand the problem will inform how they determine what the solution will be. Even though my informants often spoke about structural causes of homelessness, all of them gave focus and attention to individual factors that were, from their perspective, easier to work on. That means that in the abstract they can recognize structural and systemic issues, but in terms of the claims-making activity and typification activities that end up in the day-to-day practices, individual-level causes and concerns take the forefront.

Additionally, texts from funders (e.g., HUD) or those created within agencies typify who counts as a client, why they are in the situation they are in, and why they can be successful in their programs. None of the agencies I spoke with stated that their programming was insufficient. Rather, success in the program is the responsibility of the individual, determined by their effort to become self-sufficient. This perspective allows agencies to deflect responsibility for failures to meet clients' needs and to help them.

Many of my informants believe that homelessness is a product of a collection of bad personal choices clients have made throughout their lifetime. Edgar Simmons summarizes a common belief about homelessness in the agencies I spoke with: "But I think the main cause of homelessness is just a lifetime of poor choices that culminates into a person being homeless." Now Edgar does mention how environmental factors, or social affiliations, can make it more difficult to make good choices and make it easier to make bad ones. From this perspective, it is a bad mindset that sets people up for failure and that ultimately that mindset must be changed in order to become housed or exit poverty.

Frank Craig, the Director for the emergency shelter at Redemption Ministries, talks about an entitlement attitude with many people who come through the shelter:

> Some of it is that people have been raised in an entitled atmosphere of accepting social help and not, I mean, their thought of getting a job never crosses their mind. It's just not

> even in their vocabulary. Their parents, and their grandparents, and their great grandparents who lived on social programs and lived in public housing or subsidized housing. Getting a job isn't even an issue for them because they never thought of getting a job. Why would they get a job when they could have all of this other stuff given to them? That's part of it.

Entitlement here is a form of dependency on social welfare. As such, to an extent, social welfare violates and stunts the work ethic. He connects this dependency on social help as a generational problem as well. When generations of one's family receive public benefits, newer generations come to take those benefits to their parents as a taken-for-granted norm of their reality and come to learn that they also should do the same thing. This is a culture of poverty perspective. This perspective ignores the many reasons that people experiencing homelessness do not attempt to get formal work or are not able to obtain it and do not share that with staff. It assumes discrimination does not occur, and that they are therefore entitled rather than simply defeated. It is not clear from my conversation with Frank the actual extent to which people experiencing homelessness at their shelter have generations of family getting government assistance. It is also not clear how he knows these facts given that their intake procedures do not ask these types of questions. It is possible that through informal conversations these personal anecdotal stories arise, but not to the extent that a major generalization could be founded. It seems more likely that given his ideological perspective, fostered by the agency he works for, which has a distrust in government and its programming, that his typifications of people in poverty and homelessness are rooted in many of the Conservative claims made by Reagan and others since the 1980s.

Most informants, however, considered that there are more economic and structural reasons for peoples' poverty and homelessness. Lori Mathis from New Life Ministries has a common explanation and frustration:

> We have a lot of people living here who are working two full time jobs and they do not have enough money to afford a place to live. So, just there's a disconnect between the

> jobs that are available, the wages that are paid, and how much it costs to have a place to live. You know? That's kind of plain and simple.

Here the problem is beyond the individual. Hard work, or even having employment at all, does not allow individuals and families to escape the grip of poverty. The jobs available are few and poorly paid and thus do not allow people to afford housing. Many of my informants spoke about the dearth of affordable housing. Ending homelessness, from this perspective, requires more than the work located within any individual experiencing homelessness. It takes more than any work of any agency with the services they provide as well. For example, while Grace United has a program to help people find employment, even if the program is successful (i.e., a client finds steady employment), that does not change the fact that housing across the area is generally inaccessible for people because typical wages earned are still not enough to keep up with the cost of living.

Given that agencies lack control over external factors explains why they end up focusing on individual based assessments of their clients in their ability to escape homelessness. This is interesting because most of my informants do understand the structural reasons behind poverty and homelessness. Yet, many of these same people do not reconcile these understandings with their implemented neoliberal programming in terms of how clients access and engage in the services (e.g., the emphasis on self-sufficiency).

Jimmie Elliott of Early Journeys explains how understanding the causes of homelessness will be specific to certain types of populations. In the case of his agency, youth who experience homelessness have vastly different reasons and resources than adults. Youth often get kicked out of their homes by their parents for a variety of reasons, including sexual or gender identity. They also do not have a very large work history and therefore typically lack skills and abilities to get and maintain good paying jobs. To understand the causes of homelessness then requires the understanding of the many types of homeless categories. Another type of identity mentioned to have distinctive risks of homelessness are veterans. Many veterans can come back from war experiences and have some degree of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). They are also having to reintegrate back into society from the regimented life while being in the military.

One informant, Leroy Harrington, mentioned that most social service agencies misunderstand homelessness altogether:

> So fixing only homelessness usually doesn't fix the person. There's too many contributing factors that got them to that point that they're homeless. So part of the initiatives that we see in the social sector and the human services needs is an initiative to fix the homelessness. That's the problem, the problem is that they're homeless. Probably not the problem, it's probably the result. And so we would want to work with those people and the problem side of that.

In this sense, housing people alone may not help with factors that led people to homelessness in the first place. In Leroy's perspective, social service agencies should also be directing their attention on the other factors that led to the pain and suffering in peoples' lives that then result in the loss of a job or an eviction. This is tied back into the earlier cause of personal bad choices. For Leroy, and all the people at Redemption Ministries in particular, 'fixing people' requires letting Jesus Christ into your life; God helps and heals. Their evangelical stance differentiates their agency from other agencies that still use a Christian-based ethic. However, the construction of Christian ideology is differs by the agency.

For Jacquelyn Green, understanding the causes of poverty and homeless were not paramount, although she still presented some ideas for why people end up in those situations. Rather, it was more important to adopt a particular mindset that allows her and others in her agency to provide good services to people. She states the importance of being non-judgmental of one's poverty and homelessness. This is because every person has their story to tell. The key to understanding, or at least attempting to, is to listen. From her point of view, service agencies may never fully know the full story for why someone has ended up the way they did or why they engage in the behaviors they do. And certainly some behaviors by clients are baffling to her and simply do not make sense. But the goal is to do one's best to provide services to people and help better people's lives. In an example Jacquelyn shared with me, she stated how a client would utilize all the community resources she could and then move on and then end up back in the area again asking for help. This cycle of being assisted, moving away, and coming back again asking for the same things, frustrated Jacquelyn. This was because it just did not make any sense. Thus at one point, the client was barred from services because Jacquelyn felt that she did not want to enable that kind of behavior any longer, to say nothing of the use of limited resources on one particular person where it often gets 'wasted.' In this way, financial limitations on agencies shape to what extent they will try to help and understand the people they work with. Despite that, the value of non-judgement is important for the delivery of service.

As seen by how my informants talk about homelessness and its causes, there are many different frameworks and perspectives from which people in agencies operate. Melinda Ellis from Grace United states succinctly that the cause of homelessness "could really be anything." From trauma, personal choices, lack of affordable housing or jobs, medical episodes and costs, bankruptcy, lacking a family support and resources, to losing one's home, there are many different career pathways that lead to homelessness in an extremely complicated way. Several of my informants expressed the need for everyone, service agencies included, to continue to learn more about poverty and homelessness in order to provide better kinds of services.

One aspect that prevents this growth in understanding, which would lead to better funding for services, is politics. Marcia Klein explains:

> I just feel like we're not doing a good job of looking at reality. I would love to see all of our representatives and senators have to live on what is the poverty line or having to use

> Obamacare or having to use all of these service that they keep cutting funding to. You know? I feel like they just aren't remembering what it's like or they've never experienced what it's like to be there.

This is a rare comment implicating the broader political domain. Marcia is clear that she believes that political representatives do not understand the experience of poverty, which is why cutting funds seems to happen so frequently. Jimmie Elliot explains that part of the reason for why we cannot look at the reality of poverty is the incessant political gridlock:

> So I mean that, when politicians say we need to raise the standard of living, the standard of wages in order to improve the economy, they're right. Of course, the problem is that there is total disagreement on how you go about doing that. So much disagreement that nobody does anything! So I mean that's a really big contributor to the poverty.

On the one hand, there is a lack of understanding of what is really involved. Public policy characteristically ignores the insights of social workers and other human social service workers (Hrostowski 2013). This perspective states that politicians are not placing value on the work of the human social service sector today as much as they did in the past.

Limited Resources and Fighting for The Same Money

Sources of funding represent one of the major relations of ruling for all nonprofit human social service agencies. These typically come from government grants, non-profit or corporate grants, private individual donations, corporate donations, or church donations. Grants, in particular, have the ability to actualize and maintain relations of ruling. Grants have specific requirements and emphasize particular outcomes. If coming from the government, then the dollar amount and measurement requirements are also potentially highly politicized and determined by Congress, the Senate, and the President. Grants have the potential to influence the structure of organizations, the direction of goals and mission statements, and regulate them. Grants allow a possible link for global and national neoliberal policies to become actualized at local levels. The grants, therefore, can act as an apparatus of power to change organized practices and discourses in texts of these organizations that provide services to the homeless. They become a mechanism for isomorphic change to make agencies more similar.

A stable element of these organizations reported to me is the consistent lack of adequate resources to provide services to those they have determined to qualify for need. This is consistent with welfare cutbacks in a neoliberal state. While none of the organizations link this major barrier to neoliberal changes in the state, they are cognizant of how precarious funding can be, regardless of the source. As mentioned, money for nonprofit human social service agencies that serve the homeless come from many places. The two major sources are government grants and private individual donations. Grants for homeless services in Illinois come from HUD vis-à-vis the Continuum of Care (CoC) program, Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) at Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) through the local city government. If the grants are not from a government entity, a local large non-profit such as a United Way can provide grant funds. Only 3 organizations in my sample primarily focused on private/corporate donations. The implications of this will be discussed below.

Another common feature for those interviewed was the primacy of their role with finance. Their role as administrators in their organizations focus on donor contacts, investments, fund raising, grants, and how to make ends meet and keep the organization afloat. Almost all of the organizations mentioned the need to be good stewards of their funds, irrespective of where the funds came from. Melinda Ellis summarizes a common experience: “We try to be good stewards of the funding that we receive. We are pretty frugal, everybody has multiple roles and different things that they do.” The focus is on fiscal responsibility in an era of precarious funding for social services. Not surprisingly, this means less direct contact with those that they serve, although the size of the organization will determine whether or not administrators participate as much in direct service. Regardless, despite the social distance between those I interviewed and the clients they serve, they retained an ability to stay empathetic with the typifications of the clients they served. They expressed a point-of-view that is compassionate and puts those who receive services first.

Nearly all my informants mentioned how they have to be creative with how they end up funding projects and the entire organization. This is an example of goal displacement. The constant lack of funds compels these professionals to find new revenues of funding, think outside the box on how services are normally funded, and to never give up in the face of adversity. The emphasis on finding new funding opportunities took away time from enhancing their programs. The budget impasse clearly exacerbated financial concerns and contributed to organizational goal displacement. However, the need for creativity because of the constant deficiency of funding has always been there.

