DUAL ABANDONMENT: RURALITY, HOMELESSNESS, AND PUBLIC CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

Grover Wehman-Brown: Dual Abandonment: Rurality, homelessness and public culture
(Under the direction of Sarah Sharma)

This dissertation examines the specifically rural contours of inadequate housing in one community in the mountains of California. It does so within the context of an overwhelmingly urban conception of homelessness in the popular imaginary as well as political and theoretical frameworks. While urban homelessness dominates public discourse about the problem and its most visible forms stand in for the entire system of living without adequate housing in the United States, rural homelessness is a different experience in a variety of ways. This work identifies how rural inadequate housing is informed by specifically rural phenomena, such as rural housing stock, reduced physical visibility but increased social visibility, and far physical distances between amenities. There are discrepancies between how people survive being inadequately housed in the region and how housed people talked about homelessness. I argue that the discursive strategies used to talk about homelessness are products of social imaginaries. Housed residents rely on these imaginaries to distance themselves from collective responsibility to rectify housing insecurity and to deflect reckoning with their own position within tiers of economic insecurity that are widespread in the region.

Small towns in the United States are often considered inherently safe places where everybody knows everybody else. Hierarchies of belonging and exclusionary practices in the area chafe against the ideal that small towns are the natural sites of take-care-of-your-neighbor democratic practice. I name this phenomenon, the idea that rural areas are ideal spaces for town-

hall style democracy, *rural exceptionalism*. I argue that rural exceptionalism obstructs small-town communities from reckoning with the economic disinvestment that influences difficult problems such as inadequate housing; it orients critique of local problems inward instead of outward, resting on the belief that ideal democratic practice should be able to deal with problems such as an unhoused person in the community. This inward-focus detracts from the way wider-scale debates about the distribution of resources are enacted through dominant forms of public cultural practice. I argue that these dominant forms, particularly the administrative form most often used to manage and deliberate about homelessness, are urban-biased. Rural inadequate housing is the experience of dual abandonment- first, abandonment outside of the system of housing, then a regional abandonment from the administrative form said to manage and deliver aid. I analyze the way life is lived in dual abandonment, showing how disposability is productive of certain disposable practices of care, what Desmond (2012) calls disposable ties. Within the realm of disposability, violence and risk are differentially experienced, in this case based on gender. The systems of homelessness and the prison industrial complex are used to manage misogyny's excess, and as such, differential disposabilities should be considered when making claims about precarity and disposability.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"Many would argue that while our metropolises are the economic heart of our nation, our small towns are where you find our soul. Livability's editors have traveled many a blue highway and kicked up a lot of dust in our rental cars headed on letter-named county roads with paper maps to backup our GPS units. We've walked into many a diner where we were clearly a stranger as we entered, but left with new friends and promises to visit again" (Carmichael, 2015). This description of how the editors of Livability.com chose their "Top 100 Great Small Towns" invokes many core ideas about an essential goodness that resides in small towns throughout the United States. In depicting the small town as a place to "find your soul" the editors of Livability.com step into a long tradition of portraying American small towns as social-emotional vessels of harmony. The small-town diner often serves as a picturesque campaign stop for politicians attempting to convey an image of connection with the average citizen. Livability's editors draw upon this legacy. The diner seems to serve as a magic tollbooth that transforms strangers into friends over the course of a paid meal.

Using statistical data and the diner litmus test, the editors named Lebanon, New Hampshire as the number one town in their "top 100 small towns in America" list. In a very different ranked list, New York City and Los Angeles, California were listed number two and three of "25 Cities with Extremely High Homeless Populations" (Castillo, 2014). The write-ups for why each city earned top honors accompanied pictures of people sleeping on benches, sidewalks, and subway platforms in the daylight. In the Las Angeles picture, a person entirely

covered by clothes and blankets sleeps upright on a bench in front of a bus stop full of people. In the New York picture, a food vender cart frames the image of an older Black man as he sleeps on top of a military camouflaged blanket atop an artistically beveled stone slab bench. This list, dominated by images such as these, was shared 14,655 times, circulating as part of the spectacle of urban homelessness.

It's generally well accepted that homelessness and rural poverty are significant problems in the United States and yet, rural homelessness in the United States is often thought to be an oxymoron, a spatial and social impossibility. It is overwhelmingly minimized in comparison to urban homelessness. The thing called homelessness in the United States is not one clear-cut experience, practice, or status. It is a phenomenon made up of a collection of habitual practices related to sleeping and mobility. Sleeping on a bench, sidewalk, under a tarp in the woods, in a storage locker, or in a shelter are some of the practices regularly identified as "homelessness." Where and when one moves, and what is done in that movement is often dictated by housing status. A person who sleeps in their car might drive to a grocery store as their morning routine, both using the restroom and buying breakfast. Homelessness is also a social status, often invoked to represent the very bottom-end of a hierarchy of social class in the U.S. Finding oneself identified and marked as such can have profound social and economic consequences, so adults often attempt to hide their housing status from potential employers, and youth attempt to hide their status from peers. The system of homelessness is made up of economic relations, influenced by the people who own and manage private housing stock, government agencies, and non-government social service agencies. Homelessness as a knowable entity is produced by knowledges, such as research, point in time counts, news coverage, and non-government and government reports. These knowledges inform everyday gossip, ways of seeing the practices of

other people, and circulate as part of a field of discourse. These discourses are often articulated through spatial conceptions such as good or bad neighborhoods, or houses as appropriate sleeping spaces, and public spaces as inappropriate. Homelessness is formally regulated by institutional entities, primarily the police and social service agencies.

Rural areas are diverse, complex places. Rural places in the U.S. are different from each other, characterized by different landscapes and their related economic and cultural dynamics. They are also diverse within communities. Rural places are made up of multiple generations of people, newer and longer-term residents, owners of land and the means of production, and the people that work those places. Small towns are valorized as ideal sites for face-to-face democratic practice, a place where people are thought to take care of one another. Rural inadequate housing persists across the United States, but is rarely acknowledged in public discussion about homelessness, and under researched. This dissertation examines inadequate housing in one rural community in the mountains of California, a place I call Hills County.

Drawing from interviews, participant-observation, and ethnographic field work, I examine what is specifically rural about inadequate housing in Hills County. The physical practices of living without adequate housing in Hills County both shares characteristics with homelessness in urban areas, and have some distinct differences. For example, many inadequately housed people in Hills County interacted with either government or non-governmental service agencies in some way, but for roughly half of the people I spoke with, interacting with an agency in person requires traversing 15-20 miles. Inadequate housing in Hills County involves a variety of bureaucratic, economic, and social interactions that can be said to produce or exacerbate inadequate housing, and also change the shape of the experience.

Local interactions are informed by wider-scale regional power dynamics that structure the possibilities of how housing inadequacy is talked about, responded to, and experienced. This work incorporates findings about how inadequate housing in Hills County is experienced with an analysis of the social, political, and economic power dynamics that shape these experiences. The widespread discursive field through which homelessness is understood as an inherently urban problem informs the way locally housed residents view the problem of housing inadequacy in their community. Homelessness, inadequate housing, and most major grievances that are informed by the state and national scale are debated, managed, and resolved through the institutional form. I show how the institutional form relied upon to manage and deliberate about housing inadequacy and other critical problems facing this community is urban biased. This can be seen in the way funds to minimize the impacts of inadequate housing are distributed via the Continuum of Care program from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. This program privileges the number of people experiencing housing deprivation in the allocation of funds over other ways that could be used to determine need. This has significant implications for people enduring rural housing inadequacy, and rural communities in general in economically disinvested areas of the United States.

Homelessness in the United States

Statistics documenting homelessness in the United States are generally produced from a "count day" or a "count period" of a week or a single day. The 2012 Point in Time count documented 633,782 people experiencing homelessness in the United States on the day of the count (US Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2012). These counts only document the identifiable and visible people experiencing homelessness in (generally) urban centers, or who are receiving services from a shelter or long-term transitional housing facility. This count is

usually done early in the morning on a day in January, counting only those in transitional housing or shelter facilities and those most vulnerable people sleeping in visible, identifiable locations. This limits the number of unhoused people who are acknowledged to be without adequate shelter, and makes it seem as if people are unhoused primarily in urban areas (Toomey and First, 1993).

The technical definition of "homelessness" in the United States extends beyond street and service shelter homelessness, and includes any person who lives in a shelter not designed for or deemed adequate for human habitation (a car, dilapidated buildings, barns, tents, etc.), children who live in houses with more than one family present ("doubling up"), who live in campgrounds, or are migratory (United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2009). Less research has been done to understand the actual pervasiveness of homelessness and housing inadequacy in the United States beyond studying those who experience homelessness on the street or in regulated shelter or treatment facilities, such as the pervasiveness of couch-surfing, or inadequate housing in rural areas. The intense focus on those who are most critically at risk of death and physical harm due to their shelter status is understandable, and yet, if we are to address and eradicate homelessness in the United States we must prevent long-term and chronic homelessness from happening in the first place. In order to do so, we need to understand the extent to which people are inadequately housed, how and where people survive during times of housing inadequacy, and how they come to lose housing.

Ending homelessness is not merely a problem of creating more extensive outreach or social services. After an extensive study observing in social service waiting rooms and interviewing mothers in economic and housing crisis, Susan Bennett (1995) characterizes the causal factors of family homelessness and housing crisis in this way: "The conditions that

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produced homelessness for the women we met bespoke material and physical insecurity. These, in turn, imply an inevitable, accompanying emotional insecurity. However, in contrast to studies suggesting that family homelessness is, in part, caused by personal dysfunction and the attenuation of past familial ties, our experience and researchers' findings indicate otherwise: not that family ties were loose, but that the tensions of severe overcrowding had strained them to the point of breaking" (Bennett, 1995, p. 2180). Personal, health, and social flaws tend to dominate narratives of homelessness in the United States, which obscures the fundamental economic and housing-distribution inequalities that result in homelessness (Pascale, 2005; Schneider, 2011; Toft, 2014). Homelessness and inadequate housing are primarily the result of economic inequality and the narrow range of housing stock in the United States (Pleace, 1998). News articles highlighting increases or changing populations of people experiencing homelessness often increase during economic downturns, framing the pervasiveness as an extreme result of an exceptional crisis (Pugh, 2010; Szep, 2008). But as Don Mitchell (2011) argues, inadequate housing is a persistent feature of American housing and capitalism. "This visible homelessness is a chronic, not a crisis or emergency, condition; it is an inevitable feature of American-style capitalism, even if it might grow during times of economic downturn" (Mitchell, 2011, p. 950). Craig Willse (2015) agrees that what he calls "housing deprivation" is a result of political priorities and American-style capitalism. He extends this argument further, showing how the system of services and research said to reduce the negative impacts of homelessness actually serves to turn exclusion from housing and the economy into the production of surplus. This happens through funding the management of people made homeless, creating significant profit for the directors of non-governmental organizations, and salaries for the day to day service workers (Willse, 2015, p. 48).

Naming Housing Deprivation

Scholars studying rural housing and homelessness have come up with a variety of terms to describe homelessness/housing inadequacy, each which highlights specific aspects of the problem. For example, Stover (1999) provides distinctions between kinds of housing inadequacy with the terms "literal homelessness" and "without permanent adequate homes". "Literal homelessness" refers to sleeping rough or having no place to stay, which usually happens in episodic spurts. These spurts are part of a longer experience of being without permanent adequate homes and include substandard, overcrowded, and high-cost-burdened housing (Stover, 1999, p. 76). Stover provides an excellent articulation of some of the problems with the federal definition of homelessness, which she characterize as a difference in defining homelessness "according to a person's or family's *options* rather than *needs*. For example, a woman who lives in a domestic violence shelter usually is classified as homeless. However, a woman who lives in an area where a domestic violence shelter is unavailable and flees domestic violence by doubling up with another household, no matter how precarious that household's situation becomes, typically is not considered homeless. This predominant means of categorizing the homeless according to where they are sheltered affects homeless counts nationwide, but it especially affects rural areas" (Stover, 1999, p. 75). Neale (1997) uses the term "housing need" to highlight the similarities between the range of experiences that make up homelessness and the larger population of households experiencing housing difficulties. Yvonne Vissing (1996) suggests instead of calling rural families without shelter homeless, we should use the word "displaced" children or families or those who are in housing distress (1996, p. 8). David Bruce (2006) uses the term "at-risk of homelessness" to study housing inadequacy in rural and small town Canada. "At risk of homelessness" includes "anyone at risk of not have their own place to stay because

they are spending fifty percent or more of their gross household income on shelter costs regardless of tenure, or because they lack security of tenure." He differentiates this from what he terms "absolute homelessness" which "refers to not having one's own place to stay for the night" (Bruce, 2006, p. 64). Cloke, Milbourne, and Widdowfield (2001) found that the urban-biased language, with its emphasis on visibility of people who are sleeping on the street, produces a cyclical relationship of invisibility, lack of documentation, and lack of funding to address the problem. Because of the stigma and urban associations of homelessness, when rural people in the UK are faced with housing loss, they're hesitant to seek services from the county officer tasked with responding to homelessness. Because there are no visible signs of homelessness such as day centers, the general community tends to think the problem doesn't exist (Cloke et. al., 2001, p. 108). There were similar trends at work in Hills County to reckon with a disconnect between the lack of visibility of inadequately housed people, the urban-normative-ness of homelessness, and an investment in an idyllic rural community. I explore these issues further in chapter four, examining the social imaginaries at work in discourses of "real" homelessness.

In this work I use the terms *inadequate housing/inadequately housed* or *unhoused* to talk about people who are currently or were recently without stable housing (at a location for more than six months), or who live in a shelter that lacks an in-tact roof, heating, working plumbing, electricity, and/or a working kitchen kitchen. I also include overcrowded conditions within the definition of inadequate housing at the rate of two or more non-partnered adults per bedroom in a house. When I use the term *homelessness* I am referring not to a person's identity, nor a group of people who are unhoused, but rather the phenomenon that include: the systems produced to manage and prevent street-sleeping, such as shelters, NGO's, advocacy groups, transitional housing facilities, soup kitchens, HUD and other governmental and private foundation agencies

that fund these services; the laws, corporate-public partnership policies, and policing that are debated and enacted to manage de-valued people living and congregating on the street; media, art, and research entities that produce and circulate knowledge about homelessness; and the discursive unities produced and circulated by the general population in the United States through conversation, representation, and taboo. Because of the techniques used to measure it and the terms used to talk about it, the system of homelessness generally focuses on the urban form. Rural homelessness is a present, but largely under-recognized part of the system of homelessness.

Rural homelessness

About 16% of rural people in the U.S. live in poverty. 63% of rural people living in poverty are white, though they are only 16% of white people living in poverty, meaning that rural white people experience poverty much more than urban white people. Poverty rates among rural people of color are more than twice that of rural white/not-Hispanic population. 34% of rural African-Americans experience poverty, approximately 30% of rural Native Americans, and 28% of rural Latina/Hispanic Americans (Housing Assistance Council, 2012). Poverty correlates with inadequate housing in rural areas in a number of ways. People living in poverty in rural areas are more likely to have restricted funds to fix broken heating systems, plumbing, electricity, building materials, or to afford the fuels to heat their houses. They're more likely to be unable to pay their rent or mortgage for a period of time than non-poor rural residents. The distance between housing and employment may limit employment options and/or result in loss of income or firing when transportation fails.

