Time Seizures and the Self: Institutional Temporalities and Self Preservation among Homeless Women

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Abstract

This article documents temporalities of homelessness as experienced by many homeless people today, those living in the midst of an urban "services ghetto"—where social service organizations abound, but such organizations fail to coordinate the provision or timing of services, producing an incoherent multiplicity of offerings and schedules. I analyzed distinct but related temporal modes by which institutional timetables controlled homeless women's existence, what I call empty time and overscheduled time. The paradoxes of institutionalized waiting and strict yet inconsistent timetables exacted profound material and psychological tolls. For homeless women in Chicago, many of whom experienced symptoms of severe mental illness, simply securing their daily needs was such a time-consuming endeavor that they had to focus on short-term self-preservation rather than seeking stable employment or housing. Using anthropological theories of self and subjectivity, I argue that what was at stake for many women was more than the exhaustion of shelter life—negotiating institutional timetables also threatened their sense of dignity and humanity. Through the everyday patterning of women's time, nonprofit agencies whose stated aim was to eliminate homelessness paradoxically frustrated women's efforts to escape life on the streets. I conclude the analysis with policy suggestions to address these problems.

Keywords

homelessness; mental illness; gender; temporality; self

On a cold, windy afternoon I sat in Sarah's Circle, a drop-in center for homeless women in Chicago, when I noticed Tammy[i] come through the doors. She was dressed for the weather in a heavy coat, scarf, and gloves, but she had red, chapped cheeks that looked exposed and windblown. As she stripped off layers and acclimatized to the warmth of the center's great room, she noticed me sitting among the other women and made a beeline for my table. "Want to hear a story of frustration in homeless land?" Tammy asked me. She knew I was researching women's experiences of homelessness in Uptown, a Chicago lakeside neighborhood that bears the dubious distinction of having one of the highest concentrations of homeless people and persons with severe mental illness in the city (Luhrmann 2007). Tammy, a Euro-American middle-aged woman, was like many of the women who

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[i]All names are pseudonyms.

frequented Sarah's Circle. She had been homeless for a few months at this point, and we had already had multiple conversations in which she described the logistical and emotional challenges of life as a newly homeless person. Unlike many other women I met, in talking with me Tammy maintained a cynical sense of humor about being homeless.

Tammy's "story of frustration" began that morning with her case manager making an appointment for her at a government work program, but when Tammy arrived for her appointment, she realized she had been given the wrong address. With no money for a payphone, she walked to the state Department of Human Services and waited in line to call the program for its correct address. By the time she was able to do this, it was too late for her to go that day, and the next available appointment for the work program was in two weeks. So Tammy walked to the grocery store, where she tried to use her SNAP benefits (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, also known as food stamps). There, she learned that the money had not been credited to her magnetic card that week, as it should have been. The food stamp office asked her to come to their office to clear up the problem, where she waited for an hour and a half before speaking to a staff member. That person told her she would have to come back another day when she could speak to a caseworker. Fed up from the wasted effort and futile waiting, Tammy walked over to the drop-in center, where she knew she could at least get an afternoon meal. She told me she would have been better off if she had not tried to achieve any of her tasks, but had just slept the day away instead. "I may be homeless, but I still value my time," she stated with conviction.

Tammy's experience that day was particularly frustrating, but it was not unusual in any way. Long waits for social assistance, strictly delimited timetables for providing services, and trudging from one office to another to obtain the basics of self-preservation were completely normative experiences for the women I got to know who found themselves homeless. In this paper, I examine women's experiences of time as they navigate the institutional network that provides services for homeless people in Uptown. In the process, I show how non-profit agencies whose stated aim is to eliminate homelessness paradoxically frustrated women's best efforts to escape life on the streets. This occurred through the everyday patterning of women's time. Institutional time schedules operated at multiple levels- on women's behavior, their bodies, and their perceptions of self. I found that for many of these women, simply securing their daily needs was such a time-consuming endeavor that they had to focus on short-term self-preservation rather than seeking stable employment or housing. Further, succumbing to agencies' time schedules could seem so dehumanizing that many women became hopeless and demoralized. This further impinged on their efforts to escape homelessness.

Between 2003 and 2005, I was part of a team of ethnographers who researched the experiences of homeless women in the Chicago neighborhood of Uptown, and our findings inform the argument I present here. The vast majority of the women our research team met were desperate not to be homeless and were adamant that for them, homelessness was just a temporary condition. Yet over the course of two years of ethnographic fieldwork, we observed that most of these women remained homeless, in spite of their repeated efforts to escape shelter life. One of our central research questions was: why do these women have such trouble finding stable housing and income, especially since they engaged with a

multitude of service agencies that aimed to help people out of homelessness? The research literature suggests a range of issues that contribute to chronic homelessness, both individual and structural (Bourgois 2009, Dear and Wolch 1992, Desjarlais 1997, Hopper 2003, Luhrmann 2008). Personal problems like substance abuse, severe mental illness, domestic violence, and chronic medical conditions frequently complicate women's struggles to find stable housing. Beyond the issues affecting individual women's lives, chronic homelessness is a tragic outcome of the economic and institutional structures of contemporary North American society. Ever-shrinking state social security systems, combined with the terrible lack of affordable housing and jobs that pay a living wage, means that women who find themselves on the streets have very limited opportunities for lifting themselves out of destitution. Both individual and social and structural forces can seem insurmountable. However, customary institutional practices also prolong periods of homelessness for women in places like Uptown. In particular, I found that women's time was patterned in such a way that their taxing daily schedules became a clear obstacle to escaping homelessness.

Homelessness, Service Institutions, and Temporality

In the United States, the historic rise in homelessness in the 1980s changed the experiential and demographic dimensions of homelessness compared to previous eras (Hopper 2003, 1997, Rossi 1990). One major change has been that over the past few decades, some urban neighborhoods have come to house an increasing number of agencies that manage and provide services to homeless populations. Scholars use the term "service ghettoes" to describe these neighborhoods because of the tendency to spatially concentrate and isolate homeless persons around social service institutions (Wolch and Dear 1993, Dear and Wolch 1987, Marrow and Luhrmann 2012, Luhrmann 2010, 2008, von Mahs 2005, Culhane 2010). While many social scientists have analyzed the changing spatial dimensions of homelessness, few have noted or discussed the accompanying shift in temporalities of homelessness in such service "ghettoes." Yet the ways in which institutional networks in such areas administer and appropriate homeless people's time has dramatic effects on people's lives and sense of self, as I show in this article.