Irrespective of the budget impasse, it was reported that grants were very time consuming, as indicated by Melinda:

> It is very time consuming to do the packet. This packet was actually 95 pages once I completed the packet with all the attachments in there. So it’s not like a 95 page paper or narrative, but with all the attachments it was that large.

These grants took a lot of time and effort to craft in creative ways to ensure the budget would be met. Clearly, this was time spent away from service recipients and even staff and the daily experiences of the organization. Within the grant is some kind of ongoing narrative, especially from year to year for the same grant an organization applies to. This narrative explains how the money is being used and how it is helpful. As Diane Rowe explains, success stories are very beneficial for the narrative in your grant. It shows funders that the grant actually works the way it was planned to work. The narrative, as well as outcome measures, help maintain accountability on behalf of the organization to the funding source for that grant. Again, this demonstrates the power of the grant as a relation of ruling. Diane also explains how funding sources are always watching to see how their money is being spent as she explains the process of implementing a grant:

> But now my grants are 3 years long now. So you write it, you get it, and you have 3 years to work it. Work that thing. You know what I mean? Work all the stuff that you said you would do. And trust me they're calling you if you're not. If you're not at the level that you said you would be. If I said I would get 10 people to go to a money management class. I need to get 10 people to get to that money management class. But my goal is going to be like 15. You know what I'm saying?

As indicated above, outcome measures are taken very seriously and put extra stress on service providers to deliver the best services they can to people. There is basically a constant worry about making sure numbers are met. This also creates goal displacement because it forces providers to focus on meeting goals instead of accurately assessing the individual needs of the people they are serving. People from afar are determining what needs to be done and when for clients. That makes them ignore the more immediate and critical needs of the state of mind and emotions of clients that would prevent them from making good use of things like financial management classes.

Governmental grants, especially HUD ones, can be "tedious," according to Diane. Lori Mathis, among others, agreed that governmental sources for money are often seen in a negative light compared to private sources. "The government's always harder. Oh, yeah. There's always a whole lot more to do. And a lot more, just to meet their eligibility and also in terms of reporting. It's highly legislated." The highly politicized and controlled governmental grants have a bifurcated effect on organizations: some accept the strings attached and others, such as New Life Ministries, Faith Village, and Redemption Ministries, view the government as a poor choice for funding completely. They do not perceive the government as the answer to their problems. The typical grant process, with all its rules and accountability structures, sows the seeds of governmental distrust and becomes evident during a catastrophe such as the budget impasse. During this time, the government cannot even deliver on its promise of funding, despite how difficult it is to apply for those funds and monitor its progress in the first place. It confirms to organizations that governmental funding is too precarious and dangerous if they are wanting to function. Additionally, these three organizations that focused on other forms of funding all mentioned the ideal of freedom. They wanted to keep their organizational autonomy so they could practice their service work in the way they wanted.

In order to maintain that freedom, these organizations focused more on acquiring private donations. Private donations are money from individual people, businesses, or churches that are not tied to any specific set of requirements, as is true of grant funding. This type of funding is vulnerable to the whims of the corporate world. For example, State Farm announced a shift of jobs to the South. Additionally, as Melinda Ellis highlights, relying on private donors in a particular community puts one organization in competition with others:

> We need those agencies, but that's also another option for donors. So if the donor only has x number of dollars. Does it go here? That's a good organization, that's also a good organization and so is this one….And I know for a fact they're also donating to other causes.

On the one hand, organizations need to collaborate with each other in order to best serve the needs of their clients. On the other, if there is a reliance on private funds then it creates an environment in which agencies will need to compete against each other in the public's eye to convince people where to donate. The need to compete is spurred on by the increasingly neoliberal context in which these organizations must act. Thus, neoliberalism pits agencies that need each other in terms of a network of services for clients against each other for donor dollars.

However, because of the desire of freedom (i.e., organizational autonomy) and the assessment of state failure (e.g., not passing a budget), the direction to use more private donations makes sense. As an unintended consequence, these organizations then rely more heavily on communities to be generous monetarily. This then creates donor fatigue, as Melinda pointed out. With limited funds to be spread out in a community combined with increasing national and local economic inequality, the use of private donations certainly has its limitations. When agencies have to spend additional time and money to market themselves in the community and create new fundraisers, this dynamic creates goal displacement. From my conversations with my informants, it was not clear whether fundraising initiatives paid off given the extra time and money used.

Regardless of the source of money, all the organizations in my sample understood the need to collaborate with other organizations in order to best serve their clients. Collaboration can be done via joint agency grant applications or memoranda of understandings between agencies on how to interact with each other. One agency, Faith Village, discontinued their food pantry to support another agency's food pantry instead, because it became too expensive to run one themselves. Collaboration also happens between organizations with similar missions or ideological positions. One agency, Redemption Ministries, favors working with other religious organizations or churches while viewing more secular organizations with suspicion and skepticism. In terms of funding issues though, sometimes collaboration can be difficult. Jacquelyn Green sees the importance of collaborating:

> We are such a blessed community. There's an abundance of opportunities and ways to collaborate. And I'm sure there's ways to collaborate that we haven't even thought of yet. And that's what we're- it's the name of the game now because we're all fighting for the same money.

At the same time, she stated how formal partnerships are challenging because it involves working out finances together, personnel and staff issues, as well as figuring out locations to do the work together. Her statement also draws attention to the constant tension between collaboration and competition of organizations for funding from private donations or grant sources. The organizations in my sample collaborated mainly in informal ways, to avoid the issue of doing finances together as well as avoiding other logistical issues. In effect, this means it is hard to determine when agencies are collaborating or competing with one another because they are always doing both at the same time.

The Nuances of Collaboration

Collaboration, at a basic level, is concerted action between two or more agencies to work together toward some goal or objective. Neoliberal pressures, mainly limited resources and fighting for the same money, compels agencies in a network to collaborate. “I mean, we have to be performing spokes in the wheel, or otherwise, we’re going to wreck the bike.” Edgar Simmons from Redemption Ministries highlights the necessity of any type of collaboration. Additionally, agencies will work together for ideological reasons. Before, and during the impasse, collaboration was seen as a necessary element of operating within the system of social services. This is rooted in the expectation of agencies to do more with less.

Motives for collaboration.

Collaboration can be spurred on by similarities in the perspective of agencies that want to work together to achieve identical goals. For example, New Life Ministries tried to collaborate with other agencies so that they could expand their food co-op, a place where service recipients donate time and work hours in exchange for food. Even though they lacked funding to actualize their goal, they did succeed in getting other agencies on board with replicating their model. Other organizations shared New Life Ministries perspective on changing their food pantry into a food co-op and utilizing an ideology where labor exchange is essential in the delivery of services in order to stave off dependency and preserve dignity.

At Redemption Ministries, their motivation to collaborate was geared toward the deduplication of services. This is driven by the need for efficiency: to get rid of waste and redundancy in the provision of services. The push toward deduplication is rooted in the fact that agencies need to maximize what limited funds that they do have. Redemption Ministries was also concerned with clients who ‘bounce around’ from agency to agency; in other words, “frequent fliers.” This can be shelter-hopping or clients that request certain services repeatedly or the same services from as many agencies as they can in a community. This was such a concern to their Executive Director that he was considering getting a software program called Charity Tracker, which tracks services given to clients. From their point of view, this prevents the abuse of services.

It appears, at least in the agencies I interviewed, that those agencies with a connection to government funding sources (i.e., the relations of ruling) were less likely to be concerned with client abuse of their services. These agencies still collaborated, but not in a manner where abuse was the major concern. Even if agencies were slightly concerned about those matters, there was an acknowledgment that there was not enough time to devote to tracking those issues, as ultimately they were peripheral. However, in the case of Redemption Ministries, the concern is front and center. This could be that because private donations are a more insecure source of income that the concern for abuse becomes heightened. Their ideological perspective additionally makes them concerned about client behavior that is seen as problematic. Agencies like Redemption Ministries strive to avoid creating what they believe to be unhealthy dependencies in their clients.

The Executive Director of Faith Village highlighted the importance of collaboration mainly because of the fact that these agencies were all trying to get money from the same limited sources. The problem of resource scarcity, from her view, meant it was even more important to band together with other agencies so they could stay functional. This meant deduplicating services. The economic reality these agencies face compels them to collaborate. In fact, Faith Village, had to close its food pantry. Since this agency did not receive any state funding the impasse did not directly cause this decision. They got rid of the pantry because it was a strain on resources and volunteer time. They also knew that other agencies in the community provided food pantries. They decided to close part of their agency to back up other agencies instead. The abundance of social services for this community helped them make this decision.

Collaboration rooted in institutional distrust.

Those of Redemption Ministries were primarily concerned with trying to forge relationships, but preferably with explicitly religious (i.e., Christian) collaborations. Their distrust of secular institutions made them wary to collaborate in more meaningful ways. Despite that, when it came down to practice, to serve the client they would still refer out to secular agencies. It might be that for now they must collaborate reluctantly with secular institutions. Their goal and theory is that religious networks will be better at solving issues of poverty. This tendency to think this way is both ideological (i.e., religious values) and practical since government sources are seen as bureaucratically burdensome.

Redemption Ministries also wants to work with businesses and create business networks. Businesses donating money, or individual employees taking advantage of business match programs, are nothing new in the non-profit world. Regarding Redemption Ministries' approach with the business community, however, is a more explicit and in-depth kind of collaboration.

The Executive Director, Leroy Harrington, came from a business background and felt that it is necessary for clients to find ways to improve their ability to achieve self-sufficiency and independence through labor in the market. This perspective is harmonious with a neoliberal ethos because the drive for collaboration is rooted in the market and business community.

Mandated collaboration.

For the agencies that receive grant funding, there are clauses that state that grantees must collaborate with specific agencies in the community. This can be grants such as United Way Funding or grants coming from the state or federal government.

Jacquelyn Green from Faith Village had this to say: “That- when you put that on a United Way report, ‘Now we want specific, we want in-depth collaboration.’ Well, draw blood from a turnip.” Collaboration here is the expectation. In-depth collaboration also means more than simply referring out services. Given that Faith Village is a small private non-profit, the requirement of in-depth collaboration from funding sources such as United Way is an additional strain. To be clear, Jacquelyn wants to collaborate with other agencies and views them positively. However, grant-mandated collaboration that is “in-depth” pushes the bounds of what one agency with limited staff and time can accomplish.

Grants coming from the state or federal government often have provisions on the requirement to collaborate with other agencies. Sometimes this kind of forced collaboration creates strain on the agencies to work with their clients. Diane Rowe explains:

> So, on a national level, and I’ve even talked to Washington about this like, “Please don’t make me work with them. I don’t like how they operate.” Anyway, nationally, they’re like, “What we’re doing nationally, we expect you to do locally.” And I get that. That makes perfect sense. But when I make connections with this agency, when I make referrals to this agency, they’re so number hungry that I do not see evidence of them being people-service hungry motivated. You know? And I can’t stand that. All they’re worried about is [numbers], and I know because I work under a grant too. So I know that pressure, I get it. But darn, don’t treat somebody like a number.