Advocacy organizations representing people who experience homelessness/to end homelessness in the United States highlight that the pervasiveness of rural homelessness is hard

to measure. It is hard to measure because people who experience homelessness in areas with low population density are often not visible, because of limited service organizations to represent and count inadequately housed people, and because of conflicting definitions of both rural and homeless (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2012; National Coalition for the Homeless, 2007; Hayatt, 2013). As a result, urban-based data overwhelmingly informs polices to address homelessness and informs how homelessness is characterized and perceived by the general public. A report on Rural Homelessness issued by the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) (2010) illustrates some very specific reasons rural homelessness is difficult to identify. The report, "Rural Homelessness: Better Collaboration by HHS and HUD Could Improve Service Delivery in Rural Areas" compares how the definition of homelessness is used by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and other agencies that also provide services to people who experience homelessness, such as the department of Health and Human Services, Veterans Affairs, or the Department of Education. The HUD definition is based on the McKinney Vento Homeless Services Act, and is much narrower than other agencies' definitions (United States Government Accountability Office, 2010, p. 4-5). The HUD definition and related funding is linked explicitly to "literal" homelessness such as living in a shelter or areas not meant for human habitation. It does not include precarious housing situations such as overcrowding, dilapidated housing, or doubling up.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development is the agency that distributes the majority of funding of services to people who experience homelessness, which is distributed through a grant system and regional organization called Continuum of Care (CoC). These grants are disbursed based a competitive application process. Applications are generally produced by non-profit organizations, city or county governments, an entire state or any combination of those

organizations that join together and petition for funds in order to implement specific programs. Later I analyze the ways in which the CoC grant program was a barrier to a small non-governmental service organization in Hills County to compete for grant funding in order to provide emergency services to people experiencing or at risk of housing loss. This inability to compete for funding produces the experience of dual abandonment for people experiencing inadequate housing in rural areas. There is first the experience of being abandoned outside the system of housing, and then the inability to access services that are available in urban areas even if these services are flawed, and part of a widespread system of capitalization on surplus lives.

Cloke and Milbourne (2006) note that researchers of rural homelessness in the US and UK consistently note the ways in which homelessness is articulated, researched, and funded as an inherently urban issue. While housing deprivation in wealthy nations such as the US and UK, especially in impoverished rural areas where there seems to be abundant housing, seems "unthinkable", they propose that we move on to "investigate more closely the ways in which the state is imposing order on the complexity of everyday life by making homelessness *legible* in certain spaces and certain social groups, yet *illegible* elsewhere" (2006, p. 261). The hyper-legibility of homelessness in urban areas obscures the range of housing inadequacy in urban areas, and all kinds of housing deprivation in rural areas.

Rural Homelessness in the United States

The majority of in-depth research on rural homelessness and inadequate housing has been conducted in the UK, and a large portion of research on rural homelessness and inadequate housing in the United States was conducted and published in the late 1980's and 1990's. Both the system of homelessness and the economic engines of the United States have changed since the 1990's, and the economic and political atmosphere of the UK is different in a number of

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ways from the U.S., but these studies are helpful in understanding rural homelessness in the United States in ways that informs our thinking about the problem in its current context. Cloke, Milbourne and Widdowfield (2002) discuss ways in which rurality and homelessness are discursively articulated and conceived of separately, as well as some of the ways in which the ways to exist while homeless in urban and rural areas contributes to the over-identification of homelessness with urbanity and under- identification of homelessness with rurality.

Rural homelessness, they argue, is generally characterized by 'hidden homelessness''—homelessness that is not "sleeping rough" or serviced by institutions such as shelters or transitional living facilities (Cloke, Milbourne and Widdowfield, 2002). By interviewing homeless and non-homeless residents of a rural town in the UK, Cloke, Milbourne and Widdowfield (2002) found that both people who did and those who did not experience homelessness most often talked about homelessness in ways that named the experience as something else. Informants described periods in which they moved from hostels to bedsits, to friends' houses as being 'unsettled' even though throughout the experience they may have desired long term permanent housing (2002, p. 186-7). Others described their experiences as 'passing through', 'staying with a friend', or 'checking up on a friend' (p.188-189). They argue that informants use this diversity of terms to describe the experience because many did not want to be identified as homeless. "To do so would be to standout as visibly unable to sort out their own problems, and as having lost control over their life. This elective invisibility through refusing the label of homelessness occurred throughout the spectrum of people interviewed, and adds significantly to the hidden nature of homelessness in rural areas" (2002, p. 189). In Janet Fitchen's (1991) extended research in an isolated, generally poor, rural community in upstate New York, she developed language to differentiate between kinds of inadequate housing via the

terms "near homeless" which referred to dilapidated or overcrowded shelter that most of the people she interacted with lived in, and "rooflessness", the experience of being without a house-shelter (Fitchen, 1991). In addition to identifying survival strategies used by people in rural inadequate housing, such as doubling up, frequent moves, and sleeping in dilapidated shelters, Fitchen (1992) analyzes the housing-market factors influencing increased inadequate housing in rural areas. They include increasingly depressed incomes of rural residents, the emergence of single-parent families, both of which strain the low-income rental housing. Housing insecurity has increased as non-mortgaged home ownership through inheritance has decreased. In previous generations more families inherited their homes, they then owned outright or lived in a building on land owned by their parents. She also cites the lack of owned-outright housing as related to the increased enforcement of land-use regulations, which can restrict use of mobile-homes, or piecemeal, DIY expansion of a house while still living in it. Finally, she notes that with the rise of rural gentrification, which has seen urban dwellers with higher incomes buy property in rural areas, insecure tenancy has risen as rental properties get sold to new residents, housing prices rise, and the increased cost of land and competition for rental plots leaves some rural low-income residents with no place to put their owned mobile-home (Fitchen, 1992).

First, Rife, & Toomey (1994) conducted in-depth interviews with over 900 people in 21 rural counties in Ohio. They found that most people without housing in rural areas were inadequately housed because of economic reasons, either they had a catastrophic economic event such as job loss, or they couldn't afford housing. They found that women, especially women heading families alone, were found to be homeless at higher rates than those identified in studies of homelessness in urban areas. Men were more likely to stay unsheltered, or in abandoned buildings and cars, while women were more likely to stay with friends or family, though women

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also cited conflict with family as the primary reason they are currently inadequately housed (p. 101). They found that respondents were much less likely (approximately 50%) to say they felt they had friends and family they could count on in the area for help, compared to 90% of housed residents in rural regions who felt they had friends and family they could count on (First, Rife, and Toomey, 1994, p. 102).

Dee Southard (1997) conducted seven years of ethnographic field research on publicly owned parkland in the Pacific Northwest. She camped with and interviewed what she identified as "homeless, 'non-recreational' campers" who lived on parkland (Southard, 1997, p. 47). She categorized this population of campers into three types: voluntary nomadic, economic refugees, and separatists. Separatist campers tended to have long-term, isolated campsites populated by either single men, men clustered into groups of 2-3, or on occasion heterosexual couples. The male separatists are most often military veterans, share a culture of weapon-use and outdoor survivalist skills, and paranoia of 'government', or 'the man' (Southard, 1997, p. 61). Economic migrants were people who often lived in the area of the woods closest to towns, frequently had and lived in vehicles, and were experiencing a shorter-period of homelessness. These campers often had young children, and sought to re-enter normative housing as soon as possible. Voluntary nomadic campers tended to be young people who were highly mobile, preferred to stay next to rivers and other bodies of water, cooked collectively, and created sub-communities of 'families' that relied on reciprocity to meet basic needs (Southard, 1997). In chapter three I discuss the experiences of one informant, Lynxster, whose mobility and cultural experiences fall into Southard's category of "voluntary nomadic", but I propose that in wider economic, social, and criminality contexts nomadism might be a chosen survival strategy, but is not exactly voluntary.

There is a diverse range of coping strategies used by inadequately housed people in rural areas of the U.S. (Hilton and DeJong, 2010). Patricia Post (2002) summarizes the shelter strategies typically used by people who lose housing in rural areas as cyclical. They often stay with friends or family until they "wear out their welcome"; live in shelter not intended for permanent habitation such as shacks, abandoned houses, vehicles, or other temporary shelter; then move to more urbanized areas in search of services, jobs, or other support networks "beginning the cycle anew" (Post, 2002, p. 8). This cycle is generally consistent with cycles of coping strategies used by inadequately housed participants I talked with in Hills County. However, the cycles and survival strategies varied or were complicated by other influencing factors such as gender, or whether or not they were currently under the supervision/restrictions imposed by the criminal justice system. While Post didn't identify the low-cost motel within the cycle of shelter strategies, it was a central to coping strategies of people in Hills County. The narrative that people migrated to larger cities was certainly invoked by service providers, and conforms to Post's (2002) findings. However, I did not find that unhoused participants considered out-migration a strategy they intended to use, and in one case an informant in-migrated to the rural area away from a service-dense urban area. In chapter three I analyze this phenomenon in greater detail. Fitchen (1992) noted that people living on the edge of homelessness and doubled-up often were what she called "frequent movers", but these moves were not necessarily one-directional into larger cities with services or jobs. They were often moves precipitated by rumor of a job opportunity, or the option to stay with new family, or in search of an affordable rental unit. This often happened within a shorter-range of space, within a county or between adjacent counties (Fitchen, 1992, p. 189). These differences between other

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researchers' findings and my own warrant more research on migration patterns, motivations, and demographics of unhoused people moving between rural and urban areas.

Hilton and Trella (2014) found that unhoused parents of children in the rural region of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan spent much of their days "survival parenting", "a unique combination of near panic in response to the gravity of living homeless with children and a hyper-vigilance in doing anything necessary to protect and provide for children" (2014, 455). Survival parenting often involved taxing, day-long efforts to meet the basic survival needs of their kids, such as hauling a baby in a stroller across town and back more than four times to make appointments required to get a hotel voucher for the night, attend Child Protective Services meetings, wash clothes, and get food (Hilton and Trella, 2014, 455). Most of the fifty-four parents that Hilton and Trella interviewed were receiving support from homeless service agencies in one of the three major towns in the areas[1], but found that the agencies were not able to provide assistance that actually met the families' needs. For example, they said that informants referred to a HUD emergency housing voucher as "winning the lottery". "By the time we completed our interviews human service agencies had stopped putting new names on waiting lists because they believed there was no chance that any families just becoming homeless would ever secure a voucher" (Hilton and Trella, 2014, p. 464). Rural areas have fewer service providers, government agencies, and related funds than urban areas (Post, 2002; Edwards, Torgerson, & Sattem, 2009; Hilton and DeJong, 2010). In Hills County the services for people experiencing housing crisis were certainly limited, though when they were accessed by people in housing crisis, they were often, as Hilton and Trella (2014) found, not robust enough to meet an

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[1] Accounted for, in large part, because they recruited most of their participants through service agencies

individual or family's full needs. This is not necessarily a failing on the part of one, or even the

network of service providers. The inability of an organization to adequately resolve a housing

crisis is informed by anemic funding to rural areas to respond to rural housing crises. The

reduced options for funding rural housing assistance is always combined with the generalized

inability of service organizations to rectify the causal factors of inadequate housing that are

rooted in economic inequality and exacerbated by limited housing options. Further on I argue

that the administrative public form that dominates struggles over what and who counts as

homeless and inadequately housed, and therefore receives funding from the federal government

to address these problems, are regionally biased. This bias functions not just through the

distribution of funds to urban areas and not rural ones. It also restricts the ability of people in

rural areas to organize into formations that are state and nationally recognized, and therefore able

to practically deliberate and advocate for the needs of everyday people in economically

disinvested rural regions.

Conceptions of Rurality

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's webpage, *What is Rural?*, acknowledges the

conflicting definitions of what precisely a rural area is and how it is measured. They encourage

the reader to consider that "The choice of a rural definition should be based on the purpose of the

activity" (Cromartie & Bucholtz, 2012). Each federal agency uses a different definition based on

different population and proximity measures. However, one thing in common with federal

definitions is that they all tend to demarcate the rural in opposition to what is considered urban.

Once the metric for an urban metropolitan area is established, the rural areas are considered all

places not included in the urban metro zone (USDA Rural Information Center, 2014). Scott

Herring's (2010) introduction to his book *Another Country* illustrates the problems that are

inherent in demarcating the rural based on US Census designations, wherein an 'urbanized area'

in the year 2000 includes anyplace with:

> "'a population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile' (Census, 2000)
> This definition identifies Bloomington, IN and Appleton, Wisconsin as 'urban'
> "alongside what the Web site curiously hyphenates as 'New York—Newark,
> NJ—NJ—CT' and 'Los Angeles—Long Beach—Santa Ana, CA….' Given these
> loose examples of the static term 'urban,' the geographic pratfalls of numerically
> defining what counts as 'rural' or an 'urban' space should become less
> transparent. This is especially so when we consider the logistics of 'core census
> blocks' that have, say, a population density of 999 people per square mile and are
> deemed 'rural' by technicality. Or when we question who, exactly, decided to
> hyphenate 'areas' like New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut as a singular
> 'urbanized' population chain. Some folks in the Jersey Pinelands might disagree."
> (Herring, 2010, p. 8)

Some places that are considered 'urban' according to census designations are dense

clusters of housing, shopping, and services in the middle of rural regions far from the

metropolitan centers of state, economic, and cultural decision making. People who live in these

peripheral places, even if they are cities of sixteen thousand people are spatially distant from

these decision-making centers and often culturally distinctive. Marc Auge (1995) argues that

anthropological "places" are named and recognizable to a wide general population. The White

House and the Kremlin are the two examples he gives, linking "the identification of power with

the place where it is exercised" (Auge 1995, 63). Auge's places are named sites that house those

that benefit from unequal power relations. Doreen Massey (2005) theorizes place not as a thing,

but a co-produced 'constellation', an "event of place" that is "the coming together of the

previously unrelated, a constellation of processes rather than a thing" (Massey, 2005, 141). The

naming of a place, as Auge argues, is surely one way to recognized a Massey-place is

happening—the social and linguistic investments have made the collection of land, landscape,

materials, and culture a "place." The distinction between urban and rural places as defined by the

U.S. government can seem too blunt of a tool to understand the way culture, landscape, distance, and economic distribution intersect to produce a "region". But a region is important in understanding the contestations at work in rural public culture and rural inadequate housing. The region is identified primarily through proximity. There is the sense of proximity that is determined by how long it takes to get from one place to another. While one big city might seem somewhat close to Hills County when looking at a Cartesian map, the quality and path of a roadway will greatly influence how close that city actually is. Proximity is complicated by landscape, because while Hills County is in the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range, and shares economic and cultural characteristics with areas is other parts of the range, they are virtually un-reachable through the range itself. To go from one part of the Sierra Nevada to another by car, you would have to venture into other regions, such as the foothills or the valley.

In the case of Hills County, the time it takes to travel in a car to a site where a diversity of goods, services, employment, and political decision-making occurs greatly impacts the cycles of circulation. Within a smaller articulation of region and area, especially for people with no or limited transportation, the scale of their regional possibilities shrinks even smaller to the nearest town, out of reach of a census designated city. The production of a place as "rural" in the United States is primarily attached to remoteness. Paul Cloke (2006a) notes that oftentimes rurality conflated with agriculture (p. 20-21). To associate the rural with agriculture in a time when agriculture is mostly dominated by large farming businesses is to increasingly and essentially associate the rural with the factory. A drive up I-5 through central California overlooking massive slaughter-houses and mono-crop fields punctuated with complex machinery will make the dissonance between rural idyll and rural factory quite distinct. Rural areas include coastlines, deserts, and forested mountains such as Hills County. The majority of land in the United States is

still rural, and these rural places contain their own complex nexuses of human culture informed by weather and landscape. From people fishing off a rickety boat in the swamplands of the Florida panhandle, to the Shoshone Anti-Nuclear Test Site activists occupying federally claimed land in the desert of Nevada, rural cultural practices in the U.S. are complex; they are informed by weather, landscape, and industry, and competing priorities of human settlement.