Concerns about time and institutional timetables were salient for many women we got to know, animating women's conversations and enabling a better understanding of what was at stake in the seizure of women's time by service agencies. Studies of other marginalized groups subject to institutional temporalities (such as inmates in asylums, or poor people forced to wait for state services) show how appropriating people's time can serve as a means of shaping subjectivity and reproducing power relations and social inequalities (Goffman 1961, Foucault 1977, Auyero 2012, Zerubavel 1985). I argue that similar processes were at work among homeless women.

A few anthropologists have analyzed temporalities in homelessness, although none have focused on the way a multiplicity of institutions (such as those found in a service "ghetto") shape the experience of time for homeless people. Existing research examines temporality within a single organization, like a homeless shelter (in which shelter time is likened to time in a "total institution;" Goffman 1961), or among "street people" with relatively few institutional contacts. For example, describing the temporal dimensions of life for residents

of a Boston homeless shelter, Robert Desjarlais noted that the shelter imposed strict timetables for daily activities, with one effect being that residents came to order their lives around a routine that was temporally standardized according to the shelter's timetable (Desjarlais 1994, 1997). Such routines were characterized by boredom and long periods of waiting and "killing time." Desjarlais argues that for most shelter residents, daily life was largely organized around a mode of existence he terms "struggling along," which entailed both a hollowing out of meaning in one's activities and a diminished sense of linear time (Desjarlais 1997, 22–23).

In examining how a men's shelter in New York City organized residents' time, Kostas Gounis found that shelter timetables filled residents' lives with long periods of waiting and rendered normally simple tasks involving self-care (e.g. showers, getting clean clothes) extremely time-consuming (Gounis 1992, 142). Gounis found that the temporality of shelter living actually contributed to chronic homelessness. He argued, "by transforming the most basic activities of personal subsistence and reproduction into an all-consuming activity, the temporal organization of shelter life functions as the centripetal force that produces and perpetuates shelter dependency," (Gounis 1992, 147). Both Gounis and Desjarlais likened the homeless shelters where they conducted fieldwork to "total institutions," where, as Erving Goffman noted, controlling residents' time was a foundational administrative practice (Goffman 1961, see also Stark 1994).

Anne Lovell examined temporality among a group of "homeless street people" in New York City whose temporal existence, compared to established shelter residents, was less institutionally structured, more contingent, and more autonomous (Lovell 1992, 88). The people she studied were not subject to the temporal rules of a single institution and spent relatively little time "in encounters with service providers," (Lovell 1992, 91). These ethnographers all demonstrate that while many temporal dimensions of homelessness are beyond people's control, their time is not wholly organized in a top-down manner. Nevertheless, Lovell argues that even homeless street people often waited long periods of time for services, a process that "reinforces feelings of powerlessness and humiliation," (Lovell 1992, 97).

These studies reveal both the importance and diversity of homeless temporalities, but researchers have not focused on the kind of institutionally defined existence I studied, which was marked by frequent engagements with many institutions on a daily basis, generally within one neighborhood. Neither the "total institution" timetable nor the institutionally disengaged "street life" adequately defined the temporal existence of the women who frequented the drop-in center where we conducted research. As I show, the demands of navigating the "institutional circuit" and its multiple, competing temporalities took a particular kind of toll on women's subjectivity and their efforts to improve their situation.

Research methods

This paper is based on over two years of team ethnographic fieldwork between 2003 and 2005 examining the experiences of homeless women with serious mental illness in the Chicago neighborhood of Uptown. This research, funded by the National Institutes of Health

(grant number R34 MH090441), was conducted by principal investigator Tanya Luhrmann, Joanne Eliacin, Kimberly Walters, Jim Goss, Barnaby Riedel, and myself. The broader research project sought to better understand, among other things, why homeless women with serious mental illnesses (particularly psychosis) often reject institutional offers of aid that are tied to accepting a psychiatric diagnosis (Luhrmann 2007, 2008, 2010, Marrow and Luhrmann 2012). The researchers focused on women's experiences in particular because the lives of homeless women are relatively underexplored compared to men; in addition, conducting research in drop-in centers and shelters for women was easier and safer for female researchers.

For part of the research period, I conducted weekly participant observation and interviews with homeless women in a drop-in center called Sarah's Circle, a small nongovernmental organization that provided food, clothing, and other services to women on a walk-in basis five days a week.[ii] In addition to sustained participant observation and informal interviews, our team conducted 61 semi-structured interviews with women who frequented the drop-in center. They were all either homeless at the time of the interview or had been homeless before. Based on information reported and observational data, we estimated that 78% of the women interviewed had previously experienced or were at the time of the interview experiencing serious mental illness (schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and/or major depression; Luhrmann 2008).[iii] While not all the women who participated in the broader research project suffered from serious mental illness, many of them did. This is important to note because symptoms of serious mental illness necessarily complicate efforts by homeless persons to navigate the chaotic institutional timetables I describe. I draw on my own work and the work of other team members (including field notes and interviews) in presenting the data for this article.

The paradoxical nature of time

Daily life for homeless women in Uptown was shaped in large part by service agencies' daily schedules.[iv] On a typical day, the shelters woke all women at 6:00 or 7:00 am and in most cases required them to leave by 8:00 am, regardless of the weather. At least one shelter did not reopen until 9:00 pm, so many homeless women had over twelve hours each day to spend on the streets, in service agencies, or elsewhere (commonly fast food restaurants, chain bookstores, churches, or libraries).

There was a troubling paradox to this organization of time: women spent large chunks of their waking lives immersed in what I call "empty time," but they also had to navigate complicated institutional timetables of services on a daily basis- what I call "overscheduled time." In other words, indeterminate periods of waiting or killing time were temporally ruptured by urgent demands that women be at specific places at specific times in order to

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[ii]Participant observation usually occurred on the same day of the week for two or three months at a time, with the usual visiting day changing a few times across the research period.
[iii]Most women we interviewed reported a psychiatric diagnosis, said they had been psychiatrically hospitalized in the past, and/or displayed observable psychotic symptoms.
[iv]The timetables described in this paper represent the actual schedules of service agencies in Uptown between 2003–2005. The agencies changed policies and time schedules frequently during this period, compounding the difficulties of women trying to obtain necessary services and shelter.

reproduce the conditions of their existence. Although phenomenologically quite different, "empty" and "overscheduled" time were both determined by service institutions' timetables. Only very infrequently did homeless women control their own time. Together, these extreme modes of temporal existence – "empty time" and "overscheduled time" – had particular effects on women's experience of self. First, I describe what empty time and overscheduled time felt like, from women's points of view. Next, I discuss the effects of this paradoxical organization of time on subjectivity and the work of self-preservation among homeless women.