Here we see the relations of ruling at work: what happens at the national must also happen at the local. This mandate is impervious to how those down on the ground have to work with the stresses and dilemmas brought on by the expected collaboration. This can be another form of neoliberal collaboration. The emphasis here is that it is forced; it is a type of coercive isomorphism. Diane does not want to work with this agency because they are number-hungry. In general, Diane has developed a theory that critiques the relations of ruling in their inability to fully understand or address the local conditions:

> But they don't know because they are not here at that front-line level. So that's what I'm saying, if you read it. It looks really good. I understand it. It looks good on paper and I understand how somebody could write it like that. But when you're not there you don't understand boy there's a whole level of complications on the local level that you guys don't see nationally.

She critiques those at the national level in their inability to effectively judge work done at the ground level. This brings up an interesting irony. Neoliberalism devolves social services down to the local level. Yet, in practice, the relations of ruling still attempt to push more national directives in spite of the local knowledge and expertise of those at the local level.

The Driving Pressure of Competition

Competition is the drive to work against other agencies or people to be more successful than them in order to gain reward. This competition can be deliberate or it can result from various institutional arrangements that compel people running agencies to think and behave in particular ways in order to stay operational.

Forced competition.

Agencies engage in competition because of the structure of the funding mechanisms. Since the state contracts services out, they also evaluate how agencies use the grants to determine which ones are doing well. Marcia Klein from the Family Community Center laments about how the state caused agencies to compete against each other:

> But unfortunately, I mean the state made us all competitive when it came to performance based- when it came to all these other requirements that they've put into play. And when funding started getting cut, what is an agency going to do? They're going to fight to keep or get more of what is out there and I know that right now our Adoption Preservation Program has grown from 10 counties to 22 just in the last 3 years. DCFS realized that agencies who have been contracted to provide the services weren't doing what they are supposed to be doing, took the contracts away…

Bureaucratic accountability measures are used to evaluate performance; they can help the state determine who's using the money the most efficiently. In this same discussion, Marcia explained how agencies need to be more collaborative and not fight over the same pots of money. However, she explains how that is almost unavoidable given the lack of resources readily available to these types of social services. So this agency, despite wanting to collaborate and not compete, is competing and winning.

> We've had to grow and absorb because we have such high level of service and it was really having a good impact on these families but other agencies lost that. You know? And so it's hard, it's hard. You don't like that to happen. But you also want those families to get what they need to able to stay together.

The dilemma faced here is that these agencies want the best for their service recipients. Normally, this agency would rather collaborate to best serve their clients. However, competition is seen as a necessary mechanism to best serve people. While they may be ideologically against competing with other agencies, if their model is working well then they feel justified in expanding and taking over services.

Number hungry.

Over at Second Chance Living, Diane Rowe mentioned how certain agencies that are difficult to work with are 'number hungry,' and not 'people hungry.' She critiqued the unnamed agency for engaging in 'creaming.' That is when an agency prefers to work with the most functional and advantaged clients to boost their statistics and give the image that their program is successful and worthy of funding. While it is true they are helping people, they are avoiding a certain type of client: ones that are lower functioning, require more work, or face more barriers. Many homeless clients have these challenges. If agencies are ‘number hungry’ then the most in need may be excluded from services.

Family Community Center mentioned how another local agency just wants the money and therefore will not collaborate. “They have become competitive…They want to hold the funding, they want to hold the power, and so they are not collaborating very well.” When agencies are working with the same clientele, and applying for similar governmental grants, they are working against each other for the same pot of money. Likely from each agency’s perspective, they are justified in stating they should be in charge of the money to maintain control and develop programs the way they see fit. The point is that the relations of ruling through the mechanisms of funding set agencies against each other. They become protective of what little money they can get.

Territorial.

Because there is a scarcity of resources devoted to social services, agencies become territorial. Leroy from Redemption Ministries states: “So, but you know, we’re all territorial, unfortunately too much.” Redemption Ministries does not receive governmental grants. The notion of being territorial does not always apply to getting grants, despite the competitive nature surrounding acquiring and keeping grants. Being territorial is about edging out a place to draw in private funders as well. Melinda Ellis had mentioned earlier how the dilemma of ‘donor fatigue’ is very real in communities. If all agencies are seen as good places to donate, and they may be, where does one choose to donate? Agencies, in their attempt to stay functional, find themselves adopting a market competition model even if they may not always recognize it. This is particularly important given how many people I spoke with who highlighted the importance of collaboration.

Mitigated competition.

Territorialism is not dominant though. Agencies, at least those providing homeless services, have been seen to collaborate despite the pressures to compete and be territorial. “Agencies tend to be territorial sometimes but I think [when] it comes to serving people and serving this population I think everybody at various agencies [has] a heart for it. Ultimately, that’s- from what I [have] seen over there in the year that I’ve been there- that’s the goal for everybody.” From this assessment, Alan Hopkins states that he knows that agencies are competitive to a degree, but it becomes mitigated by the type of workers who ending up helping the homeless. It comes from ‘having a heart for it.’ This emotional component of working with some of the most destitute members of society is what allows agencies not to fully dive into a competitive mode. From my study, the more competitive agencies were not strictly providing services to the homeless. This seems to suggest that there is an ‘emotional culture’ that prevents wholesale competitive attitudes in the system of homeless services.

Critique of competition.

Marcia Klein was one person I spoke with that adequately sums up several people’s critique of competition. From her standpoint, competition is harmful to the greater good of the work of social services.

> It hurts. When I first started out in ’89 we all collaborated. I mean we were all trying to find the best home possible for kids. We were trying to help one another provide, we would work in partnership even just on specific cases. We didn’t care about who had the power or control. We were all working together and we were teams. Now it’s more, “I have it. It’s mine. You’ll do what I say.” When it’s really not in the best interest [of our clients]. And so I feel the competitiveness has not improved quality for everybody. Now,

> we did, but that's something that we do because of our integrity, our design…. So I feel the competitiveness isn't always the answer especially in social services. Collaboration is more effective, more impactful, and it has a stronger outreach versus a little one agency fighting and working with a few individuals.

In her account, historically, competition was not always prominent. That changed when states started mandating greater bureaucratic accountability measures. In her response, she rationalizes her agency's brand of competition because they view themselves as doing vital work in the community. However, she explains a little bit later that the way to solve the competition problem is to discourage excessive pride among those running the programs:

> I would like to see the power-ego-pride piece be set aside so that it's focused totally on our children and our families. I think that we'd have a much better impact. A much more positive, constructive environment to be able to do that for the work that we're doing.

She indicates that administrators' pride is preventing effective collaboration. Interestingly enough, elsewhere she explains how it is the state that spurred on the need to compete, which is a structural explanation. Here, she describes the problem in a more individualized perspective. While the state pushed competition through their funding mechanisms and performance measurements, this in turn had a psycho-social effect that can be understood in individualized terms. Fiscal and regulatory constraints that dictate the social structure is actualized within people. It makes sense if the need to engage in competition can come off as being prideful or having excessive ego.

Politics

As mentioned earlier, the increase in competition, and realization of the necessity of collaboration, is rooted in the political field. Agencies typically attempt to remain apolitical, especially to the public's perception. However, given the importance of government to the social service sector, the ways to influence legislators becomes an important concern.

Anti-lobbying clauses.

One mechanism to influence government is to lobby. Regardless of an informant's perspective on lobbying, the extent to which they can lobby is dependent upon their source of money. Any federal or state grants specify an anti-lobbying clause. The money in these grants can only be used on pre-approved eligible costs, and lobbying has not been a part of that. In order for the agencies that have governmental funds to lobby their representatives and educate them, it must be pulled from a different pool of money. And certainly, it is a hard sell for non-profits to tell private donors that they are not spending that money on direct services. This puts non-profits that rely on grants in a bad bind; they are politically muzzled by design.

Political lobbying and political advocacy.

Lobbying and advocacy for non-profit organizations is normally a sticky situation without the negative impact of the impasse. Some organizations like Grace United lobby but not at the local level. They are a much larger agency that has the organization and money to do so. A common theme for social service professionals is that there is not time. There is always work to be done and given that lobbying is difficult to get favorable results, it makes sense why more time is not invested in it.

Some like Alan Hopkins do not find lobbying to be effective at all even though he is part of Grace United, which has a national and international presence in the non-profit world. "Quite frankly I don't think it's that effective. We've been doing it for years and I haven't seen any change." Instead, he believes that community engagement is better and even sees more change from businesses being more responsive than his political representatives. He argues that the issue with politicians today is that they cannot find common ground or consensus. This belief is reinforced by the fact the impasse exists.

Others like Family Community Center actively lobby and have been doing so for 10 years to fight for more funding and to educate politicians on what the problems down on the ground are. Marcia Klein stated that their lobbying efforts are pretty ineffective though when compared against for-profit interests. There is not enough money and time to engage in effective lobbying.

> We don't have the money to get in there. When you take a look at who has the most impact with lobbying it's the people who have the bigger checkbooks. Who can pay for the lobbyists, who can take these people out to dinner and schmooze and do all of those pieces. We can't do that because to us that money needs to go for who we are working for and working with. We have voices- we're just not strong enough. You know? I mean we would rather see funding in money go toward serving our clients versus spending it all on trying to get a voice down in Springfield.

Agency providers understand the best way to allocate money to help those in need. Unfortunately, in a system where lobbying and money is paramount to having a political voice, lacking money means having a much smaller voice.

As mentioned earlier, Jimmie Elliott of Early Journeys is feeling more negative and pessimistic about the value of lobbying efforts. He explains:

> Only in that it used to be that we could go and talk to our legislators with issues and around funding and stuff and we would always get something resolved. It may not have been- there would be some kind of compromise, something would happen. And we might not be thrilled, but it would be workable and so you'd walk away. And now, we get legislators who will listen to us and shake their head, "Isn't it terrible?" But then they go out and they don't vote to help. It's fascinating again…. It's like, I know all of our legislators and I have educated them. I don't talk to them regularly because there's nothing- what am I going to say that I haven't told them already or hadn't had the discussion with them? There's nothing new other than it's horrible for the people being affected.

Understandably this leads to feeling defeated or desperate for certain agencies. Lobbying, in general is being perceived as being ineffective, and even more so during the impasse. Even when someone has been working to advocate in a political way, now party politics stalls the way to progress.

At the far extreme of skepticism is just complete distrust in lobbying at all. The Executive Director of Redemption Ministries stated that "…maybe I'm cynical or maybe I'm not naïve enough to think that that can happen easily. So honestly advocacy has to happen at a life level and a personal level." The focus on a personal level advocacy occurs across the board for non-profits in my sample. However, the more religious the organization the more likely they are to distrust political advocacy and favor advocating for people at a personal level. This is because the institution of politics is still largely secular.

The Illinois State Budget Impasse

The preceding findings helped establish how and in what ways the organizations in my sample have responded to neoliberal change more generally. Now we will turn to how these agencies made sense of the Illinois state budget impasse.

In general, everyone in my sample stated that the impasse was a disaster for the network of providers and their clients. This is altogether not surprising. How each person made sense of and responded to that mess differed in a variety of ways that are rooted in the specific history and culture of the organization.

Financial Impact: "Now It's a Team Effort"

Not all agencies in my sample received some form of state funding to be directly impacted by the Illinois state budget impasse. New Life Ministries, Redemption Ministries, Faith Village, and Second Chance Living all did not receive any state funding. The first 3 are primarily privately funded, while Second Chance Living only receives federal funding so that was not affected. Even though not all agencies were directly impacted in a financial sense, almost all informants talked about how they were indirectly impacted.