Rural Idyll

In the United States the countryside is often represented as a beautiful, romantic, clean, adventurous, and safe place to live, raise kids, and visit (Wile, 2016; Mortenson, 2009; Dunford, 2007; Buzzfeed, 2012). The city that topped Livability's "Top 100 Small Towns," Lebanon, NH, is depicted in the article first by a picture of people skiing down a hillside. The skier-dotted hill seems to be tucked right in the center of a residential area with brightly painted two and three story houses. Lebanon topped their list because while it's the town center of a rural area, it's economically stable, with low unemployment. It has a major hospital that employs most people, good public schools, and an Ivy League school the next town over. "Not many other cities this size can boast a diversified economy with a range of headquarters in everything from aerospace to biotech to ski equipment" (Carmichael, 2015). He's right. They sure can't.

While economically stable small towns are represented as ideal places, rural areas—especially low-population, non-town rural areas considered "the sticks"—are represented in popular discourse as places of deep poverty, cultural "backwardness," and hostility towards outsiders (Bell, 1997). The designations of rural areas as idyllic or backwards often fall along the lines of race and class. Places represented as "backward", "illiterate" and "scary" often include tribal reservations, (im)migrant farm housing and migrant concentrations, or the Appalachian mountains. "Bad" rural places include basically the entire rural southeastern United States,

because it represents racialized anxiety about slavery and white supremacy. Rural areas of the southeast are often characterized by racialized economic inequality, with a small number of wealthier whites in town-centers, and many poor black and some poor white people in the peripheries of rural landscape. There remains a visual legacy and current practices of white-supremacist intimidation of Black and immigrant residents. While these unequal power relations are true, they're often they're held up as reasons rural areas are "uncivilized" or helpless. The rural site is dismissed as backwards rather than invested in as a place in immediate need for collective reckoning and investment to end the racist dynamics at work. They city, not justice, is held up as the viable alternative.

Rural places represented as "good" tend to be wealthier and populated with more white people. These are places such as wine country in California, the fall foliage in Vermont or New Hampshire, the powdery slopes of Colorado, or the rolling hills of Iowa corn. They are presented as "nice" rural places to visit, the places to fix the national narratives of American rurality to (Fatoozi, 2015; Lovejoy, 2015). Recently a string of articles in major newspapers have compared the quality of life in rural and urban areas, noting that crime and pollution has decreased in urban areas, making them less threatening, while urban dwellers maintain better physical health and decreased death from accidents (Netburn, 2013; Beck, 2011; Walsh, 2013). The implication of these (urban based) popular press articles seem to be: see, the city's better for you anyway—feel good about living here. Even as the majority of people in the U.S. live in urban areas, the idea that these kinds of rural areas are nice palaces to be remains salient. This can be seen within rural subcultural arenas such as country music, as well as more urban-based cultural products representing idealized American identities such as Prairie Home Companion or the back to the land homesteading movement (Yates & Cunningham, 2002; Prairie Home Companion, 2016;

Atwell, 2015).

David Bell (2006) says the rural idyll is "first and foremost a symbolic landscape into which is condensed and onto which are projected a whole host of things: identifications, imaginings, ideologies" (Bell, 2006, p. 151; See also Marx, 2000). As part of this, the rural idyll is a repository for national identity, a reminder of a (usually golden) past, and a place to go to commune with nature (Bell, 2006). Bell identifies trends in which tourists flock to countrysides all over the U.S. and UK to take in some of the idyllic aspects of rural areas—the scenery, sounds of machines replaced with sounds of nature, hopeful simplicity that accompanies pseudo-isolation. However, tourists that seek out the idyll also threaten it. Their cars demand better roads, their city consumption tastes influence store offerings, their vacation housing jacks up rural housing costs, changing the cultural makeup of the area. Bell argues that the rural idyll is the product of bourgeois imaginary, developed alongside urbanization and industrialization, and that anti-idyll sentiments that attempt to boundary-police and "purify" rural space and communities to keep them idyllic are the product of "new managerialist (and new traditionalist) homeowners" (Bell, 2006, 158). Even if the term rural idyll emerged to describe some idealized rural setting in relation to some "monstrous" urban-industrializing setting, I find that putting the responsibility of idealizing rural areas on urban cultural practice off the mark. Idealized notions of rural areas are not confined to urban formations, and are often used to anchor rural community identity and practice. Mary Grey (2009) sees the dichotomous juxtaposition between an idyllic but static countryside and a dynamic city life productive, even if not 'true' in and of itself, because the juxtapositions "signal the shared anxieties that structure every rural" (Gray, 2009, pp. 39) and within the arguments that Bell makes, extend that to urban, life.

In 1992 Chris Philo published an article in the Journal of Rural studies that marked the

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beginning of the study of otherness in Rural Studies. He argued that researchers should stop researching the seen and the obvious (farming, masculinity, nuclear-families, etc.), instead working to understand 'others' within rural areas including youth and elders, gay and lesbian rural people, women, and non-white people. Philo's essay initiated ongoing debates about how to best study 'otherness' and power inequalities in rural areas. These debates have centered on what groups might be included as rural 'others', whether the rural is in and of itself an 'other' to the urban, and the processes through which these divisions are formed (Murdoch and Pratt, 1993, 422; Little, 1999, 437; Cloke, 2006b, 448). Research about the lives of rural 'others' is important because it refutes dominant popular conceptions of the rural as mono-cultural, free of conflict or inequality, or as an unbroken web of kinship ties and community cooperation (Valentine, 1997; Harper, 1997; Chakraborti and Garland, 2004; Malcolm, 2004). Paul Cloke (2006) notes that the idealized "close", everybody-knows-your-name character of rural sociality is at times part of an exacerbated experience of otherness.

Milbourne (2006) argues that this everybody-knows-your-name characteristic of rural sociality, combined with the idyllic expectations of the rural that communities cling to as a way of creating a positive-self-identity, contributes to isolation and invisibility for rural others, particularly people experiencing rural homelessness. In chapter five I consider the relationship between idyllic notions of the rural, particularly in the way small towns are thought to be ideal sites for face-to-face democratic deliberation. Small towns are tasked with holding the narrative of this ideal democratic practice, even if their cultural and political processes don't function in this way. Introducing the term *Rural Exceptionalism*, I argue this expectation deflects criticism of the decision making practices at work. Rural exceptionalism encourages members of the community to feel like the community is always-already doomed. A disinvested rural community

is unable to make change or have substantial engagement about difficult issues such as homelessness or class inequality because the democratic practices and effective public deliberative bodies to petition the state are not in place. Joan Tronto (2013) advocates for a shift in values that centers care, not market logics, as the foundation of democratic political practice. She argues that instead of focusing on distribution (who gets what, when, how) in democratic society, we instead focus on how we assign responsibilities of care as a way to think about political life. I argue that the naturalized legacy of care-for-your-neighbor 1-1 political practice that is attached to the rural and small town form obscures collective demands for equal distribution of resources at the state and national scales. It would seem that Tronto's concern with centering care and my analysis of the operations of differential distribution are at odds. However, in many ways our concern with politics and care are compatible; the discourse that rural people will and should care for their neighbors emerges from the absence of the state-based support and unequal distribution of resources. In an atmosphere of widespread disinvestment, the need to actually care for your neighbor increases, while the capacity to do so diminishes.

DuPuis and Goodman (2005) use the term "unreflexive localism' to describe the way in which idyllic notions of rurality are used within the emergent "local food" movement in the U.S. and Europe. They critique "local" food movements' tendency to conflate the local as inherently alternative and essentially critical to the international-based scale within the food system. The global is often conflated with 'capitalist' and therefore considered inherently unjust within the literatures of local-food movements. They argue that the presumption that local food is inherently good, always-already just because it is not perceived as hyper-global, obscures hierarchies of inequality that are present in the production of food within the local food system. This "unreflexive localism" black-boxes racial, class, and gender inequalities of labor, for

example. They argue instead for "letting go of a local that fetishizes emplacement as intrinsically more just. We have to move away from the idea that food systems become just by virtue of making them local and toward a conversation about how to make local food systems more just" (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005, p. 364). They encourage scholars of local food politics to more fully integrate critiques of 'geographical fetishism' (Castree, 2004) and the processes of the social construction of place (Massey, 1999; Swyngedouw, 1997; Amin, 2002). Their intervention is useful, in that it exposes the way in which the cultural ideas that rural areas and 'local' or small-scale places are somehow inherently or more just or pure than urban or global scales are flawed.

In search of solutions to the unreflexive localism of the local food movement discourses, DuPuis and Goodman propose next questions about processes of local food systems should consider: "which local institutions are more successful in promoting democratic, reflexive localist solutions and which merely perpetuate local inequalities?" (2005, p. 367). While this question is at first glance a generative one—and an analysis of which institutions perpetuate local inequalities should certainly be rife with possible targets—it is presumptive that local intuitions in rural areas *can* promote solutions to problems in rural areas. It presumes that local institutions in these areas can form and be recognized by the wider systematic operations that inform the inequalities of the rural place. In Chapter six, I argue that inadequately housed people in disinvested rural areas such as Hills County experience "dual abandonment." They are abandoned first from the system of housing, and then from the public processes of deliberation to be recognized as inadequately housed, which restricts the ability to make claims to have that inadequacy rectified. The problem of homelessness is deeply entrenched in the administrative public form, which is incompatible with the economic and spatial disinvestment that is widespread in rural regions. This is an extension of earlier debates that have emerged in which

the rural is 'the other' to the urban (Herring, 2010; Grey, 2009; Bell, 2003; Halberstam, 2005). Dual abandonment focuses on the ways the administrative form prevents members of disinvested rural regions from competing for collective resources at state and national scales.

Regional Bias and Public Culture

Metronormativity is a term introduced by Jack Halberstam (2005) to encompass how the rural is "the devalued term in the urban/rural binary governing the spatialization of modern U.S. and sexual identities" (Halberstam, 2005, pp. 36-37). Metronormative makes explicit the ways the city is the ideal space of "good" liberal social relations such as tolerance for racial and sexual diversity, interaction with strangers, the swift exchange of economic and discursive goods, or active administrative political participation. Scott Herring (2010) used the term metronormative to critically analyze narratives in queer culture in which urban areas are the "queer Mecca" to which all young rural-identified queer people must migrate, and in doing so must undergo a psycho-social transformation from "closet-case to out-and-proud" (Herring, 2010, p. 14). Similar to how the city-on-the-hill is seen as the ideal conditions for enlightened democratic practice, urban-based queers are presented as "more dynamic, more cutting edge, more progressive, and more forward-looking than a rural-identified queer, who will always be more static, more backward, and more culturally backwater" (Herring, 2010, p. 16). This particular cluster of literature on regional bias is focused on the regional bias of queer subcultures and queer counter-publics. Because it is rooted within already marginalized counter-public practice, it begins to show the ways in which even marginalized counter-public practices contain regional biases.

In Mary Gray's (2009) ethnography of rural queer youth in Kentucky she argues that rural counter publics in general and rural queer youth publics specifically, function differently than accounted for by the main theories of counter-publics (Warner, 2005; Frazer, 1992). These

theories, she argues, are based on metronormative assumptions about access to common, public, and visible community infrastructures, and presume a certain amount of economic and physical circulation of people and things (Gray 2009, pp. 94). She cites Michael Warner's (2005) use of Christopher Street in Manhattan as the foundational space in formulating a theory of queer counterpublics as an example of the metronormative foundation of ideas about public culture. Warner, Frazer, Habermas, and the more classical public sphere theorists from which they build arguments about counterpublics rely on the ability of a 'critical mass' to influence dominant political conversations and organizational structures. In the rural context, Grey argues, 'minoritarian others' cannot achieve a numerical critical mass. "As such, their assertions of visibility challenge the urban bias that undergirds these theories of counterpublics" (Gray, 2009, pp. 94). This example shows how a certain formation—critical mass—is thought to be a basis for public and counter-public deliberation, but is unable to happen in rural contexts. Understanding how this spatial inequality contributes to what's perceived as "local" inequality, such as rural homelessness in one community, will expand a roadmap of public political cultures, and within it possibilities of improving conditions for 'the other' in rural areas, such as poor and inadequately housed people in rural areas.

Homelessness and Public Culture

Hannah Arendt (1958) traces the roots of public culture to the rise of the city-state, wherein a man's life was split between what was his own and what was communal (Arendt, 1958, p. 24). As the political and the social life began to blur together in some aspects, public and communal life also corresponded with a shift from command executed through violence, to speech as means to persuade others (Arendt, 1958, p. 26-7). Private property and physical houses are central to Arendt's conception of public life, as made-objects are both useful, and valuable as

part of the public exchange within the marketplace (1958, p. 163). Arendt's tracing of ideal public life and liberal democracy emerges with the collection of families into city-states and the congregation of (male) citizens outside of their home deliberating and persuading each other. This congregation is made possible by the maintenance of the physical and social self in the site of the home, and home ownership was required for entry into citizenry.

The private was the realm of biological maintenance and reproduction, the labors of which were performed exclusively by women, children, and slaves. Private reproduction of the species and maintenance of the body enabled the male citizen to participate in public culture and politics. Arendt (1958) characterizes political participation as "the highest possibility of human existence" whereas "to have no private place of one's own (like a slave) meant to be no longer human" (Arendt, 1958, p. 64). This historical account of the emergence of public culture, we can see, seems to be inherently predicated on a person possessing a building, and place to call home. Feminist-Marxist critique has located the public/private split within patriarchal domination based on sex, and enacted through labor segregation and exploitation within the site of the home (Frazer, 1992; Weintraub, 1997; Young, 1985). Even as the possibility of who can be a citizen expanded to include non-property owners, women, or laborers, the inclusion within the system of housing has remained a central way of organizing people into various spatial publics such as with a nation, a town, and a neighborhood.

If people are supposed to maintain the body inside the house, and areas outside the house are the spaces in common, a person who is unhoused is thought to be out of order in the system of public organization. "The question of homelessness is therefore necessarily always also a question of public space—of who the public is, of who may inhabit public space, and of how such space will be constituted and controlled. The homeless body figures in contemporary public

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discourse as the fundamental threat to the public use of public space" (Kawash, 1998, p. 325; see also Benhabib, 1993; Hillis, 2008). Scholars have been attempting to argue that people who live or sleep on the street and other public spaces are part of a public and able to participate in public culture, not exist outside of it, in a variety of ways (Hodgetts et. al., 2008; Howley, 2003; Harter, et. al., 2004). For example, Kawash (1998) argues, "The image of the homeless as essentially other than the public fails to recognize and account for the political and economic activities of the homeless, which include self-organizing for political advocacy, participation in public discourse through electronic networks or street newspapers, and the making and selling of goods" (Kawash , 1998, p. 321). Torck (2001) finds that, after analyzing four different street papers produced (in part or whole) by people who are or were formerly homeless, the papers do little to give people experiencing homelessness a real platform for public engagement that's taken seriously by readers, instead serving as a small business for a few people, maintaining conditions of inequality, and soothe the conscience of the privileged (Torck, 2001, p. 338). However effective a street paper, or an advocacy organization, or a public protest initiated by unhoused people may be in forming, as Harter, et al. (2004) call it, an "alternative discourse community" or a "counter-public" as Warner (2005) does, I argue that these formations are formulations of public culture that are predicated on mass, the ability of exchange texts, or ability to form into recognized bureaucratic formations. These formations are attached to urban social and technical formations.