Empty Time

Homeless women experienced many empty hours that were, in their words, frequently 'killed' or 'filled' by long bus journeys or sitting alone in a public or institutional space. They often had to find ways to fill large gaps of empty time in which they were waiting for services or during periods when no services were offered. Around lunchtime, many women went to Sarah's Circle, a large, institutional space in an old office building that was filled with metal tables and chairs and a core of young female staff working behind a counter. Many women came to the drop-in center in order to sit quietly, sleep on the floor near the wall at the back of the room, or read for the afternoon. Other common activities at the drop-in center were writing and chatting with each other, although I often observed women sitting at tables that seated three or four other women, at which each woman was in her own world, sometimes resting her head on her arms, or staring at a wall. Women kept busy by making lists, doing puzzles, or copying bible verses. Even though women socialized with each other in this space, and staff offered group activities on an intermittent basis, most of the women at the drop-in center were doing things on their own most of the time. This finding is in keeping with interview data we collected in which women reported significant levels of social isolation (Luhrmann 2007). For example, two-thirds of women interviewed could not name a single friend among the women they knew at the drop-in center, while 30% of women listed no friends at all on social networks we collected.

Women told us they had to learn to "kill time" or develop a routine to fill this empty time (see also Desjarlais 1997). For example, Wanda was a 59 year-old Euro-American woman who slept in a shelter for two years before obtaining an SRO room (SRO refers to "single room occupancy," usually a room in a former hotel with a bathroom and a hotplate). She reconstructed her day in an interview as follows:

> When did you wake up yesterday, and where were you?

> I was up all night. Five o'clock in the morning I took a bus to Michigan [Avenue; downtown Chicago].

> Why did you go to Michigan?

> Something to do. I wanted to see what's in the store windows. I went to McDonald's, I had a cup of coffee for a dollar thirty-two. When I got to the Breakers [SRO building] dining room, breakfast was over. It was 11:00. I listened to the radio and watched television. Then they have dinner at the Breakers. It was real crowded.

> Did you watch television and radio from 11:00 am 'till dinnertime basically?
>
> I went downstairs for a cigarette. I went to the garden for an hour, then I went upstairs, to sleep.
>
> Was this a normal day for you?
>
> Yeah, I have more than you think like that, oh yeah.

While Wanda filled a normal day watching TV and sleeping, many women who did not have their own single-occupancy room created schedules of activities to fill the empty time or provide a sense of purpose to the days. Maria had been coming to the drop-in center for less than a week when I met her, but told me she might be coming more often because as she said, "I need a routine." Deanna, who was unemployed and has been living in emergency shelters for years with her elderly mother, told one researcher, "I usually [start] my routine in the morning by going to Salvation Army… then I go to the library to kill some time or else I stay at the Salvation Army and go through the program there." Although life in Uptown is very different from the poverty George Orwell described in *Down and Out in Paris and London*, many features of the street remain unchanged (1933). The tramp's life, Orwell said, was one of enforced idleness.

Homeless women are well acquainted with the experience of "enforced idleness," because they spend much of their daily life being made to wait. This is because nearly everything women need demands that they wait: in turn, in line, in sequence. They often wait for hours in line to see a staff member at a state agency or a nongovernmental charity organization like Salvation Army or Uptown-based Cornerstone Community Outreach. Women wait for meals, for case managers, for showers, for clothes, all provided by charitable institutions with limited resources and overstretched staff. In the morning, a woman might go to a Department of Human Services Office and wait for internet access or a case manager meeting, which was required in order to request a pass for a free bus ride, get help with a food stamp application, or schedule time to do a load of laundry. One woman said:

> With public aid or whatever they call their self these days, Public Human Resources, you be telling them you need this and you need that and… then you have to wait so long, to go in and talk to your case worker, and you try calling on the phone, they never pick up the phone, you be like, boy, these people is really getting on my nerves.

Women must also wait in order to sleep; That is, they must wait around in different places to see whether they will receive a bed in a shelter for the night. If a woman does not receive a written referral for a shelter by the end of the working day, if she arrives at a shelter and the shelter is full, she must go and wait at a local hospital until the Department of Human Services (DHS) arrives and assigns people to other shelter beds. Below, Angie describes her experience of waiting for a bed assignment:

> That's one thing about DHS, they don't come until like two or three in the morning, they supposed to be there at eight. You be standing outside, you cannot stand in the hospital now and wait on DHS even if it's cold. You gotta sit outside. It was

storming, you know what I'm saying… I couldn't go through that every night just to get a referral every night.

In addition to the time women spend waiting for needed services, women must face the hours that must be filled when no service agencies are open. This is usually weekdays from 5:00 pm until perhaps 9:00 pm, when the shelters open. Some sat in McDonald's (they were allowed to sit if they purchased something) or walked around the neighborhood's large chain bookstore, but there, they risked the embarrassment of being followed around or asked to leave. As Carla said, "It is the worst time to be homeless. If you do not have a dollar in your pocket to go to McDonald's to buy a hot drink, you have to stay outside in the cold, with snow up to your knees, waiting for a shelter to open."

Overscheduled time

For nearly every woman who used the drop-in center, daily life was precarious in a way many North Americans would find hard to imagine. Homeless women had to focus most of their energies on the basic aspects of survival: eating, bathing, cleaning their clothes, accessing bathrooms and places to sleep. Nearly all women relied on local service agencies to provide them with these means of survival. Although women spend much of their days with little to do, this empty time was structured around a number of institutional schedules over which women had little control. Thus the boredom of waiting or killing time was punctuated by the demand to rush from agency to agency to meet basic needs within the time schedules set by service institutions. I call this mode of temporal existence in homelessness "overscheduled time."

Overscheduled time resulted from the fact that private charitable agencies and public institutions abounded (there were approximately 60 such agencies in Uptown), but they failed to coordinate their services with each other. This meant that each offered a different - but always limited - range of free services and each had a different schedule for providing those services. Women often spent large chunks of time traveling from agency to agency to get things they needed to survive that were only provided at certain times of the day. Therefore, the most intimate of human behaviors were temporally regulated by uncoordinated institutional rhythms. In trying to get things done, whether it was for daily survival or in efforts to find work or more permanent housing, women got caught up in an institutional service labyrinth with no systemic coherence.