Diane Rowe of Second Chance Living puts it this way:

> Staff-wise, they cut the funding to it and so therefore [another agency] had to cut it down staff-wise. It's horrible. That was really bad because now again it's a team effort. I look at it as a community team effort. So I work at it from the housing side but then I collaborate with the community in large ways to help with other things. So we do what we call wrap-around services. So if a piece of that puzzle is gone what do we do? So even though it did not impact position wise or my job it still affected the work that I do.

The work one does in social services often requires referring out, and in some cases it is mandated by the funding source to do so. In light of the budget impasse, it is not always clear which agency has been impacted and to what extent. Information can percolate throughout the news and agencies are situated within various networks of agencies who try to meet regularly. But as the impact of the impasse unfolds, it is not always clear what might happen next. Diane's work, and what she is able to report on to HUD, is affected by the impasse despite her funding source not being directly affected.

Diane was not the only one to talk about a sense of togetherness in the community. There exists an ecology of agencies, all responding to one another, trying to network, refer out, and survive together. Melinda Ellis of Grace United talked about the shared sense of panic and grieving, as well as the desire to fix things.

> And as far as advocating for clients, when you hear about agencies shutting down, we know we don't, those are our neighbors. Those are our community partners. If they aren't successful, that will affect us. That means our clients are not going to be successful. Or we may be the one that goes under. I don't see that happening, but we do see that we may have to make some cuts to our programming.

One agency's success is contingent upon another's. From Melinda's perspective, this is a community of neighbors.

Grace United, Early Journeys, and the Family Community Center were all directly impacted because they received state funds. They were not being paid yet the State still expected the services to be delivered.

Melinda Ellis of Grace United shared how difficult everything has become:

> It makes it more difficult. I mean there's the whole level of apprehension. We're really thinking ahead as far as how to be strategic, how to reach out to more donors. And that makes it harder. It definitely- everybody's- we got to worry about donor fatigue. How many mailers do we send out asking for money? How many fundraisers and golf outings can we have a year? How many times can we ask for money when everybody else is asking for money?

The impasse created financial insecurity within several agencies. It demonstrated that the state government was an unreliable source of income to keep programs afloat. This apprehension, as Melinda calls it, forced them to re-evaluate how they fund their programs and to look for new funding sources.

Business as Usual

Aside from a non-payment of funds to certain agencies, my informants felt the crisis was not much different than business as usual in a lot of ways. Even without the problem of non-payment, agencies are always searching for more cash and the services being provided are always in high demand. Melinda Ellis explains: "We always don't have enough funding. So even if the state didn't have a problem with payment then we would still need services."

This business as usual comment speaks to the general conditions affecting non-profit social services. Agencies are constantly underfunded, understaffed, and overworked. For these agencies, this is nothing new. The impasse just speaks to added pressure, confusion and insecurity. In a lot of ways it can lead to some moments of desperation when trying to figure out what exactly will be needed to keep the doors open.

Desperation: Just Trying to Adapt

Several agencies mentioned their ability, as well as necessity, to be creative with limited funding. These agencies look at what is in front of them and try to adapt. They have some faith that their work is important enough for the community that whatever happens, funding will come from somewhere.

For many informants there was a sense of defeat that was in tension with their strengthened individual-level advocacy for their clients. Lori Mathis from New Life Ministries aptly summed it up in the middle of our conversation about the impasse: “And I don’t want to be a doomsayer and say nothing’s going to change, because it has to.” Non-profits historically have had to deal with inadequate budgets and cutbacks, so they are used to ‘bad news.’ However, this impasse was a breaking point for just about everyone irrespective if it impacted the agency’s finances. Feeling defeated likely fuels an agency’s sense of desperation as well. Since the impasse lasted so long, many felt as if things would not improve and would continue to overwhelm agencies.

Some agencies just wanted resolution. They just want to know that something is being done, and then they can adapt accordingly based on what rules are laid out for them. As Melinda indicated:

> And it may be that we don’t get all the funding. Like I said, if we don’t have money, we don’t have money. You can’t just say, “Well, we want to help everybody.” But if there’s no money there isn’t. So- and then the other side is- I don’t know. The way I see it, if you aren’t going to invest in social services why don’t you invest in businesses? So those businesses can help social services, but it seems like nothing is happening. Neither side is happening.

From Melinda’s perspective, if one will not invest in social services then invest in business. While her response may appear to be a form of capitulation, she is trying to be practical. Social services could coordinate with businesses to broker deals to secure funding for their agencies. At least with an investment of business there is some form of control: going out into the community and talking with those players. Agencies feel powerless to affect or resolve the state budget, something which is far away. But businesses close to home are perceived as being more approachable. The impasse, in this way, can create acquiescence among agencies, as their desperation pushes them to accept policy change favoring business at the expense of social services.

Melinda's desperation-rooted response is an example of a response to the "shock doctrine." Crisis brings about confusion which leads to desperation of agencies to have anything done to create a budget, even if that means altering funding priorities. Melinda explicitly states that she would prefer even if businesses were funded over social service agencies, a decision arguably not in the favor of the social service sector. Her response indicates that crises such as the impasse can further implement neoliberal change. In this example, the corporate community is being favored over the social service sector. What Melinda's perspective ignores is that it would be unclear how corporations would interact with the social service sector in order to provide funding.

Not everyone, however, responds in desperation. Diane Rowe from Second Chance Living observes that "…the budget impasse is stressing everyone out. It is. And people are making quick jump decisions…" The need for money to keep payroll going and provide direct client assistance is constant. Without it, then you have no program. Diane, however, sees that certain panicked responses to the impasse may not make the most sense in the long run for social services. In the case of supporting business over social services, that could create the possibility of getting funding from businesses. That would be an even more unstable route as it places the power in the hands of corporations to determine what agency is worthy of contributions. This would ultimately lead to corporations being able to direct agency policy.

Interaction with Other Organizations

Just about everyone in my sample stated the impasse did not really alter how they interact with other agencies, ways in which were discussed earlier. Given some of the panic, confusion, frustration, and desperation being experienced by agencies I found this to be surprising. I expected that the impasse would either increase collaboration or competition; I did not expect that there would be no real effect. Positive relationships remained positive and tense ones remained tense. Even if certain services were curtailed, these agencies recognized the importance of a community of service providers.

The degree of religiosity of the agency impacted what kind of community network they valued. For example, Redemption Ministries mainly trusted and worked within a network of churches and other agencies that were explicitly practicing Christian beliefs. The impasse, at least for Edgar Simmons, reinforced his belief that secular institutions (e.g., the state) are not to be trusted and that they are not even the appropriate institution to be doing this work of helping the homeless. For him, it was always supposed to be churches.

Religiosity aside, there is not a single agency that can provide all services to the homeless. Therefore, agencies must interact with each other in an ecology of services. This is acknowledged by everyone unequivocally. Agencies refer out because they need each other. Whether it's churches, businesses, or nonprofit social services, collaboration is a necessity. However, these same agencies will compete against each other in a variety of ways. The interactions between agencies is therefore complex and contradictory at times.

Distrust in the Institution of Government

The impasse did impact how agencies came to understand the government. For some agencies like Redemption Ministries or New Life Ministries, those with a more overtly religious perspective on their service work, it reinforced already held beliefs about the inadequacy of the state to help in issues of poverty in the first place.

Other agencies that previously appreciated the role of the state began to view government in more cautious terms. This was especially true for those agencies that were receiving state funding and were not getting paid for work that they still were required to do. Jimmie Elliott of Early Journeys stated that speaking with politicians locally really did nothing to help their cause. From his experience in talking with politicians, they seem to listen, and certainly claim they do, but they do not act on their professed concerns. This means that the politicians are ingenuous or that there are other pressures to prevent politicians from being able to act on what they are learning from service providers. In this case, the Governor had Executive/Veto power that was decisive.

Another agency, Family Community Center, has shifted its focus down to the community. The impasse altered their sense of what works. It increased their sense of relying on themselves and the local community. In other words, the government is too unstable. The financial realities of social service agencies require more stable avenues of funding. However, the impasse did not completely wipe away notions of lobbying and educating politicians. Marcia still saw the merit of at least trying to do that, whereas Jimmie Elliott, a veteran service provider of 44 years, has lost faith in the effectiveness of that tactic over his career.

The Political Field

Given that the Illinois state impasse was created due to politicians disagreeing on how to manage a state budget, it is unavoidable that everyday people have some thoughts regarding the political nature of the problem. My respondents had their assessment of the situation and could point to a person they felt was most responsible.

Many of my respondents blame former Governor Bruce Rauner. Jimmie Elliott of Early Journeys, one of the two respondents whose organization is suing the state, says, “This is horrific on so many levels. It's truly amazing to me that the Governor is doing it in our best interest because he's trying to fix the State." Governor Rauner framed the issue that Illinois was in a bind and tough calls had to be made in order to course correct the state. For Governor Rauner, that is why he would not budge with the Democrats on a budget. Jimmie had a hard time believing that framing of the issue given how much pain and suffering it caused. Jimmie went further:

> Well I think there's one primary actor and that's the Governor. I really do. Yeah, we can complain about the Dems and we can complain about Mike Madigan, but the Governor, if you look at what he said before the Primaries when he was running, he wanted to create a crisis, he wanted to use human services as hostages, he stated it. He stated what he wanted to do and now he's done it. And he's continuing to do it.

Jimmie is holding the Governor accountable for statements that were on the record, saying that he wanted to create a crisis to implement structural change for the state of Illinois. Given the Governor's own words, it's hard to hold other political players accountable for the mess created by the impasse especially when the Governor has the most power to push a budget through.

Other respondents felt that, given the Governor's business background, he does not understand social services very well. Diane Rowe of Second Chance Living was even more blunt: "I think it's our Governor. I'm sorry. I do. I don't think he really cares. I don't think that sector understands the clients I work with." Diane knows that it is difficult for the public and politicians to empathize and understand what some of her clients go through.

> And I don't know if they see [the] number [or] the value of the people I am working with and I think they're just brushed to the side. And to be honest, I think that what I do gets brushed to the side too. I don't think people see the value of the person who's on the front line trying to help them. You know what I'm saying? I think it's just kind of like, "Oh, you don't really get it."

Here, not only does she express that clients are not seen as worthy of compassion and care, but that her whole profession and line of work is undermined and undervalued. But her resilience to continue the work she does demonstrates a culture of caring service, an ethic that sustains her ability to empathize and try to understand people experiencing poverty. It is an ethic and perspective that is not extended to people in other people, like the former Governor, in business backgrounds.

One informant, Lori Mathis of New Life Ministries, saw no heroes and that the whole thing was criminal. Lori's organization does not receive state funding, but she understands the implications of the impasse beyond the financial.

> Well, it impacts our entire state. Yeah. I think it's criminal. That's what I think. Let's lock 'em up. Well it is? You know? The state's not paying its bills. And there was something in the paper yesterday I think about- you know there are court orders that they have to pay their bills. Well, I guess if you don't have the money- I don't know how you're supposed to pay your bills. I'm not really happy being a citizen in the state of Illinois right now.

The general antipathy of the impasse extended beyond her work and into her personal life. As a citizen, and not necessarily a social service worker, she is upset with how the state is managing itself.

Marcia Klein of the Family Community Center saw the whole impasse as a power struggle. She also expressed an interest in how Rauner was attempting to try new things.