Formations used to constitute a public to advocate for unhoused people— be they through textual, masses in proximity, or bureaucratic techniques—do not break apart the incommensurability of homelessness and public culture enough. Whether or not unhoused people are in charge of it, or if they like it, people who experiencing housing deprivation are most

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widely represented by administrative and bureaucratic publics. In chapter six, I rely on the work of Craig Willse (2015) to explore the relationship between administrative public formations and the system of homelessness in more depth. Specifically, I consider the ability of people in disinvested rural places to form into administrative publics, and the ability of these publics to be able to compete within the deliberative and distributive realms that the issues of homelessness, inadequate housing, and poverty take place. Reviewing some of the foundational concepts used in public cultural practice will help us see just how deeply tied the public cultural form is to both to an urban-bias, and the administrative form as the public-cultural form that is most widespread in liberal societies.

Public Culture and the City

There are two primary ways of thinking about how a public body is formed. Public formations are forged via proximity within a designated spatial or scalar designation, such as a nation, a town, or a neighborhood (Calhoun, 1997) or through shared ideas, interests, or investments that center on a certain topic, idea, or identity (Berlant and Freeman, 1992; Warner, 2005; Price, 2009). Often the two overlap when a group in close proximity articulate an identity based on shared ideas, such as members of a nationalist opposition movement in a post-colonial context (Appadurai, 1993) or a utopian lesbian separatist community (Browne, 2011).Traditional theories of the public are based on formations that are primarily urban-based. These formations rely on the presence of the masses, such as the form of public protest or collective address, and presume stranger sociality such as the town square. The most ubiquitous public formations often require white-collar middle class skills and values to execute a public claim in a way that is captured and recognized as legitimate by the petitioned body (Krislov, 1981; Mills, 1956). The circulation of public opinion through (formerly) newspaper publishing and now digital

communications usually relies on high literacy skills and access to the means of distribution (Shumow, 2015; Salvador and Sias, 1998).

The era of modernity was characterized by a move away from feudal (largely agrarian) society towards capitalism, industrialism, and the production of the city. The shift in Western European society from agrarian-centered to urban-centered was accompanied by the emergence of a scientific focus on rationality and reason as the appropriate criteria through which to make decisions. Emmanuel Kant (1784) believed that "the public use of one's reason must be free at all times, and this alone can bring enlightenment to mankind" (Kant, 1784). The city as a formation and the intellectual traditions modernity spawned are deeply intertwined. However, Georgio Agamben (1998) traces the links between the city and ideal intellectual practices back to Aristotle and the differentiation between living beings who have voice and Man who has language. With this language man can sort through the just and the unjust, "the community of these things makes dwelling and the city" (Aristotle, 1253a, 10-18 cited in Agamben, 1998, p. 8). Regardless of its origins, some form of appropriate intellectual skills and those skills' relation to the form and proximity of the city emerges in each additional form of public life. John Dewey (1954) argues that the elements required for a democratically organized public sphere include freedom of social inquiry and its conclusions, full transparency about consequences that concern the public and rigorous scientific empiricism about life (Dewey, 1954, p. 166- 178).

As the city-state is seen as the place where public life emerged and that enabled the production of collaborative citizens, it is understandable that theorists would presume the city the natural site for public culture. The form of public culture emerged along with spatial arrangement of the city-state and expanded under industrialization and the birth of the modern city, wherein Jürgen Habermas (1991) identified a shift in public cultural practice to highly

technical, institutionalized public practices in the administrative form. Ideas about empiricism and scientism emerged alongside the machine that enabled the dispersion of public ideas in mass textual form—the printing press. Jürgen Habermas identifies the commercialization of the press as an influential leveling of influence and access to information among members of a public (Habermans, 1991, p. 181). While these formulations of ideal public participation are not spatially specific like Arendt's emphasis on proximity and property, they rely on cultural practices that are associated with a certain kind of intellectual and scientific knowledge that has its roots in university-based training, and elite intellectual debate, both housed in cities throughout Europe. To obtain these skills of participating in the public, one must have access to teachers, literacy, and the technical means to produce distributable texts such as presses or internet connectivity and computers. The emphasis on rationality, argument, and formal inquiry explain the emphasis in normative publics on proximity, spoken and printed discourse, and the belief that circulation of printed texts is an inherent part of effective public culture.

Charles Taylor (2007) defines the public sphere as "a common space in which the members of society are deemed to meet through a variety of media: print, electronic, and also face-to-face encounters; to discuss matters of common interest; and thus to be able to form a common mind about these" (Taylor, 2007, pp. 83). Taylor goes even further in narrowing the sphere that he considers to be public by excluding the kinds of collective "critical mass" gatherings that are most likely to occur in non-urban communities, such as football games, concerts, religious rituals, etc. by bracketing them as "topical common space." These entities are considered separate from the "real" public work that happens in "metatopical" public spaces such as debating and idea sharing (Taylor, 2007, p. 86). A wide range of updates and critiques of the ability of equal public deliberation have emerged over the last twenty years, largely

concerned with the ability of marginalized and oppressed populations to participate in public deliberation. At times these updates are centered on ability of a speaker or speaking body to be recognized as a citizen or member of the collective with the legitimacy to speak (Werner, Counterpublics; Frazer,1992; Black Public Sphere; Young, I.M., 1985; Benhabib, 1992; Black Public Sphere Collective, 1995).

Scholars have specifically showed how the presumption that proximity or diversity of ideas does not necessarily result in public deliberation (Amin, 2008), showing how the regulation and production of governable subjects via race and gender, for example, at times literally removing people from collective public spaces, (Sharma, 2010; Silva, 2010; O'Neill, 2012) or relegating them to maintenance of culture social life via discourses of privacy, and excluding them from political and economic spaces and decision making (Harewood, 2010; Benhabib, 1993). Staeheli, Mitchell, & Nagel (2009) agree that engagement in spaces deemed "public" do not necessarily result in productive engagement or inclusion in a collective body, but also argue that engagements about issues of collective belonging in the public is not place-less. "The structure of the public realm is conditioned by specific arrangements of material space, social relations, and institutions; a public realm is impossible without some 'place' where that realm exists, even if that place is shaped as much by (for example) current media arrangements or networks of communication as it is by real property" (2009, p. 647). They argue that "geography of publicity" is claimed through both intentional "properly political" visibilities such as protest, as well as the banality of moving through space or engaging metaphorically through communication networks. They explicitly include rural spaces within these geographies of publicity, but as they acknowledge there must be a there-there in both physical public spaces and metaphorical public engagements, they don't explicitly interrogate the regional bias in the spatial

practices of co-presence, proximity, density, or the material networks that anchor textual communication. Even if current understandings of the public sphere do not explicitly focus on these formations, they remain central to the possibility of exchange.

In documenting a transition of public culture from the small-town ideal of 1-1 democracy, or the pre-industrial idea of the town square as the ideal site for public address and engagement, Habermas (1991) articulated how the institutionalization of civil society and the formation of administrative publics became a central aspect in the industrial-era bourgeois public sphere. In this new era of public culture, experts came to represent the interests of the general public produced a separate class of technical public administrators (Habermas, 1991, p. 83). In this formation of the public, the role of non-institutionalized public actors was to hold institutional administrative public organizations accountable, and in doing also, those organizations would be tasked with holding the state accountable (Calhoun, 1992, p. 23). Over this historical progression, ideal spaces in which private persons who come together as a public might debate about the "general rules governing relations" (Habermas, 1991, p. 26) shifts from the polis, to the public square, through the press, and onto institutionalized groupings. Spatial notions of proximity and population density undergird ideas of the public via the public square, the polis, verbal deliberation, and the ability to organize into an administrative unit. The administrative form is deeply intertwined with the phenomenon of homelessness, creating the conditions of regional and biopolitical abandonment, which results in dual abandonment.

Rural residents invested in ending or reducing the negative effects of rural homelessness lack the spatial proximity to geographic claims of forming a public body, numbers to claim representative significance, or a vehicle in the administrative form in order to articulate claims about shared experience or identity that might articulate a specific, identifiable "public." Mark

Lawrence (1995) argued that rural homelessness in Iowa required people to discursively and materially articulate their needs placelessness, as homelessness in rural areas is often an experience of being literally un-seen. Because rural people experiencing homelessness are often associated with the un-specific and often voiceless "nature" or landscape that they are thought to dwell within, they are often also considered voiceless, they slip through the cracks of discursive attempts to be identified and paths to secure housing identified. I found this to be true in part, as evidenced by my chapter on real homelessness. If people are thought to be "in the woods" and "the woods" are essentially to be out-of-place, then they can't be found, and therefore are no-one's collective problem. In reality the administrative form is the primary entity that the national collective has used to identify and manage homelessness and housing insecurity. It's a collection of practices that identify and then dole out resources to (theoretically) reduce the harsh impacts of homelessness. Even as this administrative form is problematic in a variety of ways, it's still the public formation tasked to manage homelessness, and it is largely absent or ineffective in this rural community.

Habermas (1991) posited that the creation of experts to represent the interests of the general public produced a separate class of technical public administrators. In this formation of the public, the role of non-institutionalized public actors was to hold institutional administrative public organizations accountable, and in doing also, also hold also the state accountable via the proxy organization (Calhoun, 1992). The ideal spaces in which private persons who come together as a public might debate about the "general rules governing relations" (Habermas, 1991, p. 26) shifts from the polis, to the public square, through the press, and onto institutionalized groupings. While Habermas identified the transformation of the public sphere into institutional formations in the 19th century, Michele Foucault identifies related transformations of the

relationship between the state and its management of people corresponding at the same time.

Chantelle Mouffe (1999) makes a distinction between "politics," the actual techniques and practices through which deliberation occurs, and "the political" which are the ways in which relationships to one another are organized. This distinction acknowledges the limitations and problematic organizations of unities, divisions, and distribution of resources. The political draws attention to the very ability to form into something that is recognizable *as* a public formation and the ability of this public formation to petition and be seen by non-rural entities. The distinction between politics and the political also allows us to name the limitations of what counts as politics when the political itself is not organized in a recognizable form. So how can two deliberations in a public practice based on the representative power of numbers, critical mass such as protest, or representative claims making such as "I speak this truth but I speak it for X people" compete in debates about the distribution of resources between urban and rural environments? This problem is especially exacerbated by rural needs and claims that originate from disinvested rural regions such as Hills County. In chapter six I show how the reliance on the administrative form restricts the capacity of disinvested rural communities to create the political bodies able to deliberate on the state and national scale. This exclusion from the forms of public deliberation produces a dual abandonment for inadequately housed people in the region; there is first an abandonment outside the system of housing, then from the ability to petition the state about this exclusion.

Politics of Abandonment and Disposability

Michele Foucault (1997) identified a change in the way the state related to its citizens in the 19th century, from the sovereign control of the people premised on the right to kill its citizens, to a new complementary form of governing based on the "power to 'make' live and 'let' die" (p. 241). The emergent biopolitical right to make live and let die builds on disciplinary techniques of

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power focused on regulating bodies through spacing, sterilization, surveillance, etc. and augments these techniques with a focus on the management of the whole population in general (Foucault, 1997, p. 242). Disciplinary techniques of governance are certainly at work in the lives of people without adequate housing in the United States. Surveillance, regulation of cleanliness, and the containment of out-of-place populations such as those with mental illness are certainly still at work in regulating the system of homelessness. The biopolitical is concerned with "the population as a political problem" (Foucault, 1997, p. 254), and homelessness in the United States is managed as such, with urgency about "fixing" the problem of homelessness that accompanies economic downturns, and congratulations that homelessness was reduced to apparently tolerable levels after slight reductions and bursts of new management techniques. (Willse, 2015)

Inadequate housing in Hills County encompasses a variety of intersecting ways in which the people of Hills County are on the periphery of investment in biopolitical formulas of regularization. The calculation of "let die" is most clear when considering the variety of ways inadequately housed people are unaccounted for. They, like most inadequately housed people in the United States, are deemed disposable within an economic system of housing. But the housed people of Hills County, who face limited economic prospects and significant political and institutional disinvestments, are also on the periphery within biopolitical calculations of the state and federal government. The region itself, like many postindustrial areas, is considered generally unvaluable and past-its-prime by the state. But in addition to the economic abandonment of post-industrial regions, Hills County experiences added isolation that accompanies frontier and rural spatial relations. Unlike a rust-belt city center, none of the people with political power will have reason to see the unraveling of the region. In chapter three, I consider the way in which housed

residents minimized or did not see homelessness in Hills County, or attached homelessness to "infamous" characters that could be considered unordinary because of apparent mental illness. These social imaginaries are discourses that permeate and are thought to be true on a wide-spread scale even when they're not, because they *do* something for the dominant population (Castordiadis, 1997). In this case, I argue that discourses about "real" homelessness rely on spatial conceptions of distance that are thought to protect the region from housing deprivation associated with the urban form. In doing so, it allows the housed community member to avoid responsibility to their fellow-man, in part. But more so, this social imaginary of "real" homelessness allows her to distance herself from the widespread economic and related social insecurity that plagues the region. To do so would require a housed resident reckoning with her own precarity within a social and economic system that has dramatically changed in her lifetime (Sherman, 2009).

The widespread economic insecurity in the region is the result of economic and industrial changes in the United States in the last twenty years, including increased mechanization and reduction of manual labor, the reliance on non-U.S. timber and paper products, and reduction in logging of public lands attached to a federal environmental protection court decision. The contraction of the timber, sawmill, and railroad industries resulted in widespread un- and under employment. But this decline was not met with widespread state re-investment in alternative economies, or added welfare-like social safety nets. The regional calculations to not invest in entire areas deemed unproductive, or a concession to other calculations about environmental policy (in this case) are part of the use of spatial containers to regulate and manage the population, in the case of this work, the State of California and the federal "state" form. Mbembe (2003) extends Foucault's analysis, calling the use of space as a container through which humans

are sorted into those who matter and those who don't "necropower." "(S)overeignty means the capacity to define who matters and who does not, who is disposable and who is not" (Mbembe, 2003, p. 27). The regional bias of public culture that I am concerned with in this work is part of understanding the complex way lives are deemed disposable or worthy of being managed and maintained through the various forms of making-lives offered by the state such as services, state-funded entitlements like SSDI, infrastructure, etc. There are layers of how people are disposable.

Elizabeth Povinelli's (2011) book *Economies of Abandonment* is concerned with social projects that "exist in the precarious zone of being and not being" (p. 31), which in part is the precarious zone of a human life between life and death, even more specifically, between making live and letting die. The book takes up "three modes of their life: social belonging, abandonment, and endurance" (p. 31) and is specifically concerned with the way in which cultural projects are considered to "fail" in late-liberalism, and what the conditions of surviving in this era are. "If a social welfare program, for instance, can be shown to lengthen life and increase health, but cannot at the same time be shown to produce a market value, this lengthened life and increased health is not a value to be capacitated. Indeed, it is a value to be actively attacked and rooted out of the state and national psyche" (Povinelli, 2011, p. 22). In Chapter five I argue that inadequately housed people in Hills County are abandoned first outside a system of adequate housing, and then experience the additional exclusion of not even being re-captured and managed by administrative forms, however dismal or profit-producing those forms are (Willse, 2015).