Institutional timetables were "overscheduled" in part because schedules of service provision overlapped each other in ways that constrained women's ability to obtain all the things they needed. For example, the shelter closest to the drop-in center where we conducted fieldwork had a 4:30 pm lottery for beds. Women who did not have a reserved shelter bed could not afford to miss this daily event, but if they wanted a meal at the drop-in center, they had to be there at 4:00 pm when staff handed out the afternoon meal. It was common to see women scarf down their afternoon meals at the drop-in center, dash to the shelter at 4:15 pm to get their ticket to the shelter, and then come back to the drop-in center until closing time. We observed newly homeless women miss meals, shelter beds, or both, because they had yet to learn that services were provided at specific times and some were provided at the same time but in different places.

Uptown's institutional timetables were also "overscheduled" in the sense that they were commonly implemented with a sort of unwavering militancy. At one shelter, for example, a large sign announced exactly what minutes of the day women could smoke and consume food: "*Daytime smoking hours: 6:30–6:40, 9:30–9:40, ... IF YOU ARE CAUGHT SMOKING AT ANY OTHER TIME IT IS A 30 DAYS BAR*," (i.e., expelled/barred from the shelter) and "*Eating schedule no exceptions: 8 am breakfast, 10:30 am snack... NO EATING AFTER 8 PM OR BE BARRED FOR TWO DAYS*." Personal hygiene also was subject to agency time schedules; at the drop-in center, women signed up for a twenty-minute time slot for showers on the two days that this service was offered each week. Women staying at one shelter received a towel for personal use that they had to return by 11:00 pm or be barred from the shelter. Clearly the threat of semipermanent or permanent expulsion motivated women to follow these timetables. The price for resisting such structures was to be forced, quite literally, out on the street.

The rules and rigid schedules often felt arbitrary to those who followed them. Shantel, who had been living in a shelter with a permanent bed assignment for two and a half years, described the time schedule established for personal hygiene there:

> There's a line for the bathroom stalls… it's incredible. The lines to wash your face, use the bathroom… right now, you can't take a shower after six o'clock in the morning.
>
> How come?
>
> I don't know. It's been like that for a while. You can't take a shower until after nine o'clock in the morning. For those three hours if you want to take a shower you gotta wait until after nine o'clock when the next shift comes up.

One day Jacquie complained to me about Danielle, a shelter employee who "makes up her own rules," like making all the women stand in a chilly hallway while she slowly calls each woman by name to enter the shelter. There was no need for making the women stand in the hall, Jacquie claimed. During the entrance process, Danielle also took five minute-long breaks, "time for me," where she seemed to meditate. "Why would *she* need to take time out for herself?" Jacquie asks, alluding to the fact that Danielle's material situation was much better than that of the women she kept waiting on the sidelines.

The drop-in center where we conducted participant observation had many schedules that felt arbitrary to women. Material services like meals, showers, and toiletries were provided at different times and had different requirements for users. Staff handed out toiletries only during the first hour of opening and the last hour before closing, so if a woman arrived at 3:00 pm, she had to wait until 5:00 to get what she needed. Staff provided mugs for women to drink coffee and tea from 1:00 pm until 3:00 pm, and called for all mugs to be returned by that time. If any mugs were not returned to the kitchen by 3:00 pm, the staff might not pass out any mugs the following day. At the daily 4:00 pm meal, food was distributed to women who lined up at the counter, and the meal ended within twenty minutes of the initial call for food. Women who arrived late were not served. Women who were not hungry at that time, or wanted to take their meal with them to eat later, were not allowed not do so because according to the agency's rules, food must be eaten on premises. Employees strictly adhered

to the schedules they made, often telling women to wait until the appropriate time to fill their request for even the most basic necessities such as sanitary products or bar of soap. During the two years I conducted research at the drop-in center, I never observed a staff member explain to women why different services were only provided at certain times, even when women explicitly asked staff members to justify their timetables.

The shaping of self in homelessness

In expanding our understanding of how time is organized and experienced in a service ghetto for homeless persons, this article contributes to the broader scholarly examination of how homelessness shapes subjectivity and self (Luhrmann 2010, 2008, Höjdestrand 2009, Desjarlais 1999, 1997, 1994, Lyon-Callo 2000, Hoffman and Coffey 2008, RWARC 1996, Miller and Keys 2001). I argue that paradoxical institutional temporalities constructed both empty and overscheduled time in ways that profoundly affected women's experience of self. In Uptown, time affected women's experiences of self both in an embodied sense (in which women tuned their efforts into the daily survival of the body) and in a subjective sense (in which women responded as valued aspects of personhood were denied or challenged).

Anthropologists have for years debated how best to conceptualize the self, with some arguing that we should employ a theory of self as primarily symbolic and representational (Ewing 1990, Rosaldo 1984, Battaglia 1995). Central to this viewpoint is the idea that perhaps the self is nothing more than the discursive presentation of oneself, a presentation informed by local cultural constructions of personhood. One reason for proposing such a discursive/symbolic model of self is that it highlights the shifting and fragmentary nature of self-presentations in different social contexts, thus avoiding essentializing, largely Western assumptions of cohesive, unitary, or universal selves. However, others have challenged a discursive theorization of self for being too limited to the realm of symbols and representation. Some anthropologists instead propose a more holistic theory of self that encompasses embodied as well as representational-cognitive-discursive experiences of oneself as a living, thinking, feeling being (Csordas 1990, 1993, 1994, Seligman 2010, Bloch 2011, Quinn 2006, Wentzell 2013, Kleinman and Fitz-Henry 2007). As Rebecca Seligman argues, this notion of self is theoretically situated "at the intersection of mind-body" and does the important work of "acknowledg[ing] embodied aspects of self" and experience in addition to focusing on the discursive aspects of self-representation (Seligman 2010, 298). An expansive understanding of self that accounts for embodied experience is crucial for making sense of how institutional temporalities affect homeless women, because the organization of time in a "services ghetto" has profound implications for what we might call the "bodily self" as well as the cognitive sense of oneself as possessing culturally valued aspects of personhood.