> Rauner and Madigan. Rauner and Madigan, I felt it was a power struggle. I appreciate the fact that Rauner is trying to shake things up and change how we do what we do. Because to be honest with you I don't think any of them should have been paid until they had reached a budget 2 years ago. Almost 3 years ago. I feel that we are not collaborating anymore. I feel like the focus has gone from I just want to be re-elected instead of where the focus should be in serving the people that elected [you] to where you are at.

At a superficial glance, one might conclude that stating anything positive about Rauner is akin to feeling a false consciousness, given his strong business background and statements to essentially hold the social service sector hostage. However, Madigan has been in the political arena for a long time. And for a long time, social services has been cut, not paid enough attention, and underfunded for decades. Given the notoriety of Madigan, who allegedly has a lot of political influence, why has he not tried to champion the needs of the social services sector? Marcia's perspective represents one of abandonment. She feels that status quo folks are not working with social services either. So therefore, at least someone who is trying to do something different is seen in a positive way. That being said, Marcia felt that none of them (i.e., government employees, political representatives) should have been paid if they could not pass a budget. She also felt that if they cannot collaborate, an element expected of the social service sector, then they should not be in politics.

In general, several informants expressed how they felt politics in Illinois are corrupt, politicians cannot compromise anymore, and that it is all about party politics. Given the general negative assessment of government, it is not surprising that social service folks are looking elsewhere to help them stay functional.

Politicians already knowing.

When I asked my informants if their political representatives were aware of the damage already done to non-profits and continuing to do so there was no question about the fact that this was common knowledge. Melinda Ellis stated that "They're aware of it. They know. It's on the news. It's what's going on. People are up in arms. People are marching. People are holding signs in the front of their buildings. They're not unaware." Jimmie Elliott had brought up before that he had educated his political representatives and that there was only so much one could do to get change to happen. In this case, the impasse was pretty well known due to the media.

In an interesting statement Lori Mathis explained to me that "I think our legislators are hearing more than what they want to hear from everybody who is affected." Clearly, politicians are hearing about the troubles and tribulations of affected groups more than they likely care to hear. This antipathy toward politics is common for the New Life Ministries and other more religious organizations. The idea that those who represent us politically don't do a good job representing us is clear as well as the fact that when we give voice to our grievances through claims-making activity that it's "more than they want to hear."

Party politics.

The idea that party politics is what was running government amok was fairly common to my informants. Many of them mentioned how polarized politics has become and how it is incredibly difficult to find common ground and consensus. Jimmie Elliott offered his thoughts on why Democrats and Republicans struggle in Illinois to find any common ground:

> Well I think from the Dem's point of view, they would ruin their base because if they let the Governor completely win, unions will sort of become non-existent in the state. And there goes their base. So that's why the Dems are pushing so hard. I think for the Republicans they're pushing so hard not so much because of their base, because a lot of their base is mad about not having a budget. It's because the Governor and some of the other very rich people will run candidates against them and push them out of office if they compromise. They're fearing their job and their party loyalty more than they're fearing the hurt they're doing to their communities. Which is fascinating to me.

For Democrats, it is fighting for their political base and the existence of unions. For Republicans, it is money in politics and the fear that very wealthy people can push anyone who compromises right out of politics.

Advocacy

For everyone interviewed, the impasse did not stifle their sense of advocacy. Rather, it was strengthened. As mentioned earlier, the type of advocacy we talk about is important here. An individual-client based advocacy is what is meant here. "It's about the people we are trying to serve. And it's just made us even work harder at it I think." Their resolve was strengthened. Jacquelyn Green also generally states the importance of having a heart for this kind of work for the clients and to understand your staff well. This shows the resilience of those doing anti-poverty work. Anything thrown their way, they will still fight to help the client. What seems to be happening under increased neoliberalization is that other forms of advocacy, especially political advocacy, is being seen as ineffective. This is in due part to the growing distrust in the government to provide financial backing whatsoever. The impasse only worsened this. Agencies, and the public, in general viewed the government as incompetent for not being able to do their jobs. This reinforces the neoliberal narrative that 'big government' is ineffective and a poor mechanism for alleviating economic deprivation.

A Budget is Passed: "Whatever that means."

When I got to interview a number of informants, the impasse formally was ended and a budget finally passed. However, there was a general skepticism about what exactly that means. The damage had been done and now there is a budget. But what about fixing the damage? Diane Rowe offered me an analogy for understanding the passing of the budget and what was to come:

> Not good. Even the fact that we have a budget now, with the state is good, but people have been almost about to die. You know what I mean? It's almost like people who were already on life support and you're saying, "Okay, now you're actually a little better you don't need life support." But they are not ready to leave out of the hospital. Do you know what I'm saying? That's the best way I can put it. They're not like, "Okay, now you're fine." You are just not on life support anymore, but you're still very ill and that's how a lot of these agencies are…. And so now you're saying, "Yay, we have a budget." Yeah, but now we are just trying to recover from this horrible experience and it's not okay for everybody yet at all.

These agencies expressed how there is no real recovery phase for them. It is lost time and they are left to be 'creative' and solve problems as if it was business as usual. This lack of a recovery phase is consistent with the neoliberal rolling back of the welfare state. Do the damage and then do nothing to attempt to recover. The reason this happens is that the goal is to whittle away at the welfare function of government. Then politicians can state, rationally at that point, that funding for these types of programs are not a good use of money any longer. This is a good example of the Shock Doctrine (Klein 2007): a disaster (e.g., the impasse) strikes and then when the calm after the storm (passing the budget) everyone is so distracted and just thankful for the disaster to be over that there is limited or no conversation on how to fix things back to their normal levels. In this sense, the act of not doing something furthers a neoliberal agenda.

Resistance

The impasse has caused some agencies to resist the devastation in a variety of ways. Some have turned to the legal system, others serve on boards and challenge neoliberal thinking by their peers, and some turn toward direct service to ensure their model is client centered. In some instances, agencies pointed to indicators in the community that seemed to present diffuse examples of resistance where the presence of arts in the community shows the reverence for the appreciation for life.

Because of the impasse, Illinois was not paying its bills. In one case, Early Journeys and Family Community Center joined up with 100 other agencies in Pay Now Illinois to sue the Illinois Department of Human Services for their non-payment of bills. From the perspective of the agencies, they argued in court that contract law was not being upheld. The state of Illinois argued that without an appropriation, according to the Illinois Constitution, they do not have to pay those agencies. Marcia Klein explains,

> But now we have more of a voice because agencies are fighting back. I mean we had to file a lawsuit last year with a bunch of other private agencies and say, "Hey, this is the 3rd year in a row. We have floated you 2 million dollars or more of an interest free loan." Because we can't get interest off of the money that they're not paying us. But we're still having to pay our services and our staff. And so they filed it and said hey, "You need to honor your obligations." And that's sad that you have to go to that extent to get a message across.

From Klein's perspective, it is sad that the legal system had to be involved at all. The agencies involved in the lawsuit were all aware of what was at stake and the irreparable harm that has already been done.

Diane Rowe from Second Chance Living was required to be on the board for an organization that she felt was more number-hungry and not people-hungry. She took it as an opportunity to resist that ideological position:

> But I have developed the mindset of, "Okay, I hate going. I managed to go, I have to go." So I challenge them every time when I go around them. I used to sit there and be like, "I don't want to be here. How soon will this be over with?" But now I go in there and say, "Why are we doing it like this? Can we figure out another way? Is this person really being served?" I don't know if they like it or not. But I'm just learning now to just start opening my mouth and be like, "Since I got to be here. Maybe I will find a way to make an impact." At least I can leave and say at least I did everything I could to try to make a difference.

While Rowe may feel she is making a minimal impact, she is creating discourse and challenging her peers to think about the implications that policy decisions have on clients.

At the Family Community Center, Klein states it is good for service providers to remind themselves of what is at stake for clients. To remind themselves of the importance of direct service and the population of people that they are serving. "I think that they really lose sight and when you've been out of direct service for a while you definitely lose sight of who you are fighting for." From her perspective, direct service led to compassion and thoughtfulness. If you were working there, given the low wages to begin with, chances are that you were passionate about the people you were trying to help. For her, it is important for administration and anyone making policy to be reminded of front-line service work. That is what gives a face to the problem they are trying to solve:

> And I feel some people miss that. And so we get opportunities to get back into that direct service work which reconnects us and helps us then be better, as an administration, making decisions or as a supervisor or a manger making decisions. And so, I feel that as practice that that's something that they should all do. Get back in touch with who you're working, who you're serving, who you're caring for.

In her administrative duties, finding ways to never lose sight of the direct service work is a way to resist against policy that negatively loses sight of those we are trying to assist.

Melinda Ellis from Grace United pointed toward more general cultural affinities in the community as a sign of resistance against the notion she believes led to the impasse. “There’s a lot of arts in our community. You know when there’s arts there comes an appreciation for life and others and humanity. Humanity always comes with the arts.” For her, the arts allow the public as well as service providers to be more in tune to the needs of people. It allows people to look into a different dimension of human existence different from market concerns. This looks less at the business side of the world and examines the human experience of suffering and finding dignity amongst that suffering.

Dualities of Mind and Performance

I found that based on the source of funding (i.e., government vs. private) there were different types of dualities for my respondents. These existed before the impasse, but the crisis allowed my informants to reflect on the nature of their collaborations in the ecology of service providers. Many described their work with other agencies in a collaborative tone (e.g., ‘we’re a team’). This contradicts elements of New Public Management these agencies have adopted in response to forces of austerity prior to the impasse. I am going to highlight two types of dualities. One is of the mind. In my study, those who work at agencies without governmental support show an internalization of neoliberal language and expectations of clients (i.e., maintaining a strong work ethic, having personal responsibility) while also emphasizing the reasons to treat people humanely and with dignity. The other is a duality of performance. There is a frontstage and backstage split between interactions with governmental funding sources and clients.

Edgar Simmons: A duality of mind.

Edgar from Redemption Ministries seems to be torn between two different logics when we talked about helping the homeless. In one part of our conversation, he is expressing frustration with the “entitlement society,” one that “thinks they have a right to shelter, a right to food, a right to things.” He also mentions the breakdown of the family as a leading cause for societal problems. Here, he seems to be suggesting that the homeless, and particularly the unruly homeless, became so because they lacked discipline in their childhood:

> You can't discipline children in school. When I grew up, it was paddling. You didn't want to mess up at school because you didn't want to go to the teacher's office to get paddled. Right? And now, the kids are like, "You can't touch me." And they talk to teachers any old way, but that starts in the home, too. It used to be when I was a kid and you got into trouble at school, you got home and got in trouble because you got in trouble at school. And now, the parents are going to the schools and berating teachers for disciplining their kids. It's a mess. And we've created this whole thing. I think most of that is because we've handed out everything.

Edgar appears to attribute the bad decision making of people experiencing homelessness to a lack of discipline from their childhood home life. In a way, he implies the homeless who act like they are entitled to food and shelter are very much like unruly or lazy children. Therefore, programming must be constructed in a such a way to create discipline, undo the negative effects of bad parenting, and reverse the damage of welfare benefits given out ‘freely.’ It is particularly insightful when he states, “And we’ve created this whole thing. I think most of that is because we’ve handed out everything.” He is embracing the idea of an internal locus of control, one where individuals are responsible for their circumstances. If there is any structural explanation for poverty/homelessness that is of merit, it is that people have been given too much, as opposed to too little.