Recently homelessness advocacy organizations have raised the alarm about widespread and increasing incidents of hate crimes against people who experience homelessness, overwhelmingly those that sleep on the streets of cities (Knafo, 2012; Huey, 2012). A genre of

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"bum fighting" films has emerged, in which a housed person pays people living on the streets to be filmed fighting each other, drinking urine, or being attacked in their sleep by a housed person who calls himself the bum hunter (Bunds et. al., 2015). Bunds, Newman, and Giardina (2015) argue that while the making of this video and the murders and attacks on homeless people throughout the U.S. are despicable, they are merely the physical acting-out of the widespread indifference and profit-logics used to value people who sleep on the street. "Through the acts of violence on the homeless body, the Bum Hunter and his contemporaries act as metonyms for the ideologies of homo economicus, not as anomalies" (Bunds et. al., 2015, p. 283). These videos are an example of entire populations of people being deemed disposable within what Henry Giroux (2007) calls the New Gilded Age. The New Gilded Age is not just biopolitical management via market logics, as Foucault (1997) identified, but the actual marketization and market-logic of human value through the privatization of public services and the logics of profit above all else. Violence directed at people who experience street homelessness is the physical acting-out of neoliberal scorn for unprofitable bodies (or making profit from the violence on those bodies, such as a bumfight film). However, unprofitable bodies, or rather bodies that have been deemed disposable, are not universally the targets of violence and not the target of violence in the same ways. Even within a realm of disposability, bodies are differentially treated harshly based on gender, (dis)ability, race, sexuality, age, and criminal history.

While people are abandoned from systems of investment by the state and the public body, there are various ways in which those that are disposed of are tasked to endure life within the realm of disposability. Povinelli (2011) says second-order questions of belonging and abandonment, not just the way belonging and abandonment happen, but "how or to what material condition one belongs or is abandoned" (p. 31) are not often sufficiently probed. In the last

decade, care has been the focus of considerable intellectual inquiry (Atkinson, Lawson, & Wiles, 2011; Kessler, 2008). Foucault (1988) argued that care of the self ultimately became a centering aspect of existence. In the Socratic era care was reserved for those considered "the bearers of culture," those whose lives were deemed to matter politically. Care of the self "evolved into procedures, practices, and formulas that people reflected on, developed, perfected, and taught… giving rise to relationships between individuals, to exchanges and communications, and at times even to institutions." (Foucault, 1988, p. 45) In the current neoliberal era, scholars identify how care is intertwined with not only the logics of neoliberalism, but also dollars and cents economization and corporatization of care. These institutionalizations of care are accompanied social, spatial, and political transformations as care move from unpaid labor generally performed in the home by family to a labor and profit industry (Lawson, 2007; Parr & Philo, 2003; Tickin, 2011). This economization of care spurred a necessary analysis of the paid labor performed in that care (Aronson & Neysmith, 1996; Borris & Parreñas, 2010) with its various gendered, racialized, and transnationally characterized composition (Morgan, 2005; Baldassar & Merla, 2013; Winkler, 2002).

As the institutionalization and corporatization of care became normative in the U.S. and Western Europe, scholars are still untangling the role of care and intimacy in family, friendships, and ultimately communities (Bowlby, 2011; Roseneil, 2004). Current debates about care often center on the provision of healthcare and health insurance (Ehrenreich, 2011; Fleck, 2009), and the gendered divisions in who performs the labor of care for children, people with severe physical impairments, and the elderly (Slaughter, 2012; Williams, 2000; Gerstel, 2000).The labor of care is differentially gendered and raced, with both men and women of color doing the vast majority of cleaning in the U.S. (Duffy, 2011; Ehrenreich, 2000). According to Slaughter, "not

being cared for is just as much a marker of inequality as being discriminated against." In a political context this means "You don't give me what I need to survive and thrive on an equal basis with my fellow citizens" (Slaughter, 2014). From this perspective being unhoused is one way a citizen is not cared for. In chapter seven, I highlight differential material aspects of the politics of care in the lives of people who experience housing deprivation. The gender imbalances of who performs the majority of care have been analyzed from the perspective of people who are presumably housed. Building from the theory of disposable ties (Desmond, 2012) I identify disposable care at work. *Disposable care* is characterized not just by short, intense, and productive ties with relative strangers, but also has a gendered component. Disposable care reflects the gender imbalances of the labor of caring that is performed within the realm of disposability. The labor of care that women perform for each other and for men is not just the care for that individual person. These care practices perform labor that absorbs the impacts of abandonment.

Gendered trends in surviving and enduring disposability are an example of what I call *differential disposabilities*. With an eye to the differential gendered dynamics at work within disposability, I argue gender exposes people to differential levels of risk to harm. I show how two different inadequately housed informants endure abandonment and compare the gendered processes through which he or she is abandoned. In doing so, I argue that homelessness absorbs the excesses of misogyny, and that the labor of disposable care enables disposable life. The differential hierarchies at work within the process of abandonment must be considered in any attempts to make sense of disposability, and alternatives to it.

Preview of Chapters

Chapter two examines the cultural, economic, and political setting of Hills County. Drawing on the technique of "defensible space" advocated by state fire officials as a way to protect the home from wildfires, this chapter highlights how both the research practices I used and the cultural tensions of Hills County can be understood through the relationships between optimism and autonomy; two very Californian cultural traits. Hills County is a mountainous, forested region made up of vast tracts of federally owned lands and small towns. Timber and milling has been the primary economic engine in the area for the last hundred years, but reductions in logging have created a long-term anemic economy. Socially conservative and anti-government political cultural attitudes are highly visible in the area, though there are pockets of left-leaning homestead-type communities that are newer arrivals in the region. Emphasizing the complexities of researcher postionality in this context, I overview the methodological approaches used. The analysis considers power dynamics surrounding both the informants' subject positions and my own and situates these dynamics within feminist research methodologies.

Chapter three answers the question: What is rural about inadequate housing in Hills County? While frequent, shorter-distance mobility practices are prominent aspects of urban street dwelling, rural inadequate housing is often experienced by longer distances needing to be traversed in car-dominant rural areas. Urban homelessness is most often characterized as hyper-visibility. Rural homelessness involves a kind of reduced visibility because there are less people and more places to escape into and be unseen. At the same time, inadequately housed people may experience increased visibility because there are so fewer places to interact with others while remaining anonymous. Inadequate housing in Hills County is informed by housing stock

characteristics of rural areas, such as increased use of mobile homes, high cost-burdened rental markets, and smaller rental markets.

Chapter four analyzes ways that housed people talked about homelessness and housing inadequacy in Hills County. Housed people often told me that homelessness wasn't a problem in the community, while simultaneously offering up detailed anecdotes about two "infamous" fixtures of the community. The trajectory of how housed residents thought a person would manage if they lost housing contrasted with the lived experience of most of the people I talked with who lacked adequate housing. I argue that these accounts of "real" homelessness are social imaginaries that draw on wider national narratives of urban-based homelessness, which results in housed residents not recognizing rural inadequate housing when they see it, or believing that the person somehow likes or chooses to be unhoused. Social imaginaries are relied on by adequately housed people to assuage responsibility for seeing and therefore responding to homelessness and housing insecurity in their community. Even more so, these social imaginaries serve to minimize their own anxiety caused the by the widespread economic insecurity of the region.

While most people acknowledged the widespread lack of economic opportunity, they also referenced the idea that Hills County was supposed to be take-care-of-your-neighbor, small-town place. Some people thought that this was generally true, but most people indicated there were hierarchies of belonging and exclusion, as well as widespread NIMBYism in response to addiction, poverty, and disability. Chapter five examines the use of public space, and relations of us/them in Hills County, arguing that this small town (most small towns, likely all small towns in the U.S.) does not operate with ideal public practices, despite the widespread idea that small towns should function in this way. I call this expectation that small towns supposed to function through ideal, face-to-face, somehow kinder and more productive democracy, *rural*

exceptionalism. Rural exceptionalism produces the expectation that an ideal town-hall-style deliberative democracy should be happening (though it is not), leading everyday members of the community to believe their community is somehow uniquely failed or dysfunctional. Rural exceptionalism detracts from a project of recognizing unequal distributions of the opportunities to participate in wider-scale public deliberation. This unequal distribution informs the specific limitations to recognize and respond to housing deprivation in this community in this case. Rural exceptionalism obscures wider political analysis and the possibilities for collective demands on the state to emerge through town-wide public engagement by placing the blame of hierarchical or ineffective public cultural practices on the members of the town themselves.

Chapter six is concerned with these regional distributions of resources. Using the Continuum of Care system of distribution of funds to manage homelessness as the example, this chapter argues that foundational notions that make up what is considered public cultural practice are urban-biased. The administrative form that dominates the bourgeois public sphere is particularly incompatible to economically disinvested rural regions. It is the form of public organization and deliberation that is most frequently used to engage the phenomenon of homelessness. Because of this, rural inadequate housing is a dual abandonment—first the abandonment outside the system of housing, then the abandonment from the ability to petition the state about exclusion from the system of housing.

While people who are denied access to adequate housing fall into a population or populations of people deemed inadequately housed or homeless, the experience of being disposed of, and of living in the realm of abandonment, is not universal. After the various ways a person is cut off from systems of housing and social connections, disposable lives further splinter into differential disposabilities. Chapter seven examines two different ways different ways that

disposabilities are productive. First, there are productive aspects of care that are executed within relationships forged during disposability. Building of the notion of disposable ties (Desmond, 2012) I consider the relational strategies used to survive inadequate housing in Hills County. Identifying the labor practices of caring that exist within disposable ties, *Disposable Care* attends to the differentially gendered practices of care that emerge between people who are enduring abandonment. Disposability, in this way, is productive of sustaining life. The labor practices performed by those who are disposed of are un-valued in the economization of life itself, but sustain life nonetheless. At the same time that practices of care-taking emerge in a specific form within the realm of disposability, differential relationships of harm and risk emerge within the population of people abandoned from the system of housing. I consider the way disposability is differential within the system of misogyny and gendered ordering, and the way that homelessness absorbs misogyny's excess. Disposability is differentially experienced by those that mostly receive harm, and those that perpetrate harm, largely determined by gender. I compare the trajectories and labor of care at work in the lives of two specific informants. Within the system of misogyny there are excesses considered outside the realm of acceptable vs. unacceptable. What is considered excessive misogynist violence informed by the gendered ordering of masculinity/maleness/manhood is regulated primarily through the Prison Industrial Complex and homelessness. These two systems are intertwined, with the Prison Industrial Complex producing homelessness in a variety of ways. Misogynist violence wears down the bodies and social relationships of femininity/females/girls and women, and this person's housing deprivation is informed by the social severing required to survive (or merely endure) in a system of misogyny. The juxtaposition of care and violence within differential disposability indicates

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that while disposability might be a widespread condition of the Gilded Age, its nuances must be accounted for in order to be rectified.

Inadequate housing in Hills County is made up of specific practices that take place in this specific site. These practices and relationships are significantly informed by wider spatial, political, and social contexts. While rural inadequate housing in general is under-studied, this project further examines the under-theorized spatial biases that permeate understandings of how public cultural practice works. In doing so, the links between lived experiences and widespread systematic power relations such as misogyny or state-based redistribution of wealth and opportunity are made explicit. In the chapters that follow I analyze things done and said and observed in the field, as well as bureaucratic practices, national-scale narratives, the working of social phenomenon such as misogyny, and bodies of intellectual thought. It is a work of critical ethnography, that Soyini Madison (2012) says "begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness within a particular *lived* domain" (p. 5). It does so with the aim that this work will advance a project of homelessness eradication and can be used to re-engineer community and political practices towards that end. I believe that as long as urban, street-sleeping people are continually researched, and held up as the idealized representative of what homelessness in the U.S. *is,* the majority of housed people in the U.S. will not be motivated to radically shift our system of housing allocation and economic distribution.

Chapter 2: Defensible space: embodied research in the forests of Hills County

In the seven months I spent driving back and forth through the winding mountain passes that climb up to Hills County I could visibly see that, like the rest of the landscape I saw driving through California, the years-long draught had taken its toll on the land. The tall pine trees were covered in a seemingly permanent haze of dirt. The winding rivers were low; the marshes had bright green new grasses where normally there would clearly be swampy water. One day, as I was driving from one town to another I crested a mountain peak and the light in my car turned from bright to dark, the sky from light blue to purple and grey. I grew up in the Midwest, and such a change in that region would indicate a tornado or significant storm was headed my way. Most of Hills County doesn't have cell phone service, so I drove toward my destination in hopes of meeting people who knew what was happening. As I pulled up to the town where my next interview was, I heard high-school students chatting about "the fire." If faced with a tornado, a Midwesterner will seek somewhere low-lying and sheltered. Westerners, when confronted with a wildfire, either evacuate as quickly as possible, or stand optimistically within their "defensible space" (Cal Fire, 2012). Defensible space is the zone free of highly flammable material that homeowners are supposed to clear from around their home, theoretically depriving the fire the fuel it would need to encroach upon and ignite their home.

The notion of defensible space seems to be imbued with quintessentially Californian attributes: significant social value placed on both optimism and autonomy. Optimism and autonomy are also a good way to make sense of my experience of research in Hills County. I was optimistic that I would make connections with people and be able to get a sense of inadequate

housing in Hills County. At the same time, I was deeply cognizant of the limits of my physical body and the power relationships between myself and others. I was protective of my own bodily autonomy and security as I made my way alone, day after day. Informed by my own experience as formerly inadequately housed, as well as a participant in a number of research studies, I interacted with informants in a way that attempted to respect their autonomy and privacy, while still asking key research questions that often centered on emotionally charged subject matter. The attitude of Hills County's current inhabitants is generally one that incorporates a sense of pride of place along with worry that current economic conditions have little hope of changing. This dualism is a pride of place gained through an ethic of autonomy and self-sufficiency. Many residents hope that economic conditions will somehow improve, while having no clear demand on outside actors to be accountable for that improvement. There is a visible separatist movement afoot, which is itself a practice of pride in autonomy in its highest form—the political production of defensible space. What follows attends to these tensions, siting them within their historical and present economic and cultural contexts. Entering this place as an embodied researcher requires situating my positionality and methodological orientation within this cultural-political atmosphere. In the reflexive tradition of feminist methodology, I account for my methodological decisions, and give examples of the analytic approach that resulted in this work.

Hills County, California

The day of the fire I met the person I was going to interview, Marie, outside on the sidewalk. She was watching the cloud of smoke. We stood together, watching for a while, then she whisked me inside, saying we would both get sick from smoke inhalation if we stood outside for too long. Marie pulled up a website to show me that the fire was burning hundreds of miles away, across a major highway, and that we were safe. At the end of our interview she cheerfully

brought me to the thrift store next door to meet the owner, who is also her friend. "Hey! She is researching homelessness! People come in here sometimes, right? Who are homeless and need clothes?" The shop owner was much less enthusiastic and forthcoming than Marie. She told me that yes, sometimes people came who arrived in town and didn't have warm clothes, or who somehow lost their clothes, and that usually she would find something to give them and send them on their way.

The poles of enthusiasm in this conversation epitomize well my interactions in the community. People who were open to talking with me were generally quite enthusiastic. They seemed glad that I was coming to talk with them about homelessness, even if they didn't really feel like they knew a lot about homelessness in their area, or thought that homelessness wasn't really a problem there. Most of these people are service providers in some capacity. They are the white-collar professionals of the community who spent their days discussing and dealing with largely unpleasant problems of the community such as hunger, poverty, and addiction. Most of the people to whom I was merely a newcomer, a tourist asking questions, were vague in their answers to my questions. They seemed wary, and generally ended the conversation quickly. This was not universally the case, however, and I had handful of in-depth, lengthy conversations with retail clerks, waitresses, security guards, fellow shoppers, and people with whom I shared a table at community dinners.