Anthropologists and other social scientists have shown how everyday institutional practices can powerfully shape the experience of self for people who are homeless, often in disvalued ways (such as making people feel disrespected, objectified, infantilized, and policed; Hoffman and Coffey 2008, Lyon-Callo 2000, Luhrmann 2008). In particular, dignity and respect appear to be highly salient, socially situated aspects of self that homeless people struggle to maintain and negotiate, often at great cost (Höjdestrand 2009, Hoffman and

Coffey 2008, Hopper 2003). In fact, efforts to preserve one's sense of a dignified and respectable self can in some cases lead to homeless people resisting, refusing, or opting out of institutional services (Luhrmann 2008, Hoffman and Coffey 2008, Gounis 1992). For this and other reasons, social scientists studying customary practices in agencies that provide services to homeless people argue that such institutions may actually perpetuate, rather than remediate, homelessness because services are delivered in ways that threaten people's self-representations (Luhrmann 2008, Wasserman and Clair 2009, Hopper 2003, Stark 1994, Gounis 1992, RWARC 1996, Hoffman and Coffey 2008). In this article I show how it is not just engagements inside institutions, but also engagements across and in the temporal spaces between institutions that have a dramatic effect on women's experience of self and in the process, may perpetuate homelessness. This operates at the level of self-representations, and also affects embodied experiences of self because women must focus immense amounts of time and effort on reproducing their bodily existence day after day.

Day-to-day survival and the preservation of bodily self

Institutional schedules of services for homeless women were arranged in such a way that women spent most of their time engaging with services to obtain the basics for reproducing their daily existences. The work of day-to-day survival – making sure one had access to food, clothing, a bed for the night, a place to use the bathroom, soap, deodorant, tampons, etc. – took up so much time and energy that the daily preservation of one's bodily self interfered with women's efforts to find stable housing or secure employment. Focusing on "getting by" rather than on "getting out" was common and unavoidable, given this temporal organization of service provision.

Homeless women (and some agency workers) recognized this deep irony. For example, Cathy repeatedly complained that the difficulties of her job search were exacerbated by the lack of telephones for checking messages before 9:30 am. She was trying to find work at a temp agency, and she needed to be reachable by phone before the workday began. No social service agencies opened that early, and Cathy did not have money to get a cell phone. She said she had not gotten any temp jobs because of this. "Why can't DHS [Department of Human Services] open at 7:00 or 7:30?" she asked me rhetorically. "I know they could get *someone* to come in early- *I* would do it!… I wish the services were organized differently," she commented. Cathy often complained to me that many of women's needs went unmet by service agencies, while agencies' failure to coordinate their efforts produced duplicate, redundant offerings, like more than enough meal offerings and clothing handouts, but no deodorant (a frequent complaint) and too few opportunities to do laundry or use the phone.

The organizations that existed to help women out of homelessness were often seen by those they were trying to help as tying knots around their ankles. Indeed, I found that the strict structuring of daily life could act as an obstacle to finding housing and employment. This in fact was Cathy's point exactly. As a homeless women with a graduate degree in social sciences, she frequently complained to our research team that agency schedules and policies actually keep women unemployed and homeless. Nor was she alone. A staff member at the drop-in center put it this way:

> People say dumb things like 'why don't homeless people just go out and get a job?'
> These people don't understand that *you don't really have time to go searching for*
> *jobs*. For one thing, you have to be certain places at certain times to get what you
> need to survive. Also, if you got a job, it would be hard to have regular working
> hours and deal with the time demands of shelters and other agencies.[v]

Women gave our research team explicit examples of how helping institutions' schedules prevented women from achieving long-term goals like finding employment. For instance, Joni explained how one shelter had a substance abuse treatment program that demanded strict attendance to the daytime meetings. She explained that women's efforts to secure long-term housing through the treatment program came into conflict with women's efforts to find a job:

> There's always the threat that you're not doing what they tell you. It's almost like a
> built-in helplessness. Like, 'don't really go out and get a job.' You have to go to
> these meetings. Well, I mean if you do get a job you're excused, but…. If you say
> you had a job interview, and that's why you don't show up, then they kind of look
> at you like, 'Oh really?' Like, they don't believe you, and of course, sometimes you
> don't get a job the first or second interview, so you know… I find that there's some
> built in helplessness.

Another woman, Sierra, told us that the time constraints of shelter life prevented her from adhering to hospital and doctor's appointments across town, which she desperately needed to treat a brain tumor. We learned that women could attend a shelter's meetings in order to receive a permanent shelter bed; we also knew that this privilege might be rescinded if a woman missed a single night in the shelter. In another example, Kat told a researcher she was barred from a shelter after writing a letter of complaint about the following incident that she witnessed:

> A client requested to be woken up at four o'clock in the morning, so she could get
> ready to work at a temporary agency and [the supervisor] Ellen told her that she is
> not waking anybody up at four o'clock in the morning and if she catches anybody
> up before six, she's barring them, and then, when the woman tried to ask her why,
> she turned around and called the police and had her removed…

This incident and the other examples reveal the extent to which women experienced agencies' timetables (and their strict enforcement) as an obstacle to their practical efforts to escape homelessness. My finding echoes Gounis' analysis of a process he called "shelterization," in which residents of a New York City shelter came to experience "daily subsistence [as] a full time occupation," (Gounis 1992, 140).

Because of the challenges posed by uncoordinated and unforgiving timetables, women's efforts were telescoped in on the preservation of their bodily selves. In this sense, the preservation of bodily self is similar to Agamben's idea of "bare life," the experience of mere survival or daily self-reproduction, i.e., making it to the next day (Agamben 1995).[vi]

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[v]Although agency workers' points of view are not the focus of this paper, research including more voices of agency workers would make a valuable contribution to understanding the phenomena I discuss here.

The daily life of homelessness in Uptown could be productively compared to a "bare life" where women both rush around and wait around for things like hot meals, bus passes, a place to shower, and shelter beds. This kind of purely bodily existence is a sort of "stripped down" experience of the self.

I offer two final examples of how this worked with regard to local housing application procedures. It was common for local affordable housing agencies to accept applications only for a very limited period. For example, Francine had a job but was living in a shelter, and described her attempt to find housing as follows:

> For the SRO [single room occupancy housing], okay, they only have one day, 9 to 3, where I could fill out the application and I was working… this is maybe once a year. I couldn't make it between 9 and 3. It was just one day, one day only. So, no, I couldn't take it off, I'm telling you. I can't just take off of work just like that, you know, to take care of the business. It's that type of agency where I have to request a day off like two weeks ahead of time just for one day off.

Nelly had a similar story. When she arrived at a shelter, the housing agency was not accepting applications. They reopened the application process after months for one day only. If you did not submit your application that day, you had to wait months for the process to open again. Nelly applied as soon as possible but still had to sleep in the shelter for five more months after applying before she received an SRO room.