This perspective attributes blame to individuals. The major goal is always to get people back to work and off programs. What is problematic is that this pays little to no attention to the depth of the clients’ cognitive and emotional suffering that prevents them from obtaining work. Some agency providers may disregard this because they do not know how to effectively help them manage this suffering in order to exit homelessness. The most marginalized clients are those that have severe mental health issues, substance abuse, criminal histories, and a variety of disabilities. Shelters that temporarily help people experiencing homelessness typically have difficulties getting their clients permanently housed and connected to long-term services that they need. For example, Edgar discusses a problem of access to mental healthcare:

> I would say 60-65% of the men we service have mental healthcare issues. And we don't have proper mental healthcare out here because we don't have the funding for the mental health facilities. We don't have places where we can put people until they can get better.

Edgar admits that these clients are difficult to work with in terms of guiding them to Jesus or housing. He makes it clear that this gap in services is one of the fundamental reasons why their shelter does not have as high a success rate for housing people.

From his point of view, people who are industrious, hard-working, and enterprising find their way out of poverty. However, religiosity is a core element that is required to develop the work ethic. Serving God and being a follower of Jesus Christ entails love, but also providing discipline to those who lack it. In this perspective, those who are stuck in the cycle of poverty and homelessness have not come to Christ. He fears that people become indolent when welfare systems do not incentivize hard work and basic resources are ‘handed out,’ which exacerbates what he calls the ‘sin problem’:

> If you make people too comfortable on the welfare system, they're going to stay on there forever. But if you make it to where you have to do something for your benefits, then I think that would help us, too.

This perspective underlines one aspect of the problem of poverty: current institutional arrangements of service provision. His colleagues agree. Government bureaucracies and secular social services are part of the overall problem in the alleviation of poverty. They view these current arrangements as ‘free goodies’ that kill the entrepreneurial spirit. Additionally, Edgar pointed out that these agencies are constantly ‘chasing money’ and having to do excessive amounts of paperwork. In his assessment, this means less time to help clients and that government agencies experience goal displacement: more time and energy is spent tracking and reporting on work to get reimbursed for money than spending more time interacting with clients.

Edgar focuses his critique of the ‘entitlement society’ on the Housing First model that is used by another agency in the city.

> Well they have the housing model that says, "Housing First." You know. And that's great. I believe that people should be housed. But when you do that and there's no rules and bounds, that has turned into everybody's drunk, everybody's high. It's a mess.

According to him, without a structure of rules then housing programs become chaotic and people become lazy and ‘entitled.’ He goes on to explain that the work ethic, and exchanging one’s work for services, is key to climbing out of poverty.

However, in these discussions he seems to have forgotten or compartmentalized the humanizing statement he said earlier in our conversation:

> They're not a picture; they're not that person sitting in the doorway or under the bridge. They are people; they are human beings, they have souls, they have feelings, they have families. They have hurts, wants, needs. To understand that they're human beings. We need to drive that home. That they're your brothers and sisters, that we're called to care for those folks, so that they're not "those folks" anymore. We've got to be able to pull them out of homelessness.

Clearly, Edgar has emotion care work qualities, as exhibited by his concern for loving the men in his shelter. He wants them treated with respect and dignity. In another part of our conversation, he described the injustice of the treatment of people experiencing homelessness when he was accused of being homeless himself in the rain underneath an awning by hotel staff and was told to move along. He’s also concerned with the most marginalized people experiencing homelessness: the mentally ill. He understands the difficulties and steps they must go through in order to get help. This kind of perspective is in stark contrast to his statements that his clients are entitled, lack a work ethic, and are too comfortable on welfare. This statement humanizes the clients he works with daily. It recognizes the stigmas associated with homelessness and how one is treated poorly due to this status. It also highlights the sense of urgency to care for people.

How does Edgar, and many others in my sample who share his perspective, reconcile these seemingly disparate viewpoints of people down on their luck? On the one hand, it appears that neoliberal concepts have been adopted into his worldview because they are born out of the perception that austerity is real. This is particularly true for agencies that rely on private donations, which is inherently precarious. When resources are limited (e.g., housing, shelter beds, money), there must be a system to effectively and efficiently help people. If there is not, then agencies could be accused of abusing those limited resources. Furthermore, when a shelter is funded by a ministry, and it therefore must rely on collaborating with private donors for funding, then that agency is going to have to- at least to some degree- internalize whatever ideology that those donors favor. If the private shelter, in its mission and practice, does not mirror the values of the private donors that fund it, then they might give support to some other ministry or organization that is more in line with their own views.

Theoretical constructions of an entitlement society and the inherent value of exchanging work for services allows staff to make sense of who gets those sparse resources. Therefore, policies like Housing First are seen with skepticism and disdain. It is just free stuff, which does not solve any problems. However, it seems when Edgar talks about his day-to-day interactions with the men experiencing homelessness that his perspective disconnects from the world of entitlement; care comes first. Homelessness and poverty become a raw experience when you speak and work with someone living in those conditions. It is possible that the realities of homelessness overcome the more neoliberal narrative which seeks to explain it.

Diane Rowe: A duality of performance.

The type of duality that I found in Diane from Second Chance Living, a publicly funded agency, is not an internal or mental one but rather an external, performative one. Goffman's notion of frontstage and backstage self-presentation and James Scott's hidden transcripts as acts of resistance are both useful in analyzing Diane's perspective and actions at her agency. While she is following a neoliberal role, which is apparent by her work title of 'Family Self-Sufficiency Grants Manager,' it becomes clear from her reflections in our interview that she is more about "digging deep" to help clients. She wants to connect with them on a personal level by listening to their stories and doing this across long periods of time – sometimes several years. This contradicts notions of efficiency and pragmatism that the neoliberalization of services generally entails.

Diane is under the stress of bureaucratic accountability measures of the grant she operates, yet she perseveres in her pro-social work ethic. Her responsibilities include writing the grant and reporting on it as well as executing it through direct service work. When she does case management, she focuses on ways in which she can identify and remove barriers to independence for her clients. Much of her work is guided by assessment forms created to reflect requirements of the HUD grant, which are typically centered around eligibility requirements for her clients. Through these forms, she can determine that clients can move into affordable housing units that the project has as well as figuring out what supports are missing for current residents. Originally, her HUD grant emphasized making sure clients got a job, got into school, as well as how many she was able to secure these services. Her job depends on meeting these quotas that she is forced to set in order to get the funding. More recently, HUD has added components to get agencies to secure support services.

She tries to create a good workflow with other agencies in the community in order to connect her clients to self-sufficiency support services (e.g., counseling, school and career training). In fact, her HUD grant sometimes specifies which agencies she must connect her clients to. However, some problems arise due to HUD not understanding how things play out at the local level:

> But when I make connections with this agency, when I make referrals to this agency, they're so number hungry that I do not see evidence of them being people-service hungry…and I can't stand that. All they're worried about is- and I know because I work under a grant too. So I know that pressure, I get it. But darn, don't treat somebody like a number. You know what I'm saying? It took a while for me to get them ready to even send them out there to you and you can barely work with them? Or you're going to tell them, "Well go sit on that computer and hopefully you will find a job…." They're just trying to get their numbers, or they only work with the most successful people who barely really need them**.** And they're like, "Oh, yeah we can help you do this, this, and this." But when you send somebody there that is lower functioning, they need some help, they need some babysitting, they're like, "We really don't think you're eligible for our program." Yeah, they are. You just don't want to put in the time to work with them.

Because some agencies are forced to pay attention to numbers and tracking services, they sometimes may not provide high quality, individualized help to the most vulnerable. Diane recognizes how stipulations set from afar can have unintended consequences:

> It looks good on paper and I understand how somebody could write it like that. But when you're not there you don't understand there's a whole level of complications on the local level that you guys don't see nationally.

Diane critiques the relations of ruling (i.e., HUD) for assuming relationships at a higher level will play out the same way at the local level. Despite that, Diane makes sure she gets the numbers that she needs to report back to HUD for her grant. Her goals for helping clients have not been displaced, as it seems to have happened at this other agency.

In addition to the above institutional expectations and requirements, there is an emotion care work that is not tracked. This emotional component is essential for her to be successful in helping clients. But it is overlooked by the relations of ruling that create the rules of the grants.

While there is this glaring omission in how her work is evaluated, Diane makes sure that she accomplishes this kind of work. Even though Diane is trying to help her clients become self-sufficient as HUD defines it, she is doing work that closely examines the real barriers (e.g., emotional, intellectual) many of her clients face. Her work often lies in fostering the emotional fortitude and building the confidence in her clients to go out into the community and get the help they need from those other agencies. She mentions that some of her clients confide in her that they are overwhelmed, exhausted, scared, depressed, experience discrimination, have difficulties parenting, or are in abusive romantic relationships. Another reality that she observes is that many of her clients from fatherless, broken families. Sometimes she just holds space for clients to vent. Many of these issues are revealed in one-on-one conversations over the course of several years. She notes that she has witnessed improvements in these clients, but that it takes several years of meeting with and reaching out to client to help resolve these barriers. All of this work to recognize the place of emotions in her clients is invisible and held backstage away from HUD. This type of work is what Diane means when she said that she genuinely wants to help people.

On the frontstage Diane follows what HUD wants. She pushes for self-sufficiency in her clients, she makes required connections in the community, and tracks her progress. She also can write her grants to reflect the realities of the care work she does in her office, even though that work is mainly invisible. Backstage she helps clients to the best of her ability and tries to “dig deep.” She has mentioned how clients will break down crying in her office, how she works with people with depression to slowly make progress, and she also critiques the work of other agencies that are neglectful of certain clients. Backstage, away from what is said in grants or the required referrals, Diane advocates for her clients in a way that focuses on their specific needs. HUD pushes a more neoliberal numbers-based rhetoric for how grants and services are to be distributed, which is expected to negatively impact the quality of service work. However, grant writers and service providers can use their discretion to ensure quality care is provided. This suggests that a duality of performance exists among some social service providers that receive governmental assistance.

End Notes

1. Here is the account of Leroy Harrington, the Executive Director of Redemption Ministries, at length on how he, and the agency, views Christianity. This perspective influences how they think about sin, the root problem, as well as how to solve the problem: “Well the ministry itself is really non-denominational, but would fall into what I would guess say historical orthodoxy of the Christian faith. So the belief that a) God is created. For me, it comes down to about the 4 R’s. One, we’re responsible because he’s created us. So God has created, if he’s created us, if he’s created this world and us, then we are responsible to him. It’s his world, his, he gets to make the rules. The second R is relationship because he not only created us, he created us in his image. And consequentially stamped that image on us so that we can have relationship with him and he can have communion with us and relate to us in the relationship of love that he wants to. Unfortunately, the 3rd R is we rebelled against that. And we didn’t want that. We thought we knew better. And Adam and Eve did that and so do we every day. We always think we know better than what he is. So that rebellion sort of wrecked the relationship and it needs to be restored and to do that God set about a rescue plan. And that rescue plan ultimately led to sending his son to die, bury, be buried, and be resurrected so that he could pay out penalty for that rebellion and take our place and consequentially restore that relationship and ultimately he’s looking to restore all things to the original conditions. So not only our relationship with him and the relationship with the creation and the world. So the good news is when we come to know him we get to be a part of that reconciliation and that restoration.”