Forests, rivers, and lakes blanket the mountains with settlements of people interspersed in valleys surrounded by tall mountain peaks and pasture grazing land for cows and horses. Humans reside primarily in five "major" towns made up of approximately 1,500 people or less, and about twice as many small villages comprised of clusters of houses that have maybe a small store, usually not. Logging was the primary industry of the area but has significantly diminished

since the early 1980's. The county now has high unemployment, multi-generational poverty, and proportionally high numbers of people struggling with alcohol and drug addiction and its related social problems such as children entering state care. The area has four seasons, is very hot in the summer, and very cold in the winter, usually experiencing many months of snowfall accumulation, though that has been changing with climate change and the years-long draught that was underway when I conducted my field research.

Hills County is home to a community of inter-related Native American tribes. Part of the members of these tribes driven off the land by both the federal government during armed conflict, and through the incursion of settlers during westward expansion during the gold and other extractive metal booms in the late 1800's. These indigenous tribes still hold some land. Tribal members and their descendants live integrated into the towns and amongst the countryside with (mostly) white residents, primarily in one corner of the county. While the majority of the people living in the county are white, there is a community of Latino/Hispanic (informants used two different terms to describe their ethnicity and communities, so I retain the dual usage) immigrants whose families came to the area in the last thirty years. Most members of this community are employed and many members own businesses or work at family businesses. There are a very small number of Black residents. There is a two-lane state highway that winds through the county, connecting the county to major cities a couple hours in each direction. Because of this, the two main towns on the highway see higher numbers of hitch hikers and travelers in the warmer months. The county seat is the most populous town in the county, and is home to a small but visible "counter-culture" environmental and earth-based (many call it "hippie" and "back-to-the-land") population.

The majority of the county is culturally and politically conservative. The county is represented by state and national representatives from the Republic party. There is a visible and active secessionist movement that is part of a multi-county movement attempting to organize rural counties in Northern California and Southern Oregon to secede from the state of California (and Oregon) to become its own freestanding state it calls "The State of Jefferson." While this movement states that it has liberals and conservatives among its membership (and I did speak to one member who was socially liberal and fiscally conservative), it relies on imagery and anti-state rhetoric that is similar to deeply conservative T-party rhetoric. The yellow flags of the State of Jefferson hang off the front of property entrances, on the back of pickup trucks, and on the front of houses. The main grievance of the State of Jefferson movement is that the State extracts resources from the areas, while ignoring their needs and political interests. They argue that statewide decisions consistently serve the moneyed, socially liberal, economically concentrated economies and political priorities of San Francisco, Sacramento, and Los Angeles. However, this is not their only grievance or priority. Their table distributing literature at the county fair had pro-gun literature and posters, "Private Property Equals Freedom- Redistribution Equals Slavery" literature, and literature claiming that California's prospective anti-bullying/gender-non-conforming educational rights laws were anti-Judeo-Christian. While they have not had a lot of success with county-wide buy-in in the Central Valley counties, the ranching and former logging counties of Northern California and Southern Oregon have seen a majority of county-governments sign-on to support the secession movement.

This gives an idea of the kind of visual political atmosphere circulating in the county—grievances with the state, feeling left out of the benefits of the economic tidal waves driven by Silicon Valley, and socially conservative, pro-gun rhetoric. The area has been approved to have

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high-speed internet cables installed in the county, but they have not yet been installed, so the county itself is left out of the possibility of plugging into the information economy of the Silicone Valley from a distance via telecommuters, or as home-bases for new digital companies. One informant who worked for a social service agency and I were talking about economic possibilities in the area, and I asked if she thought the residents would be upset if white collar tech workers from the major cities moved up to the area for cheaper housing and rural living, but telecommuted to tech jobs. She exclaimed "Oh dear no! That would be wonderful! We need people with good paychecks up here!" However, I don't think her response should be considered universal—the very vocal conservative State-of-Jefferson residents would likely chafe at increased housing prices and an influx of moderate and/or liberal residents.

Economic History

Timber was the economic engine of the Hills County region for a century. A combination of factors coincided to reduce the logging industry in Hills County. In 1991 two legal rulings called "the Dwyer Decisions", more commonly known as "The Spotted Owl Decision" was a victory for environmental conservation activists of the Pacific Northwest, who sought to slow the deforestation in the region. This decision intensified the reduction in logging that was already underway because of economic factors, and resulted in a decline of the supportive economies where logging and mill workers spent their paycheck. In the year I conducted fieldwork, 2014, the documented unemployment rate in Hills County was around 12%. Those numbers account for people actively looking for work. It does not count the people who have fallen out of the labor market completely, having given up on finding work and exhausting any access to state unemployment. While multiple factors coincided with the reduction in logging, animosity of locals towards federal environmental legislation remains high, evidenced in fliers posted outside

bars, and news articles arguing that the residents of the area will never be told the full potential impact of newly proposed environmental protection decisions.

There is still some logging and mill work happening in the area—a few mills are open, though their production and human-labor is greatly reduced from the production in the early 90's. Trucks with massive cut trees would pass through the main streets of each town, headed towards one of the mills in the area. It was neither constant nor a rarity. Timber still remains a central industry and identity of the region. The majority of the land in the county is owned by the federal or state government, mostly in the form of national forests. Some residents have jobs working for the Bureau of Land Management or the Department of Forestry. During the housing boom pre-2009, it seems many men who would have previously worked mill or logging jobs were working construction jobs around the region of Northern California and Western Nevada, but these jobs were lost during the housing and related economic crash. The majority of jobs to be had in the area are in government administration and retail to support the trickle of tourism that county leaders have been attempting to cultivate as an economy to replace logging, with only moderate success. These bureaucratic and service jobs such as retail are much more the employment domain of women, and these economic changes has altered the gendered landscape of work, families, and employment in the region over the last twenty years.

Jennifer Sherman (2006) conducted ethnographic research on rural poverty, economic capital, and morality in a similar community in Northern California affected by de-industrialization related to the Spotted Owl Decision. She found that gendered shifts in employment changed family life, wherein before the decline of logging most women were expected to be stay-at-home wives and mothers, and men's sense of masculinity was deeply tied with being the primary breadwinner. With the rise of women's employment and long-term

decrease in men's employment, a woman working outside the home has become acceptable but not ideal. Two informants who worked at service agencies referenced this phenomenon at work in the county, indicating that the gendered shift in labor had a significant impact on family life, and the identity of men, especially younger men who were never employed in the logging industries and have not found another masculine-based working-class career to pursue.

Brandy works at a service agency in Grandmont, one of the larger towns in Hills County, but also one of the towns with the least industry or economic opportunity. She said most of the employed people in this area commuted to a major city outside the county more than an hour away, or to Churchill for work. She grew up in Grandmont, and is raising children. She said they see a lot of families with children come through the agency in which the woman is employed part-time, looking for work, and/or being the primary person to fill out paperwork to receive government services such as MediCal or WIC. Meanwhile, the male parent is not employed, nor spearheading the attempts to secure state-based services. She said, "But a lot of the younger guys they just kind of are... whatever. And hanging out with their friends or whatever. It's just kind of like they get into that when they're a teenager and then they're in their like mid- to late 20's and they're kind of just like hanging out playing video games." (Brandy, In-Person Interview) She said these clients are different than clients who understand themselves as within the workforce, because they come to career counseling meetings wearing pajamas, who she might see the next day in the grocery store in the afternoon wearing pajamas. Pajamas took on a central artifact to describe what she sees as a widespread phenomenon within a portion of the population that seems to understand themselves as permanently out of the workforce.

There are two main tourist towns in the county, which have a golf course, and a cluster of "2nd Homes" or vacation homes owned by urban Bay Area and Los Angeles area residents.

These tourist economies initiate a cluster of seasonal and part-time jobs such as house cleaning, lawn maintenance, golf course maintenance, caddying, and food service work for permanent residents. In general, if people didn't work for the county or federal government in a full-time position, their work was unpredictable, spotty, and unstable. The workers I spoke with that were employed in the couple of not-for-profit non-governmental organizations in the area are engaged in precarious white-collar work, their hours often whittled down below full-time. They talked openly about how their employment could end abruptly if the next year's grand cycle was not successful, or if institutional priorities changed. Economic insecurity and doubt that it would stabilize seemed a consistent concern from informants, no matter what their economic class status at the time I talked with them. Despite frequent acknowledgements that it "seemed" like the county government was trying to or at one time had tried to improve the economy through tourism, no one that I talked to seemed optimistic that any specific economic engine was on the horizon to improve conditions in the area anytime soon.

Methods of Research

Field Research for this project was conducted over the course of seven months, May-December 2014. I spent time in the community attending public events such as: the County Fair, parades, sitting in the entryway to an outdoor music festival and a large public exhibition, sitting in restaurants, diners, and coffee shops, reading in the public libraries, shopping at stores, interviewing participants, chatting with store and restaurant workers, observing in parking lots, camping in state and national forests, staying in motels, eating at a donation-based community dinner, walking around the streets of small towns, walking in the forests, interacting with participants via phone and email, and driving, driving, driving. Most of the times I was in Churchill, the county seat, I stopped into the Midpoint to say hello to staff, or report back on

conversations we had started. I stayed for three or four day long-weekends four times in the beginning of field research, then came up to the area for one or two days every week for the remainder of the time, driving many hours each way from the SF Bay area, up the mountains to the field site.

I conducted in-depth, formal interviews with twenty-five people, nine of whom were at the time or had recently been inadequately housed. I had more informal, impromptu, yet lengthy and data significant conversations with approximately five other people about topics such as the rental housing market for a part-time service worker, the economic strategies of getting bye for an elderly retired person living on Social Security, or whether or not the person thought homelessness was a problem in the community. The formal interviews were primarily conducted face-to-face, and these interviews were recorded on a sound recorder, stored on my private, data-locked and physically locked computer. I later transcribed each interview and anonymized identifying features. This project received IRB approval, with multiple updates to change recruitment strategies and field site. The name "Hills County" is a fictional name of a real place. All participants names have been changed, details of their specific life experiences or the physical context have been tweaked at times to enhance anonymity. I have omitted some details about Hills County itself, including its exact distance from urban centers that would make it more identifiable. I have left all details about the place that significantly inform the context of inadequate housing. These extra steps to anonymize the place and people have been done because I worry that some participants are at risk of harm if the details they told me were identifiable to others not already familiar with their case.

I began formal interviews by contacting government agency officials and public service providers that I thought would be most likely to interact with people experiencing homelessness.

I contacted them via email and (not surprisingly) many of these emails did not receive a response. However, the director of the Midpoint agreed to talk with me along with one of her staff members, initially by phone. After the phone conversation they invited me to come into their offices and talk more in-depth with each of them individually, and the director gave me email introductions to five members of the staff with instructions that they should be open to meeting with me. Two of these staff eventually set up meetings with me, and I met each of them at their field offices, which were in two different towns, Riverton and Grandmont.

At many of my initial in-depth interviews, the participant would recommend I talk to a different person either in their agency or another agency in order to answer unanswered questions. This chain of referral lasted a while until I felt I thoroughly understood the service provision environment of Hills County. I then contacted county officials I felt I needed to talk to in order to fill gaps in knowledge, such as the county Veterans Affairs officer, and a person working for the District Attorney that was part of the alternative sentencing and early prisoner release programs. During these interviews I spoke with people who ran programs that managed Section 8 Housing Vouchers, Domestic Violence shelter housing, Domestic Violence prevention, parenting education classes, mental health care management, weekly free/donation based community dinners, emergency housing assistance, alternative sentencing program which included an apartment for short-term emergency housing, Women, Infant, and Children's food programs (WIC), community health liaison for Native American residents, and crisis management. Among the people in this group of service providers that I spoke with was a Christian minister, a former employee of the town planning department, a real-estate agent, a retired teacher, a school administrator, and a restaurant owner. Some of the people in this interview pool were raised in the area, though many of them moved to the area in their early

twenties/late teens, usually because they married a man from the area. A few said they moved to the area because they were attracted to the beauty and pace of life. Sixteen of these eighteen participants are women, two are men. Before each of my interviews I briefly explained that I was conducting research on housing and homelessness in the area, that the interviews would only be listened to by myself, and that they would be anonymized of identifying information. I asked if I could record the interview, giving the option of not recording if they felt more comfortable. Everyone agreed to let me record. At times I would need to stop a conversation already underway to gain this consent and begin recording.

The inadequately housed participants that I spoke with were recruited in a variety of ways. Lynxster was recruited via a sign project, in which I sat in a public space with a large poster-sized sign that said:

I have lived in my parents' house, an apartment, and a college dorm.

I have also lived in a minivan, slept in a storage locker, on other people's couches, in

unheated basements, on a loveseat in the basement of my workplace, dozing at a table

in an all-night diner, and in someone's kitchen because I could not afford any other

place to sleep…

Will you talk with me? Where have you have slept in your lifetime?

In general people tended to avoid me, taking a wide berth, or ignored me when they walked by. A few people stopped to ask questions about why I was doing what I was doing, and four other people gave an accounting of their sleeping spots after asking clarifying questions. Some of these respondents lived in what I would consider inadequate housing in their past, usually in childhood, but none were experiencing current or recent housing insecurity except Lynxster. I used this recruitment tactic two different times in Hills County. I give a more in-

depth description of Lyxster's response to my recruitment tactic in the next chapter. I developed this recruitment tactic in an attempt to gather specific data about sleeping practices that were detached from the stigma and cultural specificity of the phenomenon of "homelessness." I also anticipated that in disclosing my own housing history, it would establish like-identification, creating an affirming environment for people to make disclosures who would otherwise keep these stigmatized experiences private.

My hope was that in using this tactic I could more accurately identify the ways in which people experience inadequate housing in its variety of forms and severity, without them having to adopt the stigmatizing identity of homeless, and without me assigning that concept to their experience in the moment or in publication of my findings. While I still feel that epistemologically this is accurate, and I believe that Lynxster would not have talked with me in the same open way that he did if I had used the word "homeless" in my recruitment, the tactic had a couple of practical flaws. First, people (myself included) usually have negative responses to being solicited in public places, instead wishing to go on to their destination or continue chatting with their companion without interruption. Because of this, people often clearly and intentionally avoided eye contact or even looking at the text on the poster board. This would likely be true in any public location, but the vast open space of rural places made this an even more severe technical downfall, because there was plenty of space for people to walk at a distance and avoid interacting with the sign or myself. The second flaw in this methodological approach is that despite my epistemological commitment and general distaste for both the inaccuracy and stigmatizing effects of the word homelessness, the word is a legible and know-able entry into a conversation about housing deprivation and housing insecurity. When I said the word "housing insecurity" to people in the field I was often met with a blank stare. Despite my

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resistance to do so, most interactions started with the term homelessness, with all its regionally-specific, narrow, and stigmatizing baggage. I would then incorporate ideas about complexity and multiplicity about homelessness into the conversation, widening our interaction about ways people are unhoused or not home. This methodological approach has the potential to gather interesting and valuable data. I hope researchers that have experienced housing insecurity or homelessness will take up this methodological approach, strategize solutions to these technical problems, and conduct the project over a longer period of time in order to gain a wider array of respondents.