Stories like Francine's and Nelly's reveal the difficulty in negotiating institutional schedules of services, even for highly motivated women. However, motivations themselves could be whittled down through the boring, lonely, and frustrating experience of balancing institutional waiting and schedules. We found that even the most driven women found it psychologically debilitating to seek services as a homeless person. For many, the process could seem like a vicious cycle of dehumanization and demoralization that filled their days. Institutional temporalities of homelessness can wear down women's sense of self-dignity, which further hinder women's efforts to find a way out of homelessness. The web of temporal demands unconsciously created by multiple "helping" agencies in a services ghetto ensnares women in institutionally supported homelessness even as they put forth enormous effort to preserve their bodily and psychological integrity. Further, symptoms of psychosis, mania, and/or depression, which presented among many of the women who participated in this study, clearly worsen and are worsened by the daily incidents of frustration, demoralization, and dehumanization that are commonplace in homelessness. Persons with symptoms of severe mental illness, who comprise the majority of women we interviewed, are likely to have a particularly hard time navigating the incoherent multiplicity of institutional timetables in a "services ghetto."

Dignity, disempowerment, and other assaults on the self

Institutional temporalities robbed homeless women of dignity and made them feel powerless. The organization of time in Uptown represented an assault on the self that many

[vi]Political scientist Leonard Feldman has applied theorizations of "bare life" to an analysis of the social and political exclusion of homeless persons and the problems this poses for democratic societies (Feldman 2006).

women felt keenly. I suggest that the subject-making effects of institutional timetables could be such an affront to women's sense of self that some might choose to opt out of services as a way to preserve dignity and a sense of agency. For others, the demands of institutional engagement whittled down at reserves of energy and hope, lengthening the amount of time spent homeless.

The paradox of empty hours punctuated by strictly scheduled service provision was experienced as a great emotional strain for many women. For example, when asked to describe her daily life, Wilma complained about "having to think so much, having to be aware, where will I get a shower, where will I get my clothes clean, thinking all the time about what to do and when and how." The hardest part of each day for Wilma was between 7 and 8 am when her shelter was closed for cleaning: "You didn't know what to do and where to go, there was no place to go at that point and you really feel the challenge."

Beyond the stress and strain of daily survival in homelessness, women experienced their interactions with service agencies as an affront to the self. It was not just that it was hard to keep to schedule; it was also the fact that women's schedules were not their own. What was at stake for many women was more than the exhaustion of shelter life; rather, their sense of independence and dignity was crucially threatened when they engaged with institutions and their schedules. Mary described this experience in vivid terms. She considered herself a "success story" in this world because she stuck to the terms of her parole, abstained from drugs and alcohol, met a kind man, and moved into her own apartment six months after becoming homeless. Part of what motivated her was the sense that being in a shelter was too much like being an inmate. In her narrative of change, below, notice the extent to which she focused on the temporal regulation of daily life as a factor motivating her to escape homelessness:

> I started *all* over, and I reached my goals. I don't have to wake up, uh, at any certain time, I don't have to go to bed at any certain time. And I like that because I can go home and put my key in when I want to, and I can go eat when I want to eat, you know, I ain't got to go through all these rules and regulations because I went through that when I was in jail, I want to feel free. You know, being in the shelter to me is like being locked up because you got these rules. I don't mind following the rules, but I can't follow those rules too long 'cause you making me still feel like I'm locked up and now I'm getting depressed, you know what I'm saying? Now my depression coming on now because you putting this pressure on me where I gotta go to bed when you say go to bed… I didn't want to feel like that, so I had to really stomp down, girl, I'm saying I had to crawl before I walk.

Mary describes what many women tell us they experience when following agency timetables: a sense of powerlessness, a loss of independence, and a loss of dignity. These losses cut right to the heart of what it means to be human in North American society, to possess an agentive, autonomous self. Given all the problems of homelessness, including a lack of privacy, stigma, and the very real exposure to victimization (particularly for women in this neighborhood), it is striking that Mary's narrative focused so narrowly on the fact that shelters *controlled her time* and that this was what really impelled her to "stomp down" and get out of there. Mary's claim that institutional temporalities in homelessness can lead to

depression is noteworthy, for it suggests the extent to which the seizure of women's time affects their subjectivity.

I found that once they left the shelter and had their own space, women celebrated their freedom from institutional time schedules. It was as if the temporal aspects of life on the street came to index all that was horrible about being homeless. For example, when asked her opinion of the shelter, Amber exclaimed, "Uh-uh, no! 'Cause I don't like being around a bunch of females in one area and we have to go in at a certain time and be out at certain times." Again, Amber's focus on the problems caused by shelter timetables was striking considering the other problems that women could focus on when describing shelter life. Even Shantel, a woman who claimed to have no problems following her shelter's schedule, told a researcher she could not wait for her apartment, because she was sick of people telling her what to do. She said she wanted to be able to sleep until 9:00 am instead of always waking at 7:00 am, and to stay up late if she wanted, rather than having to go to bed every night at 10:00.

Interview data confirmed that women found the temporal aspects of homelessness to be a particular affront to the self. For example, we asked all participants, "What is the worst part of being homeless?" The most common set of responses about the worst part of homelessness cited a combination of time restrictions, curfews, taking orders, and not being in control (17% of women surveyed). Surprisingly, perhaps, this percentage was larger than the percentage of women who said that *not having a home* was the worst part of homelessness (15% of women surveyed). Thirty-four percent of women participating in the survey reported that using social services made them feel a loss of dignity. Of those who equated using services with a loss of dignity, the majority (67%) said that waiting in long lines for basic necessities was the most undignified part of homelessness. These findings suggest that it was not the fact of *needing* welfare services that made women feel a loss of dignity, but rather the experiential aspects of engaging with service agencies, and particularly the waiting. The connection between institutional seizures of women's time and a feeling of powerlessness and loss of dignity was apparent, for example, in Ellie's conversation with an interviewer, when she said, "Like waiting to get into the shelter, you gotta line up across the street… you know, line up… it's just like, okay, *there goes the homeless people*, you know what I mean? It shouldn't have to be, you know, so obvious." While Ellie focuses on the shame of being publicly marked as a homeless person by being made to wait in lines on the street, Mary equated institutional timetables in homelessness to her time spent in prison. In both cases, the institutional seizure of women's time produced an intense sensation of powerlessness, loss of dignity, and frustration.