3. In certain emergency situations, they can provide food without the volunteer service. As stated on their website, “We will continue to provide emergency food assistance when necessary.” The site does not define what an emergency looks like.

4. On the website for New Life Ministries for their food co-op, it states the times in which people can contribute their labor in exchange for a food voucher to then get food as shopping hours. According to Garrow and Hasenfeld (2014), this blurs the line between service recipient and employee for the organization as well as then transforms the service recipient and treats them as a customer. It is a market solution that differs from standard food pantries.

5. I was unsuccessful after many attempts at getting an interview with the manager of homeless services from this agency that was a hub for homeless services in McLean County.

6. Housing First is the philosophy that it is easiest, and cheaper, to get people into housing *first* before addressing other kinds of barriers like substance abuse, mental health, ability to budget, etc.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

At the federal level, discussion and policy regarding homelessness is becoming increasingly neoliberal. The White House Council of Economic Advisers (2019:1) released their report where they utilized a “simple supply and demand framework” to analyze the complexities of homelessness. In their assessment, the tolerability of sleeping on the streets increases homelessness and policing policy ultimately shapes this factor. For areas with increased homelessness, the implication is clear: we are too soft on those sleeping in the streets and we help enable their ability to stay there. The Trump Administration also replaced the former Executive Director for the US Interagency Council on Homelessness with Dr. Robert Marbut, Jr. to have a “wholesale shift in the country’s philosophy” on helping people experiencing homelessness (Kesling 2020). He supports “housing forth,” which calls for behavioral modification in order to earn the right to shelter beds and permanent housing (Yentel 2019). This is the institutional reality my informants are now up against.

My informants are always tasked with how to make sense of their work in a constantly changing terrain. For this study, the Illinois state budget impasse was the key moment for social services. Clearly, the economic impact of not getting paid for services took a toll on the sector in predictable ways. The ways in which agencies made sense of all this varied. Based on previous literature, these neoliberal pressures are expected to push agencies to more fully adopt and implement new public management. While there were many things I learned from speaking with my informants, I will only highlight some of what I consider to be my major findings. Some of these findings are directly related to the impasse. Other findings are more related to business as usual.

The Ecology of Homeless Services Providers

Since agencies are interconnected in an ecology of service providers, what one agency does will impact the whole system. In responding to neoliberal forces, organizations tend to become increasingly similar in structure. This reflects the simultaneous processes of institutional isomorphism: coercive (i.e., mandated from authority, formally or informally) and memetic (i.e., imitation derived from uncertainty). All agencies I spoke with are forced to confront the financial issues of their organization, leaving less time and energy to focus on programing. Elements of new public management are evident by the emphasis on assessment and performance standards to remain accountable to whomever their funders are. Agencies must be 'good stewards' of money and be 'creative' with their limited resources.

Tensions existed in this ecology before the impasse. Whether an agency had governmental grants was a key factor in determining how services were provided. Faith-based organizations often would not get government grants or contracts. This allowed them to develop programming in ways that emphasized their ideological positions as influenced by their religiosity. A focus on character development, work ethic, and personal responsibility were highlighted as pathways to lead individuals out of homelessness and poverty by these agencies. Ideological and political differences in agencies have the potential to create tension and unease in an ecology of providers. In order for agencies to collaborate effectively, they must generally share a similar vision and mission statement. Although these are abstract elements of these organizations, they impact the delivery of services and have a ripple-effect throughout the community of providers.

An ecology of service providers is both a set of networks and a geographic space. Various organizations have to determine how to interact with other agencies in order to best fulfill their mission statement. In the case of Redemption Ministries, they were disillusioned with the local Continuum of Care and other government agencies because of their secular focus. They wanted to move into a different direction: creating and maintaining a religious network of providers. That would include faith-based organizations that provide direct services, churches, and even for-profit businesses run by people of faith. At present, this kind of expansive religious network has not been developed.

There are other kinds of network divisions: those created by government mandate (e.g., HUD-funded Continuums of Care) or groups oriented toward profession or sector of society (e.g., a social services council). Agencies actively must navigate these networks within this ecology of providers and make decisions on where to spend their limited time and energy.

The shock waves of the impasse caused the network of providers to look at their connections in more collaborative ways. This was slightly unexpected especially coming from agencies that were not financially impacted. Regardless of the funding source for these providers, they all spoke about 'teamwork' and 'being in it together.' What is unclear from my conversations with people is whether these agencies acted on these sentiments. It provided a moment of reflection that agencies could be reminded of the ways in which collaboration, not competition, was important for the delivery of services to their clients. These notions of collaboration made it clear that it existed before the impasse. But in times of crisis, it appears the sense of togetherness was strengthened.

Despite the highlight of collaboration, what was noticeably absent in this ecology of providers during the impasse was any claims-making activity that emphasized the structural problems of homelessness and housing instability. Incidentally, there was also a lack of coordinated resistance against the impasse or the structural problems of homelessness. While two agencies did join against the state in a lawsuit, this was because they were financially impacted. It appears that even though the crisis showed providers they must work together because they are 'in the same boat,' there were no efforts taken on behalf of every organization to resist the complications and problems brought on by the impasse. Additionally, while a couple agencies mentioned that they did advocacy work with the public and their political representatives, very little was being done to provide a structural account, and solutions, to the problem of homelessness. This shows that this particular ecology of providers in this community have untapped potential to organize around common visions and impact change locally and beyond at the state level.

The Impasse: Business as Usual, Desperation, & Distrust in Government

Even though all my informants were dealing with the crisis of the impasse, and this was the original impetus for my study, my conversations revealed other issues. I found out that in many ways the crisis was business as usual, albeit in a more heightened form. Everyone was still contending with many of these problems before the crisis hit. Most of my informants were frustrated with the impasse and were able to identify who was at the root of it: the former Governor Bruce Rauner. Others (e.g., Lori Mathis) 'saw no heroes' and so her indictment of political blame was more diffuse and across the board. However, all of them lacked any real mechanism to act on this. Even the social service providers who decided to sue the state were unsuccessful in their attempts to get remediation. In all, this crisis sowed more distrust in the institution of government as a means to help pay for social services. It compelled some of my informants to a point of desperation. They wanted any budget to get passed and they would pick up the pieces afterwards. Being forced to be creative (e.g., suggesting businesses should get funding instead and that agencies should work with those businesses) has the potential danger of accepting more neoliberal perspectives on the mechanisms of funding.

The Idea of Austerity

The driving force of agencies to implement new public management is a financial environment based on austerity. The lack of resources available for agencies causes them to tighten their belts and be ‘good stewards of money.’ The rational calculations behind this are financial. Alterations in service provision happen as agencies adopt the idea that clients need to conform to the environment of austerity. In other words, if they cannot get with the ‘program,’ then they are out. They are beyond help. Not all agencies responded this way. The duality of mind and performance I discussed showcases the empathetic care work inherent with homeless services. Even when more neoliberal concepts are embraced, staff in my study still appear to prioritize empathizing with people experiencing homelessness over conforming to other rules of programming.

Government funding is more stable than private donations. Those with this funding can afford to use more discretion to “dig deep” with respect to discovering and addressing the barriers facing clients. More religious organizations, alternatively, do not have that stability in funding and their situation is therefore more precarious. I argue that this enables them to fall back on an ideology that promotes individuals working on themselves and utilizing a strong work ethic. Those willing to get employment and save money and do their best to follow rules are the ones that will escape homelessness. Those that do not are viewed as too costly to work with, or at least much more difficult. Stricter guidelines are placed on them for entry or re-entry into programs.

Contradictions in Service Work Give Rise to Dualities

This study investigated how people down on the ground made sense of neoliberal changes as well as how they navigated crisis in order to maintain funding and stay open. From the beginning of this investigation, I did not assume that service providers, at any level (whether executive directors or direct service workers), took neoliberal welfare logic and displaced their understanding of what services and service provision mean. While they may, on the surface, use neoliberal discourse to appease the public and funding sources, backstage when they are performing service, they engage in logics that are more empathetic, non-exploitative, and social rights oriented. This type of duality of performance was exemplified by Diane Rowe at Second Chance Living. It offered insight into a small form of resistance; hidden transcripts that describe overcoming barriers and examining the emotions of her clients. It is a kind of neoliberal lip service. This challenged the relations of ruling built into her grants, which call for bureaucratic accountability measures that prize outcomes, which consume time, and undermine the intensive work it takes to achieve those outcomes.

This duality of performance underscores a paradox of the relations of ruling. Theoretically, it would make sense that agencies subjected to grants and their requirements would be more vulnerable to the neoliberalization of their services. They follow regulations and rules determining how to spend their time and money. However, those with grants appeared to have resisted neoliberal logic and values regarding their service work. This shows that coercive isomorphic processes may be effective at getting agencies to transform their organizational response to acquire money, but it does not necessarily follow that they will ideologically alter their perspective on the treatment of clients.

The other duality, one of the mind, was more perplexing. Edgar Simmons from Redemption Ministries was an archetype of this form. The element that was perplexing was that the two disparate viewpoints did not seem to create any cognitive dissonance. While he stated that all people experiencing homelessness deserve respect and dignity and our love, he also critiqued the negative effects the welfare system has on his clients. He also related the 'entitlement society' back to the fact that families were 'broken.' From his perspective, this all stems from the sin problem. It appears his religiosity allows him to love all, as Christ would, while also providing him the avenue to discipline and guide these men at his shelter to become Christian men. In his worldview, these perspectives do not seem incompatible.

For agencies that are privately funded, the relations of ruling are not governmental agencies providing access to grant money. Individual people choose to donate to these organizations or volunteer their time. By doing so, they contribute to the relations of ruling set forth by faith-based organizations. Interestingly, the relations of ruling that appeared to have the strongest impact was not from units of government, rather from places of faith. In order to receive their services, through religious and spiritual rules regarding morality, they implement ways to control behavior and thought in an attempt to provide their prescriptions for living. This was particularly important for faith-based organizations that prioritized proselytizing, as opposed to other agencies of faith that tried to use those principles to advance pro-social goals. However, even New Life Ministries, which did not prioritize proselytizing, furthered more ways to include the exchange of work in the provision of services. A lot of their inspiration did come from outside ideological forces by reading popular books on social work vis-à-vis the ministry. Their response to neoliberal forces, by adapting it into their programming, still focuses on a creating a relations of ruling that tries to prescribe more productive modes of behavior. While they were not as focused on bringing people to Jesus, they were focused on instilling good work ethic and character into their clients. As my study shows, those without grants and had a somewhat strong religious standpoint for their organization usually followed neoliberal values and implemented them in their service work. This may be because it aligned with their more conservative logic and values. What is worth noting is that their duality of mind at least prevents a wholesale adoption of neoliberal thinking because it allows for the contest of ideas on how to best provide services to clients.