Four participants were recruited by a staff person at the Midpoint, who told clients about my project and asked if they would be willing to speak with me. She scheduled our meetings at the Midpoint in the conference room, which was private. I also hung recruitment fliers on community bulletin boards, bus stops, and outside service agencies. The main text of the flier read:

HAVE YOU EVER LOST YOUR HOUSING? HAVE YOU EVER ALMOST

LOST YOUR HOUSING? HOW DID YOU GET THROUGH IT? I WOULD

LIKE TO TALK WITH YOU. I AM INTERVIEWING PEOPLE ABOUT HOW

THEY SURVIVE HOUSING LOSS.

I then provided information about my institutional affiliation, uses of research, etc. with my contact information on tear-sheets. Two respondents responded to this flier by phone, and then corresponded with me when I called them back. The first person, Cathy, I set up an interview with for the next week. The second respondent, Bonnie, called me well after I had finished fieldwork, when I was home with my newborn baby, so I couldn't travel up to the area and do an in-person interview. She said she still wanted to talk with me, so we did a phone interview and I

took notes. The last two participants of this "primary sample" of the nine unhoused participants, were referred to me by Cathy, who set up the interview, and then picked Tim and Rochelle up to make sure they made it to the correct place to meet me. I gave everyone in the primary sample a $10 local grocery store gift card as a thank-you for speaking with me, excepting Lynxster and Bonnie, because Lynxster was recruited using the earlier, disclosure based recruitment tactic, and because Bonnie was an impromptu interview on the phone. I told Bonnie that I would normally have provided this card but wouldn't be able to because we were at a distance, and she said not to worry about it, that she just wanted to tell me her experience.

Data Analysis

I transcribed all recorded interviews by hand. I then identified units of analysis and coded these units in line with Sarah Tracey's (2013) method of sorting and analyzing collections of texts over multiples passes and re-organizations. I also had been thinking about and analyzing the information I had gathered through my months of research, situating information gathered in the spatial, economic, and political contexts surrounding me as I traveled around the field site. I contacted some informants with follow-up questions for clarification, and asked comparison questions to different participants to get a sense if an informants' characterization of a problem at hand was widespread, or isolated to their unique understanding. For example, initially I heard multiple housed informants mention Veteran homelessness. I asked informants that provided emergency housing services if they could give me a number of how many veterans they served in the previous year. I also initiated an interview with the county Veterans service official, and sought to clarify if unhoused informants were veterans. The result was that the population of inadequately housed Veterans was over-stated by the initial informants.

Throughout my research, and especially after every trip up to the field site, I wrote in an extended fieldwork reflection document. I used this space to evaluate the information I was gathering, document new questions that arose, and reflect on my own thoughts, feelings, and positionality. I also kept hand-written field notes, especially during interviews. I also used these notebooks as places to write down contact information that people gave me as referrals, document observations, and collect a variety of relevant materials such fliers, newspapers, etc.

Elizabeth Povinelli argues that the role of critical work is not necessarily to give clear answers to the problems that researchers identify and give specific details about. I will specifically argue that it's inappropriate and anti-democratic for one individual researcher to give a definitive policy or alternative proposal to problems so intensely felt by the poorest, most marginalized members of our population. Instead, the role of critical analysis is often only able to say "not this." "'Not this' makes a difference even if it does not immediately produce a propositional otherwise" (Povinelli, 2011, p. 191). Mirroring the way in which her co-conspirators, poor indigenous Australians, "produce a positive" in the social world even if their refusal (not this) doesn't immediately produce a "what then"— a proposal for what should happen instead. This work begins with "this is what I see happening" and ends with an analysis of "not this", as in this isn't working perhaps because this way of understanding or enacting it is flawed. It is critical of systems that produce inequalities, but it is also mindful that just as I am positioned at multiple intersections informed by privileges and oppressions, so are all of the people I interviewed.

As such, I hope that this work identifies and is necessarily critical for ways in which the most disenfranchised, most at-risk people come to be in that situation. At the same time I seek to harbor generosity for individual participants and a community that are always many things at

once, the product of many processes that make available a limited range of options of how to act, talk, and operate. I am extremely critical of injustices or the way a phenomenon is discussed, I identify the ways in which it is shown to operate in the stories and lives of my informants, and consider the implications of such operations. I also attempt to be generous about that speaker's value as a human, and as a member of their community in whatever ways they are or may be. Someone's position as a middle-class administrator is likely to produce, for example, classist statements, even if in a robust commitment to economic justice, in my own ideal world, they would not say such a thing. The informant that committed an act of misogyny-based violence on a child is also the subject of harsh restrictive management by the Prison Industrial Complex that renders him almost assuredly long-term inadequately housed. If my analysis of homelessness and inadequate housing in Hills County itself seems to be quite a bummer, it doesn't mean Hills County is an essentially terrible, inhumane place. Homelessness is a gnarly, unpleasant subject. I produce this work neither to identify victors and champions of resistance, nor to identify monsters who are actual people to be demonized. This is a work of "not this" and does not specifically define a "what then."

Researcher Positionality

Though an analysis of gender relations is not the primary goal of this research project this work is, in a variety of ways, executed with the goal of employing feminist methodologies. Pamela Moss (2005) overviews the ways in which feminist geographers have developed a variety of strategies to explicitly address questions of power in some way, which she argues is the essential core of a feminist project, in the process of research. These strategies include the ways in which the researcher interacts with their participants, the reflexive steps a researcher takes in considering her own position in relation to participants and makes adjustments in the

ways she interacts to minimize inequality and exploitation as much as that is possible, and the ways in which findings are analyzed, presented, and used towards political projects to rectify inequality (Rose, 1993; Valentine, 2007; Sharp, 2005). In this section I identify my positionality in the field, which clarifies why I made some methodological decisions and not others (England, 1994; Rose, 1997). I also give information on how I reflected on my positionality throughout the research process, both in relation to the individual participants with whom I interviewed, as well as the dominant culture of the community in general. My historical experiences, identities, and embodiments all served as ways of knowing and perception in key ways (Probyn, 1993).

Lynne Staeheli and Victoria Lawson (1994) argue that feminist researchers should explicitly acknowledge that a concept of "sisterhood" is problematic, and that researchers should make clear the ways in which the power relations between the researcher and the researched operate in order to "transform the structures that create 'our' privilege and 'their' marginalization" (Staeheli & Lawson, 1994, p. 97). As the recruitment section highlights, I have the experience of previous inadequate housing in common with the nine primary participants. This gives me a certain kind of insider knowledge. However, I don't for a minute think that we were sharing similar experiences in similar time. I am now an adequately, stably housed person who always has money in my bank account for emergencies. During this research I traversed the state in a well-running car. I have a supportive loving nuclear family that I live with, a wife that is employed. I was not disabled by disease or physical impairment (even if disease and physical impairment definitely informed my physical experience of being in the field or restricted the routes of field-research options available to me). I had the institutional support and legitimacy backing of a major research university, and access to federal student loans and later a dissertation completion fellowship to support my ability to research. These privileges are the bread-and-

butter that enabled me to conduct field research, write this document, and that create the conditions of economic and housing stability that I currently enjoy.

I was aware of this privilege at all times. I also remembered and tried to be mindful of the ways in which being inadequately housed is stressful, exhausting, and overwhelming. The way in which it's hard to prioritize what has to happen next because the problem at hand seems so big, so informed by any number of moving pieces that the solution seems too complicated to leverage potential resources to put it back together (if those resources were ever near-at-hand). I tried to keep things simple, to be clear about the information I was seeking, and to not attempt to extend our interaction, pry beyond the range of information I needed to account for the questions at hand, or make promises I didn't think I could keep. I wasn't able to be their friend, or even their personal one-woman caseworker/problem-solver, and so I didn't pretend that that's what was happening. I presented my position in the field to the unhoused participants as: I am doing research on this problem because few people ever talk about it, or know enough about it. I know you've got a lot going on, that it's complicated, and stressful, because I once too was inadequately housed. I will try to do the best to represent your experience and leverage it towards policy and social change. I will not take up a lot of your time. I will listen when you speak. I will be generous and grateful that you chose to speak with me. I gave most participants a grocery gift card to thank them for their time. I directed people to concrete tangible resources if I was able to provide them in the moment, such as the contact number to obtain a section 8 voucher, or the name of a service provider who might help them better solve a problem they were having. I attempted to advocate for accountability about a specific policy decision that was impacting the midpoint in negative ways. I wrote letters to state legislators, with no response. I compiled a list of potential homelessness, rural, and housing specific non-government funding sources for the

Midpoint to pursue. In these small ways I attempted to advocate to improve the conditions of informants when possible within my limited capacity.

Embodied Research

Gender was a significant factor in my experience of engaging in field research in Hills County. It deeply informed how I moved through the region, who I talked to, where I went, and where I did not go. I am female-assigned-at-birth and masculine presenting. I generally use the term "butch dyke" to refer to my current combo of gender/sexuality pairing. I am married to a woman and at the time that I began field research I had one young toddler at home in the urban area where we lived, for whom I provided care two days during the work-week, and sent to childcare three non-consecutive days a week. This childcare reality deeply shaped how long and what days I could go up to Hills County. In the later months of fieldwork, I would often wake up at 4:30 or 5am, drive for more than four hours, conduct interviews and be in the field all day, and then drive home late into the night. I did this once or twice a week. I have Multiple Sclerosis, and one enduring symptom I have is an extreme response to high temperatures. When I began field research it was blistering hot in Hills County, and I spent nights sleeping in a hot car or tent, and days trying to walk around and participate in public activities, but felt nauseous and frail the entire time, with restricted physical mobility. As the heat started to reduce, the nausea continued because I became pregnant. To this day when I reflect in any way but intellectually on my time in the field, I immediately feel nauseous. When I became pregnant I started staying in a motel when I stayed overnight.

My gender presentation greatly informed where I went and how I was part of what became "the field". I, as a rule, never go into bars unless it is a gay bar, or I explicitly know people I am going into the bar with well and know they will "have my back." This is gained from

consistent encounters of intimidation, threat, and sometimes physical violence experienced in heterosexist bars, which seem to act as permissive venues for some men to behave agressively, and function according to gendered-and-sexual system in which I, as a butch dyke, am a very visible remainder. On two visits I slept at campgrounds, one trip sleeping in a tent with my dog, explicitly brought along for warning and protection, and another time sleeping in my car. I chose to sleep in the car the second time in part because I was afraid of violence. If I sleep in a tent, I have to move from the car to the tent, making myself visible. I have to use the gendered restroom or pee outside, which could explicitly announce my sex and gender, disrupting any safety potentially gained by "passing" as male. Being seen outside by others and then sleeping in an unlocked environment such as a tent while I was alone was more risk than I was willing to take more than once. Most of the campgrounds in the area don't even get cellphone service, so both the time I slept in the tent and when I slept in the car I would pick out a spot, drive back into town, call my wife and let her know the name of the spot where I was sleeping, then return to the site sleep, texting her when I made it back to town in the morning. These strategies are in many ways the production of defensible space. All the sleeping and mobility strategies were learned during times I was living in a van in both rural and urban areas. Mobility techniques, shelter materials, and my own masculine gender presentation were put to use in reducing my visibility to strangers; the first two techniques were to make me not-visible. I will expand upon the regional contours of these strategies in the next chapter. The second technique of "passing" makes me un-notable in a system of misogyny in which women and/or feminine people are targets of a variety of intrusions and threats of harm. I will expand on the implications of these dynamics within inadequate housing and disposability in chapter seven.

These strategies of where to go and how to go in order to stay safe are not a reactionary response to a stereotypically-induced fear of rurality or rural men. I was raised in a rural community, I came out as Lesbian as a teenager in that rural community, and I am familiar with a full range of different masculinities present in rural communities. At the same time I suffered a constant stream of harassment, was verbally threatened to be shot, and was run off the road by cars. I'm not saying each and every rural space in the U.S. is plagued by misogyny, homophobia, or transphobia. However, before I began fieldwork, I Goggled homophobic violence in the region. I was trying to assuage my wife's anxiety about my safety, and assumed I would report that there hadn't been any anti-queer violence of note. Instead I found that within the last ten years a man staying at a campground in an adjacent county was murdered because his assailants thought he was gay. I wasn't willing to find out if I would encounter violence or intimidation based on homophobia or misogyny in a scenario in which I would be extra-exposed and visible, and could killed or injured with no other witnesses during my time in the field. The following section of my field notes illustrates how I balanced some of the feelings of fear and anxiety with the researcher's imperative to be present and curious:

> While I will need to take a few more days to process all the things that were said and how to proceed in my fieldwork, there are two specific feelings/things I wanted to reflect on and make note of that have more to do with my own processing of being in this place as a person. They're linked to the experience of being in a rural, mostly white, working class community; which means linked to memory and working through fear.
>
> The first is, in the almost constant process of trying to be present, to not situate myself within an 'us/them' binary of right-wing 2nd-ammendment fundamentalists and myself. To consider my own views ("I wish we didn't have such a gun-laden society, I wasn't afraid of men buying and selling knives right next to me) with a more measured and detached experience. For example, there's a diner here that has a warning on the door that says something along the lines of "This is a redneck establishment. Be prepared to see or hear: people carrying weapons, the Lord's prayer, people who will tell you what they think" etc. My first impulse was

to look at that sign and think "that place is not for me" and walk on. Then I wondered if I should be BRAVE enough to go in. Later, when I needed something to eat, I just walked in. I sat at the diner counter, chatted with the kind waitress, and it was all just fine. (Excerpt from Field Notes)

That is not to say that it would always be fine, that I would always be safe, lest you think this is evidence that I was overreacting to the risk. That is to show that I had fear, this fear and my own gendered body informed how and where I went, but it was not the only consideration. I both stayed safe and pushed past my comfort zone in order to understand a place. And yet, my understanding of the place is and will always be informed by my own embodiment and history, and what that embodiment enabled.

While there are ways I chose to go some places and not others, my embodiment and my history enabled ease of movement in certain ways. I experienced an ease of movement as a white person through an almost entirely white community. I was not surveilled, stopped by police, or afraid of being physically harmed because of my race. If people were not put-off by my gender expression or the fact that I was researching the community, they were generally open to talk to me and treated me as an authority on the subject of homelessness. My gender was an asset in talking to woman informants, especially those that disclosed harms based on being a woman. It likely improved my rapport with the many women service providers I spoke with, even as it limited the number of stranger-men I would interact with in public and elicited awkward commentary on (my) gender and sexuality from one of the male informants. In addition to the baggage of memory, my rural upbringing was also an asset in understanding Hills County, and the place often evoked warm feelings. The following passage is directly below the previous excerpt in my field notes, attempting to make sense of both the fear

and nostalgically-informed joy of moving through a rural space filled with familiar cultural markers:

> When I was doing my sign project this evening, reflecting on this tension of being a rural, working-class raised person who left and who has somewhat different values, I remembered something I think of now and then about my childhood, that I sometimes share with non-rural people to either let them know the kind of place that I come from, and/or to let them know that that place is really different than the place they come from. And that is the memory of feeling happy, alive, interested, curious, and in-awe when I walked into the garage two houses down from where I grew up—the garage of a hobbyist taxidermist. I don't even remember the guy's name. I remember he had a nice old wife, and he was a pretty quiet old guy, who let us kids come in and poke around and look at the taxidermied animals when his garage door was open and he was working. I remember that he was working, but I don't remember gore. It was a place of work, and I guess now we would call it art. My vegetarian friends would freak to think of taxidermy as art. But it was and while my own nuclear family didn't own guns, didn't hunt, and didn't camp, my mother's nuclear family did (hunt and own guns because they were farmers), and this cultural experience which is so foreign to liberal urbanites, was a very positive, warm experience.
> (Excerpt from Field Notes)

This passage shows some of the conflicting tensions between my historically informed cultural knowledge and values, and my present positionality as an urban-dwelling, social- and economic-justice oriented queer person and all the cultural priorities that tend to accrue with those social positions. I also love trees. It seems stupid to say, but I love trees, especially pine trees, and the county is blanketed with them. Many of the people I talked with said they liked living in Hills County because of its beauty, and I related to this, I "got" it. I often asked them to elaborate, but that was a researcher's imperative—as a person, I understood how salient "it's beautiful" might be. I could understand how those mountains and those woods might hold enough feelings of home to stay, even in hard times.