Sociologists and anthropologists who study waiting as a social phenomenon have developed theoretical insights would seem commonsensical to the women who visit the drop-in center. For example, Barry Schwartz (1975) found that the people who wait the longest for things they want and need are those who occupy the least powerful positions in society. People in the upper and middle classes in North America spend less time waiting in lines to fill their basic needs than those in the lower class. Similarly, Javier Auyero and James Holston show how in Argentina and Brazil, respectively, waiting times for public and even private services are directly related to one's social class standing (Auyero 2012, Holston 2009). Auyero

pushes this observation further, arguing that, "acts of waiting [for public services] are temporal processes in and through which political subordination is reproduced," (Auyero 2012, 2). The relationship between social class and waiting time is striking in a place like Uptown, where homeless persons can be seen standing in lines outside of charities and government agencies, waiting for food or a bed for the night. In waiting hours for basic items that many North Americans have always had access to or can easily buy, homeless women are made to feel their powerlessness relative to institutional staff and society in general.

Halfway across the world, in a different era and political system, anthropologist Katherine Verdery described a similar experience for Romanian people living under a socialist dictatorship (1992). Verdery focused on the state's seizure of people's time and describes how this transformed Romanians' conceptions of self in the Ceausescu regime. The socialist state controlled housewives' schedules with electric and gas cuts, implemented unreliable transportation systems, and immobilized bodies in food lines: "The state… generated an arrhythmia of unpunctuated and irregular now-frenetic, now-idle work, a spastically unpredictable time that made all planning by average citizens impossible," (1992, 56). This clearly resonates with the experience of time I describe for homeless women in Uptown. Verdery argues that, "the experience of humiliation, the destruction of dignity, was common for those who had waited for hours to accomplish (or fail to accomplish) some basic task… Such seizures of time… were basic to producing subjects who would not see themselves as independent agents," (1992, 55).

A major difference between the socialist case and life in Uptown is that in Ceaucescu's Romania, everybody was subject to similar controls over their time, meaning that nearly every citizen experienced the loss of agency that Verdery describes. In other words, there was some sense of collectivity and solidarity in the shared experience of time seizures. This was not the case among homeless women in Chicago. In the rapidly gentrifying neighborhood of Uptown, only certain people have to wait for services and follow these particular schedules, publicly marking them as members of a stigmatized underclass, "the homeless," a term that connotes social and economic failure, deviance, and madness. The trauma to women's sense of self was magnified because the experience of waiting was not only intrinsically frustrating and undignified, but was also tied up in a continuous identification of one's self as a homeless person, a second-class citizen (or non-citizen; see Feldman 2006). Experiencing the stigma of homelessness as an assault on the self was further compounded for individuals who were perceived to be mentally ill or "crazy" as well as homeless (Luhrmann 2008, 2007). While the stigma of mental illness impinges on people's identities and sense of self in many social and cultural contexts, for the population we studied, the stigma of mental illness-- the stigma of being "crazy"-- was especially toxic as it marked one as truly hopeless, permanently doomed to a life of social isolation on the streets (see Luhrmann 2008, 2007 for documentation and analysis).

Verdery's description of time seizures contrasts with institutional temporalities of homelessness in another important way: the Romanian socialist state transformed people's experiences in a totalizing sense, meaning that the state had nearly total control over work times, transport times, and waiting times. Ordinary citizens had little recourse but to endure

food lines patiently and perhaps find solidarity in their shared dehumanization. In Uptown, the situation was very different. Charitable institutions abounded, offer different and overlapping services, and allowed voluntary participation. Uptown's "service ghetto" differed from the experience of state socialism, or a total institution like the military, where individuals were usually all subject to the disciplines laid down by the authorities. While destitute women found they must engage with at least some service institutions to survive, they chose between agencies offering similar services and engaged with some services while avoiding others.

The paradox in this is that in choosing to disengage from services, women might be able to preserve their sense of self, but perhaps at the expense of getting help with housing or work (Luhrmann 2008). Given the conditions I describe, it is likely that women felt they had to choose between their self-dignity or services that might help them end their homelessness. One woman named Ann told me she stayed in a shelter for four months before coming to the drop-in center for services because she was ashamed to show her face. Before, she had slept in parking lots because she knew she would feel the same shame going to a shelter for help. Ann said that when she finally came to the drop-in center, "My pride was hurt, you know?"

At times the psychic effects of spending time in shelters were visibly recognizable in a woman's face and demeanor. Clarice was a former shelter resident who explained, "There's some people up here I've never even heard them speak. I was looking at this young lady and I was like, she doesn't say a thing…" For Clarice these were the women that suffered demotivation and demoralization; She said, "I come back to encourage and to love, … we have little parties and stuff, you know, pump it up, because a lot of times people just sit, like the girls in the back there [gestures at women sleeping on the floor in the drop-in center]." Once, a woman in the drop-in center pointed out a woman sitting by herself. "See that woman," she said, "I haven't seen her in about a year, and I definitely see a change in her. She was in here a year ago, loud, arrogant, angry- with a bad attitude. She was so sure she was 'on her way out of here' but it's been a year and look, she's still here." She noted that the woman did not seem so arrogant now. She had been that way too at first, she told me, implying that it is not uncommon to underestimate how long homelessness might last.

We can see how and to what extent the various helping institutions affected women's subjectivity and sense of self. Many quickly internalized the most essential rules of survival in this world, like lining up outside the shelter by 4:30 pm to have a cot for the night. But because the neighborhood had so many different independent institutions, women could in some way 'choose' their level of subjection to schedules and other rules. Those who accepted the logic of seemingly arbitrary time schedules justified their participation as an effort to achieve individual transformation with the institutions' help. Yet the fact that women often viewed their actions as a choice between help or self-dignity suggests the personal losses women experienced just by engaging with these agencies. It was a loss so great that women could read it in the faces of other homeless women.

Unfortunately, this kind of life lasts much longer than women anticipate. Some women manage to find work and stable housing for themselves within a few months of becoming homeless in Uptown, but many find it much more difficult. In fact, the daily negotiation of

social services is so effortful that it can come to feel like one's job. It is not difficult to think of women as colleagues in homelessness as they travel together from agency to agency to complete different tasks throughout the day. The irony, of course, is that Uptown's services are intended as temporary assistance, providing the basics so women can get back on their feet. The services are meant to promote rehabilitation, not dependency. Of course, not all women became dependent; many were able to successfully navigate the system to locate housing and work within a few months' time.[vii] Yet just as Foucault noted how prisons claim to rehabilitate while actually producing a new class of delinquents who cycle in and out of prison, so too do Uptown's service institutions promise to end homelessness while actually contributing to the production of a class of homeless persons (Foucault 1977). Women enter this fragmented care system expecting homelessness to be a temporary trauma, but frequently ended up living in shelters for six months or even years.