Based on my findings, the notion of an internalized neoliberal logic that is embedded into the cultural fabric of the agency is not as hegemonic as previously believed in the literature (Harvey 2005; Schram and Silverman 2012). While many studies talk about the 'common-sense' appeal of neoliberal thinking or its 'taken-for-granted' status, on the surface we do not know readily about hidden transcripts and other contradictions that undermine the neoliberal perspective. My findings support the literature on actually existing neoliberalism. Additionally, even when neoliberal thinking is embraced at a rhetorical level, the behaviors of administrative staff differs from what is professed. My evidence indicates that neoliberal thinking is being grappled with (e.g., Diane Rowe). The budget impasse exacerbated the financial pressures that caused agencies to reflect on the values that matter to their organizations. There are contradictions between rhetoric and beliefs against what happens with service provision. A culture of compassion contradicts and challenges market logic.

The Impact of Religiosity

How religious an organization professed to be was a major determinant as to whether they would get governmental funding or not. It was also the major determinant as to how neoliberal they were. While many organizations have a historical background rooted in Christian thinking and ethics, most did not attempt to integrate that perspective in their service work in an institutional manner. The reason for this is structural. To gain access to governmental funding, a largely secular institution, agencies cannot expect clients to attend chapel service or conversion to a specific religion.

Places like Redemption Ministries can maintain this service quality because they rely on private donations. New Life Ministries, while religious, does not take the same approach to doing ‘the Lord’s work.’ In many ways, their programming has embraced new public management the most. This is in part because they have adopted some elements of Robert Lupton’s (2011) work, which is ideologically consistent with the neoliberal perspective on social services. As mentioned above, because these more religious organizations choose to not seek out governmental grants, they retain their ideological autonomy and transparent identity.

Redemption Ministries was the only faith-based organizations to place emphasis on proselytizing. I also ended up getting four informants from this one location. The choice to do so in a way can be considered a limitation of my study. Certainly, taking more informants from an organization who was not financially impacted by the impasse meant that the narratives that arose from my work would lack specific themes that tie together those of a common experience linked to the crisis of the impasse. It was also the only organization where I could hear from different position in the hierarchy of the organization to hear how they understood the work they did. However, it did allow me to learn more about a starkly different approach in the theory of service provision and compare that to agencies that were more closely linked to governmental relations of ruling. It also allowed me to see how religiosity seems to elicit a response to neoliberal change that is more aligned with its end goals of creating people that are highly attuned to notions of personal responsibility, entrepreneurship, and a strong work ethic.

Future Research Possibilities

In this study, I interviewed people from seven agencies. In looking at several organizations, one trades depth for breadth. In trying to understand the process of neoliberalization, additional research that focuses on one agency would be beneficial. This is because one would interview more people from a single place, which would elicit multiple viewpoints from the same site. Consensus and points of conflict could arise. It would help show the process in which top-down policy is negotiated and implemented at the street level. It would also add complexity to our understanding of the ecosystem of service providers by learning how even one agency can potentially have many conflicting viewpoints. In figuring out what agency to investigate, one method could be figuring out an agency that others are having problems with or other agencies that are viewed as overly competitive, number-hungry, or seen as being overly restrictive.

Another line of future research would be to look at what is driving the decisions to exclude people from services: actual scarcity of resources or ideology. Or it could be both. This can allow us to determine why services become more restrictive.

The dimension of religion in social services needs to be explored more. In my study, certain topics naturally arose in our conversations: ‘busintry’ (i.e., a merger of business and ministry) and friend-raising (i.e., not fund raising). From my study, it appears that the more religious an organization is, and the less they receive governmental grants, the more they adopt neoliberal practices in their day-to-day work. I have offered some suggestions why this is the case. What is unknown is the extent of these practices in other faith-based organizations. Additionally, it would be worth exploring the ecology of the faith-based system of services. This includes more churches and organizations that prioritize the primacy of Christ in their delivery of services. While the ecosystem of services I found out in my study includes these faith-based organizations, places like Redemption Ministries allude to another network of providers.

Lastly, we ought to talk directly to service recipients about their perspective on program rules discussing self-sufficiency and personal responsibility and how that effects their homeless careers and the texture of street life. These organizations exist to assist these people. Their perspective is critical in determining the efficacy of these programs. It would also be useful to get providers to delve more deeply into what they think of self-sufficiency and personal responsibility. All my informants discussed it, but our conversations never explored the depths of what they actually mean by these things. It is important to consider what personal responsibility means to these players because it allows us to explore how agencies take accountability for how helpful their programming is. The heavier the reliance on personal responsibility of clients, it becomes more difficult to evaluate or critique the shortcomings of programming so that it can be improved.

Responding to Neoliberal Policy

In my discussion with my informants as well as my own personal experiences working in the social services field, I have developed a few ideas on how to best assist agencies. Most of these ideas are aimed at easing their financial burdens, which would then allow them to focus on the ways to best serve their clients.

1. Change away from a money reimbursement model for grants. In researching more on grants, it came to my attention that grants work by using the local agencies' own money first and then requesting a voucher from the governmental agency to get reimbursed for work already completed. Agencies are regularly audited, so paying the money forward

should not matter. This would allow agencies to have an immediate cash flow to work with, as well as considerably less fiscal uncertainty.

2. Get rid of match requirements. Match requirements for grants prevent agencies that already lack funding from gaining access to grant money.

3. Change heavy record keeping requirements. Most agencies that do not get governmental grants avoid them due to the time-consuming and extreme levels of accountability placed on them. Easing on these requirements would allow more agencies to apply for funds and benefit from more stable funding.

4. Increase governmental funding. While certainly not a novel idea, these agencies have been lacking funds for their work for decades. Increased funding can help pay workers better, hire more staff to process the high demand, and allow for more services to go to clients.

5. Start and maintain conversations within the network of service providers on ways to best discuss how they reach out to politicians, and persuade the public, on the importance of a sustained governmental involvement with social services. The network of providers and various meetings already exist. Allowing these other organizational changes to occur will require a sustained effort regarding the importance of increased governmental support for this work.

Participatory action research calls for a further step at this point in the ongoing research process. That is to figure out how to distill the findings of my study and share that within the local ecology of social services in a meaningful way to initiate progressive discourse and social change. One of the original goals of my research was to map and understand the internal dynamics of the ecological network of service providers who assist people experiencing homelessness. In doing so, my hope is that my study can allow service providers perspective on how to create a more integrated and coordinated system of services that does not lose sight of the rights and vulnerabilities of those they serve. The dynamics of the homeless services field contribute to the challenges, as well as opportunities, to create a positive system of services.

The ways in which programs serving people experiencing homelessness are organized have great import for the texture of street life. It sets the rules for service recipients in how they can receive aid. This impacts the homeless careers people have when navigating the streets. New public management creates contradictions in how service work with the most vulnerable is understood and undertaken. These contradictions give rise to fractures in the process of neoliberalization of services.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Demographics:

1) What is the name of your position or job title? ***If you have printed or online material available, I'll appreciate having access to this.**

2) How would you describe your central roles and responsibilities in this position?

3) What is the nature of your formal education/training, in preparation for this position?

4) How long have you held this position?

5) How long have you worked in the human services sector, and what other, past roles have you had?

On the Organization and interagency relationships:

1) How would you describe the central goals of your agency? **[Mission statement.]**

- To what extent do you feel you are meeting these goals? Please elaborate.

- What are some barriers for you attaining your goals? (I realize there may be varied kinds of barriers.)

2) Take me through a typical day here for you. What is that like?

3) What are the services that this organization provides?

- Who typically receive services, and how, if at all, has this population changed over time?

- How do you define, and determine, those who receive services?

-What if any external rules or constraints define your ability to provide services, e.g., regarding eligibility or the duration of services?

- What are the expectations held on those clients to receive services? Any rules?

- What if any changes have you seen over time in demand for your services? Or, a separate question, what changes have you seen over time regarding those seeking your services?

-Similarly, what if any changes have you seen in the kinds of services people are seeking?

- I assume there is interdependence among agencies serving vulnerable people. What kinds of referrals or partnerships are especially valuable for you, involving other agencies?

4) Can you describe the staff who work here? **(IF you're provided a directory, this will be helpful.)**

- Do you have more full-time or part-time employees? Has this changed over time?

- What is the typical background of your staff? (Or, what is the range of backgrounds?)

- In what ways do you see you and your coworkers being most successful, in meeting clients' needs?

5) Can you describe to me the history of your organization?

- What significant changes have occurred in your organization, in your experience?

- Do you recall any specific major events in the past that altered the way this organization operates?

6) The State of Illinois has been without a budget for nearly two years.

- How are you adapting?

- Which goals or programs of your organization are being prioritized? Are there trade-offs being made?

- How does this budget impasse impact your advocacy and delivery of direct service?

- In your estimate, who are the primary actors creating this predicament?

7) What are the sources of your funding? (Seek out published material/reports)

- Do you receive any federal or state funding?
- Do you receive grants from various foundations?
- In what ways are you accountable to your funding sources for how you run your organization?

8) What do you see as recurring challenges or unmet needs, for your clients?

9) In what ways would you hope to enhance your effectiveness of the provision of services?

10) What is your involvement in lobbying or advocacy roles?

- What kinds of community engagement or communication do you have, to enhance fundraising or public awareness?
- What, if any, outreach do you have with political representatives?

11) How, if at all, have your interactions or partnerships with other organizations in McLean County changed, in the context of the budget impasse?

- Are they other non-profits? Businesses? Universities?

12) What do you, and your agency, see or hope to see in terms of collective advocacy for human services, in this political climate?

13) Could you identify for me a couple or few agencies that have been important partners for your agency?

14) Can you think of anything else that you find important that you would like to add?

Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

Introduction
This research study is being conducted by Erik Zdansky, a Master's student in Sociology, at Illinois State University (ISU) to determine how and in what ways human service organizations are reacting to the Illinois State budget impasse. Particularly, I will be focused on organizations that provide some kind of services, direct or indirect, to the homeless in McLean County. In order to participate, you must be over 18 years of age. Additionally, you must have worked within McLean County in the human service sector for at least 3 years.

Procedures
If you choose to take part in this research study you will be interviewed. This will last from 60 to 75 minutes and it will be audio recorded. The location and time of the interview will be at your convenience.

Risks/Discomforts
The risks are minimal and discomfort would be no more than you may feel from discussing your work with others on a daily basis.

Benefits
Once this study is complete, it may help the human service sector in McLean County see where it is at in terms of outlook on this issue, but also it will serve as a guide. This is a research project about your organizations and how they are interpreting the budget impasse, but also how you are responding to it in a practical way. To maintain your confidentiality, however, only themes found in the data will be presented to the community of service workers. It is my hope that this project will initiate dialogue among service providers, which can help us collectively assist those we serve that are the most vulnerable in society.

Confidentiality
All information provided will remain strictly confidential.

Participation
Participating in this study is voluntary. Refusal to participate involves no penalty or loss of benefits. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. You can also skip questions you do not feel like answering.

Conflicts of Interest
To the researcher's best knowledge, there are no conflicts of interest in conducting this study. There are no internal or external funding for this research.

Questions about the Research

For any questions about this research, Erik Zdansky can be contacted at 309-472-7642 or ewzdans@ilstu.edu. Additionally, Dr. Chris Wellin, the ISU faculty advisor for this research project, can be reached at 309-438-7698 or cwellin@ilstu.edu.

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

I consent to participating in the above study and to have my interview be audiotaped.

Signature ________________________________

Date _____________________

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Research Ethics & Compliance Office at Illinois State University at (309) 438-2529 or via email at rec@ilstu.edu.