Being homeless came to seem like a job for some people. Traversing the unconnected network of social services easily took up a whole day's efforts, and most of the women staying in shelters did not have paid employment but instead spend their days obtaining services they need to survive. And, as with formal training or orientations in positions of paid employment, women who were new to homelessness had to pass through an orientation period of learning how to survive on the streets. After this period, women filled their days with activities particular to homeless people: applying for housing, waiting for free meals and shelter beds, signing up for chores in exchange for clothes, and interacting with other homeless people. I once observed a woman comment in all seriousness to a drop-in center employee that she was going to "take a vacation" by checking herself into a hospital psychiatry unit. There, she would receive a clean bed and would not have to worry about food or hygienic needs for a few days. The temporally taxing routine of homelessness, a routine of bare survival, can become a full time job whose temporal structures and psychological consequences limit the possibilities for escape.

Conclusion

Previous ethnographic research on temporalities of homelessness focused on shelter residents for whom the shelter serves as a sort of "total institution" (Goffman 1961) or on homeless "street people" who have relatively limited contact with institutions (Desjarlais 1997, Gounis 1992, Lovell 1992). Here, I document temporalities of homelessness as experienced by a great many homeless people today, those living in the midst of an urban "services ghetto"—where social service agencies abound, but organizations fail to coordinate the provision or timing of services, producing an incoherent, sometimes chaotic multiplicity of offerings and schedules, many of which are enforced with a harsh rigidity. The women who participated in this research usually engaged with multiple institutions on a daily basis to get the things they needed to survive, and often struggled against rules and schedules that felt arbitrary and sometimes counterproductive. In this article, I analyzed two distinct but related temporal modes by which institutional timetables controlled women's existence: what I called empty time and overscheduled time. Experiences of empty and

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[vii]However, we seemed to encounter such women relatively infrequently, which could have been a function of the shorter period of time they spent in the institutional circuit and/or because they spent less time in the drop-in center.

overscheduled time were not the result of agentive, intentional planning on the part of service agencies, but rather temporal patterns that resulted in part from a failure to coordinate service schedules across a broad range of institutions.

For homeless women, the paradoxes of institutionalized waiting and strict yet inconsistent timetables appropriate women's time and take a huge psychological toll. Negotiating a labyrinthine, disconnected set of social services agencies is physically, cognitively, and emotionally demanding. Women suffering from symptoms of psychosis, depression, or other mental illnesses will likely find the experience particularly difficult and frustrating. Rushing from agency to agency and waiting around just to obtain the basics for daily survival leaves many women tired, frustrated, and literally without time to seek long-term solutions to their homelessness. Those trying to find housing and a steady income often report feeling hindered, rather than helped, by the organization of services for the homeless population. As time passed, for some the activities of being a homeless person could ironically begin to feel like work, and mere self-preservation became the central organizing principle of women's lives. When survival is uncertain, providing for your basic needs becomes the overarching concern. And yet, some women experience institutional temporalities as such an affront to self that they may reject social services in order to preserve their sense of respect and dignity. This act of denial in order to secure the preservation of self-dignity is a risky tactic. Unfortunately, as a homeless person, such moves may come at the cost of possible institutional help out of homelessness.

The ethnographic findings I discuss in this paper have clear implications for policy and institutional practices. As one woman named Lauren said, problems arise for people like her because "[the agencies] don't think" about what homeless people need. I would add that the multiplicity of service institutions in Uptown compound difficulties for the homeless by not communicating with each other to integrate services and schedules. In making the following suggestions, I am inspired by anthropologists like Kim Hopper and Tanya Luhrmann, who have translated their research into specific proposals for institutions to follow in order to improve services and alleviate the suffering experienced by homeless people (Hopper 2003, Luhrmann 2008). Relatively simple interventions could alleviate the kinds of problems related to institutional temporalities of homelessness. Institutional time schedules may contribute to chronic homelessness, but they are more easily addressed than other aspects of long-term homelessness. These timetables are not deeply entrenched in the institutional settings because as we observed, they change frequently. Often one or a few individuals are in charge of deciding how to organize their agency's schedule. Timetables for providing food, soap, sanitary products, and other items could easily be revised to better accommodate women's needs. Regularly asking women what services they need and what time they need them could prove productive for agencies whose stated aims are to empower people and help them get out of homelessness.

Indeed, one bright spot worth mentioning is that Sarah's Circle, the institution that was the site of our research between 2003 and 2005, now offers around-the-clock services for homeless and at-risk women. The institution recently expanded its day center to include two forms of housing: a 24-hour emergency/interim housing program for 50 women (with services meant to aid them in obtaining stable housing as soon as possible), and a permanent

supportive housing program for women with disabling conditions who have been chronically homeless. Since these developments occurred after the completion of our ethnographic research, I cannot comment on the specific effects they are having in women's lives, but I expect that the creation of another permanent housing program and a 24-hour emergency shelter in this neighborhood would offer major benefits for those women who participate. Our research showed that many temporal tensions and difficulties arose because shelters forced people out in the morning and did not allow them back until that evening, so a 24-hour emergency housing program represents a significant improvement over the institutional shelter models described in this paper.

Looking forward, women (and men and families) need greater flexibility in the times when they can receive services and a better coordination of service provision across agencies. In so-called "service ghettoes," agency schedules should be combined into a single calendar of neighborhood social services that is easy for people to access. One or more agencies could maintain such a calendar as one of the services they offer. In addition, organizations would save resources and improve women's lives if they discussed coordinating their services with each other. This would avoid overlapping services at key times while also reducing the number of duplicate services provided to homeless people. For example, if such coordination of services existed in Uptown, Tammy, whose story of frustration I outlined in the introduction, might not have wasted her entire day trudging from institution to institution only to learn that certain services were not available at that time. If Tammy and others had access to a printout of an inter-institutional timetable that showed when and where people could obtain needed services, they could plan their days more agentively and efficiently, and those who were new to homelessness would not have to spend so much time "learning the ropes" of where and when to seek needed services. Many of these changes could be relatively easy to implement and could save agencies' limited resources. Freed resources could then be redirected to much-needed services like job-seeking assistance and activism aimed at structural changes that could help prevent homelessness in the first place.

Acknowledgments

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