After I finished field research, I was reflecting on the times I spent staying in the motel. This excerpt summarizes the complexities of embodiment that informed the data collection:

They had kitchenettes in some of them, and so I chose that room for my first stay, hoping to be able to drink coffee and eat food and manage my nausea better. It smelled faintly of mildew and smoke, and there was almost no natural light and dim lamps. I texted people and watched Rachel Maddow and made field notes and took my dog on walks in the pine needles and trees that surrounded the motel. In later visits I took my coffee out to the wrought iron metal table that sat in the courtyard. I loved the trees. I deeply loved the pine trees and felt at home—reflective of some of the woods that surrounded my town in rural Ohio, the woods I would first take long-distance runs in. I deeply loved the frost on the ground in the later months of my fieldwork—the crisp cold air that I never got in my coastal Bay Area urban home.

Figure 1: Wrought Iron Table

Despite my own displacement from the rural area that I grew up in, I believe in the political possibilities and capacities to care that are present in rural areas. I believe that economic and social justice are great bedfellows with rurality, even if the dominant narratives and political representatives of most rural areas in the U.S. today tend to track along conservative, anti-collective lines. It is with all the baggage, the joy, the "not-this," and the practical and personal understanding of the salience of defensible space that I produce this work. I point to the current roadblocks at work in the constitution of public culture that obstruct the potential of rural disinvested communities to demand that conditions change. I critique the administrative public

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process to manage inadequate housing in hopes that new strategies to addressing homelessness and inadequate housing and regional resource equity in rural areas might emerge.

Hills County, as a rural, economically disinvested area, is a region in the midst of hard times that have lasted for an entire generation at this point. There are hierarchies of class that structure what is 'hard' about the hard times. For many people that live in and visit Hills County, it is also a deeply beautiful place. The classed experience of hardship greatly informs the kind of life a person lives in Hills County. For example, it is hard to try to earn a living as a small business owner with slow internet connection, but also, it is hard in a more critical-to-survive manner to have no transportation to fill out a form for SSDI. Hills County is a rural place, and being inadequately housed or unhoused in Hills County is characterized by a specifically rural experience. In the chapter that follows I answer the question: What's rural about inadequate housing in Hills County? I overview some specific differences between urban and rural inadequate housing, highlighting the ways in which the specific rural experiences of inadequate housing are informed by rural spatiality, mobilities, and housing stock.

Chapter 2: What's Rural about Inadequate Housing in Hill County?

The coerced movement of poor and other de-valued people around city streets in the United States coincided with the emergence of the city in general. Those who are seen to be poor on the streets have historically been managed through movement into and out of jails, asylums, workhouses, and shelters through different eras of the regulation of poor bodies on city streets. In the United States the phenomenon of "homelessness" as it emerged primarily in the post-Keynesian era is deeply associated with the visibility of bodies on the street. Research that connects the range of inadequate housing in urban areas, from street-sleeping to doubling-up, hasn't been the focus of much research. This range has been more evident in research on rural homelessness, though that literature is much more limited. To understand the spatial and social aspects of inadequate housing in Hills County, especially as it connects to the wider problem of rural public culture in the United States, I must first identify the parts of inadequate housing in Hills County that are specifically rural. I draw attention to the ways in which key aspects of urban inadequate housing and homelessness contrast or are shared with inadequate housing in Hills County, specifically highlighting differences in the experience of visibility, mobilities, housing stock, spatial relations, and the role of idyllic notions of landscape and community. Within theoretical examinations of regional aspects of inadequate housing, I integrate summaries of each of the nine primary informants whose experience highlights the phenomenon I am addressing. Doing so reveals how people survive within inadequate housing in Hills County, and illustrates some of the specifically rural aspects of their experience.

Visibility

Homelessness in the United States is often talked about and researched in ways that emphasize the visibility of people who are unhoused, and the effects of that visibility in the form of violence, policing, and stigma (Pascale, 2005; Gibson, 2011). Ken Hillis (2008) argued that because the bourgeois public sphere is established based on the private cloaking of the embodied-body in the site of the home, the street serves the purpose as a site of transmission between privately held spaces. "The homeless in public subvert this naturalized dichotomy in performing public space as a space of enclosure in that they seem to the mobile gaze to be going nowhere" (Hillis, 2008, p. 299). Visibility of the homeless person on the streets of Las Angeles, the city he writes about, is key to the marginal status of the homeless body within the public sphere.

People sleeping and living on the streets and other public outdoor spaces of urban cities are often the targets of public sweeps by police to enforce "quality of life" laws, specifically designed to prevent people who are experiencing homelessness to visibly exist, with their poverty, on the street (Vitale, 2008; Spradley, 1970; Mitchell, 1998; Mitchell, 1997). Even as the police are often the actors that physically remove visible unhoused people in economically valued areas, Mitchell and Staeheli (2006) documented how Economic Development initiatives such as "ambassador" programs are used to reduce the visibility of poor people from the streets of "revitalized" districts. Informants from the Development Initiative told Mitchell and Staeheli that they hired rough looking people the explicit purpose of intimidating visibly homeless people and panhandlers in shopping and tourist areas to leave revitalized areas of San Diego. Mitchell (2003) finds this non-police tactic of clearing public spaces of people experiencing homelessness extends to other cities such as San Francisco, where clearing the streets were often performed via

aggressive outreach by homeless service organizations who attempt to discipline people who refuse their services, using tactics such as handing out cards telling passers bye not to give cash to panhandlers because they have refused the agency's services (Mitchell, 2003).

DeVerteuil, May, and von Mahs (2009) critique the ubiquitous focus of research on the regulation of visible homeless populations and the ways research links regulation to harm and the colonization of public space by private interest. They characterize this priority of U.S. led, urban-based research "the punitive turn" arguing, "to frame homeless geographies exclusively in terms of 'collapse' is to ignore the increasingly varied and complex geographies of homelessness that characterize the contemporary city" (DeVerteuil et al, 2009, p.647). They call on researchers to examine homelessness in "majority" countries (non-western, non-wealthy countries) where housing insecurity is often widespread, as well as homelessness in rural areas (2009, p. 658).

Snow and Mulcahy (2001) parsed types and uses of space in the city as it is used by people who experience homelessness in urban areas to survive. They found that prime space, occupied mostly by businesses and valued domiciled residents is primarily used to acquire food and income by homeless residents. Prime spaces are also the most stringently policed and in which they are the most unwelcome. Transitional space tends to be the spaces in urban areas that are occupied by marginalized domiciled residents of a community (such as low-income residents). In transitional areas unhoused residents might be able to acquire food and income, but are also often able to linger in sites such as under-valued parks. Marginal spaces are the seemingly unwanted, unclaimed spaces of cities such as abandoned buildings, unkept alleyways, and homeless encampments in sites like riverbeds (Snow and Mulcahy, 2001, p. 158). Within the same city, the valuation of the spatial area correlates to the increase or decrease of visibility by regulatory powers.

Subjectivity and identity also influence the visibility of people who are recognized to experience homelessness at all. Harter et al. (2005) show how youth are less visible among those who experience homelessness and inadequate housing, and therefore their needs are less recognized and addressed. They argue this is the result of multiple intersecting factors; adult men are over-represented as experiencing homelessness, youth often intentionally hide their housing status to avoid stigmatization from peers, and communities often have NIMBY attitudes that reduce education and outreach into schools and other "mixed" environments where youth are found. In her ethnography of street youth in New York City and the agencies that provide outreach to them, Kristina Gibson (2011) shows how youth "hide in plain sight" to avoid the attention of police and private security, moving around and through train stations and the surrounding areas (Gibson, 2011, p. 155). This decreased visibility in turn limits the ability of youth outreach teams of social agencies to locate them and provide services.

For Lynxster, the permanent traveler I spoke with, staying out of cities altogether was the most effective tactic to avoid harsh policing that accompanies the visibility of urban homelessness. He said that he won't go back into certain cities for fear that he will be arrested on outstanding warrants associated with quality-of-life offenses. He tries to stay mostly in rural areas or on the move to avoid the harsh policing of urban areas. In this way, his mostly rural-based housing inadequacy is a product of the visibility of urban homelessness.

LYNXSTER

Lynxster is an energetic, outgoing white self-identified Jewish man in his thirties. When we met he was wearing utilitarian reinforced work-pants, a striped cloth billed cap, a white shirt with a rainbow on it, and a gold tree pendant necklace. When he saw my housing disclosure recruitment sign outside a festival he started jumping up and down. He jabbed both fingers in the

direction of my sign and said "Hell yes!!! This makes my prick hard!" Then, pointing to the part of my sign that said "because I couldn't afford any other place to live," he asked very seriously, "because you couldn't afford it, or because you choose to?" I responded "well, that might be the case for some, but for me it wasn't. It was because I couldn't afford a place to live." He stared at me for a moment, and then said "right… cool, I'll be right back." He then went to tell his friend where he was, settled his large backpack and sleeping mat, and returned to sit in the chair next to me.

Before I could begin getting his consent to record or talk about privacy and confidentiality, he said "in the beginning" and started to tell me his story. After stopping to clarify consent, he mapped out a trajectory. His narrative started as a young child with two parents in a small house in a southern state. It wove through the deaths of first his mother, which resulted in a short period in foster care, then living with his dad and stepmother followed by the death of his stepmother a few years later. He had his first experiences of being unhoused as a teenager after his dad became disabled in an accident and couldn't care for him. During that time he said he couch hopped, stayed with friends, and sometimes slept outside. At 18 he was arrested for a felony and, using the language of sleeping-sites, said "I slept in jail…and now, because of that felony, it's always been hard for me to try to get rental place, and this and that, and actually establish a real residence" (Lynxster, In-Person Interview).

When he got out of prison he left the state and moved west to travel and work seasonally at resorts. During these times he often stayed in sub-par worker housing, sometimes with four or five people living in a very small place, "living in rooms in places with people I shouldn't have been there with" (Lynxster).

GWB: You mean, like, you kept hanging out with them because they had a place to stay, or…?

Lynxster: Well no, I was working for a place and this was the environment they put me in. Like all the resorts and stuff. So I am very thankful for that, but I never really had a home. My home is that thing right there behind me, my backpack. And I'm a true person that loves to wander. Have a little bit of PTSD. Don't like small places. But I've slept in ditches, and people's yards, and floors, and you know, couch surfed for years, in the resorts and…

GWB: and you were working at the resorts?

**Lynxster*:* Most of the time. You know. Doing what I had to do to get bye. Going to the shows in the summer time.

Most of his adulthood has been spent traveling from place. He tried to establish semi-permanent occupation in a smaller-town area of a Northwestern state but indicated that tension with police got too bad so he went back to traveling. He mainly travels from one festival to another, where he sells handi-crafts that he makes. He says he often gets harassed by police for selling crafts on the streets of cities when he is traveling. "I've gotten many tickets in San Francisco. I've gotten tickets all across the United States. I've been harassed. I've been poked at. I've been brutalized. I just got arrested in St. Paul a couple of days ago for trying to sell trinkets and jewelry trying to keep my passage and get money for traveling" (Lynxster, In-Person Interview). Last year around Christmas time he was traveling in Northern California, sleeping outside in a rural area, when he got frostbite on his foot. He said he got really sick before they ended up finding a friend that had a place to stay in a nearby city where he could recover.

Lynxster seems to rely almost exclusively on not just existing social resources in the form of friends or traveling companions, but in his ability to make friends with strangers and use that camaraderie to meet his needs for shelter, safety, transportation, and social connection. I

discuss Lynxster's use of social connections in more detail in the chapter on Differential Disposabilities. Dee Southard (1997) identified one sub-group of campers on federal land as "voluntary nomadic." She defined voluntary nomadic campers as often young people who stay on public lands as parts of intentional gatherings or clusters of other voluntary nomadic groups. They are dedicated to lives that are connected to the earth and free of attachment to materials possessions. "Many of them have chosen to live an alternative life style which resolves around traveling, camping, and going to 'happenings', 'gatherings', and 'barter fairs' to congregate with people who share this particular alternative life-style" (Southard, 1997, p. 48). While I don't doubt that Southard found these discursive articulations of voluntary alternative lifestyle at work amongst members of this group, I am concerned that the term 'voluntary' too easily elides the conditions that compel a person into semi-permanent nomadism. Southard's research happened more than twenty years ago, so the cultural, legal, and economic conditions might be slightly different than today, which might account for some difference between her findings and my own. Lynxster certainly falls into the category of voluntary nomadic as defined by Southard. He circulates as part of a festival/gathering/barter cultural network, makes and sells handicrafts, and had few material possessions. However, his felony conviction when he was in his late teens, paired with his early experiences of inadequate housing that started before he was a teenager creates the social, emotional, and economic conditions that make stable employment and access to permanent housing very difficult. Integration with a culture of permanent nomadism might be an effective way to survive in reciprocal relationship with others, but the term voluntary covers-over an atmosphere of limited options.

Disappearing and Being Seen in the Rural Landscape

Samira Kawash (1998) argued that the very notion of the public at work in the bourgeois public sphere "is always defined as against the visible, street-dwelling homeless; in this framework, homelessness is not a problem that occurs within the public but a threat that appears from elsewhere" (Kawash, 1998, p. 320-321). In this formulation, visibility of the homeless body is necessarily in public space because to be without the private property of the house is to be permanently in the public. This articulation of the public as defined in opposition to the visible homeless body (who somehow soils or violates the 'true' purpose of public space in the liberal, bourgeois idea of public) presumes an urban form, a landscape so filled with people and buildings that a body in public space will necessarily or eventually be seen by other people. Hitch hikers and other people just traveling through Hills County, especially those with a lot of belongings, are more visible to the wider population of the area because there are few roads in and out of town. However, in most experiences of inadequate housing in Hills County, an unhoused person might not eventually be seen as unhoused by another person. The majority of Hills County is public land—owned by the federal or state government, open to walking, camping, and often driving through. The territory of the technically public space is so vast that someone could sleep, bathe, and eat in the woods without encountering another person for a very long time. Cycling or walking into the closest town doesn't necessarily reveal a person to be unhoused because in the economically disinvested region, a number of low-income people without a functioning vehicle might walk or bike into town for errands. The experiences of Leonard, an informant who often slept in the woods during times of inadequate housing, show how sleeping in the public space of the woods was in many ways an experience of reduced visibility.

However, there are ways in which a person is quite visible as unhoused in rural areas. As a fellow woods-sleeper, Leonard said he could easily identify others who were also living in the woods because he recognized their specific mobility practices. For example, he told me he recognized other people sleeping in the woods because they would be walking or biking along the road and then abruptly turn into the woods. At one point an informant, David, was sleeping in a tent in privately-owned woods for months before he received a note from the property owner asking him to leave. Both David and Leonard said their sleeping sites were usually not seen by other people because they hike so deep into the woods before setting up camp that most hikers won't make it to their site. People who sleep outside in a urban neighborhoods are likely to be known by other people who circulate in their neighborhood including housed and unhoused neighbors, police officers, and store owners. At the same time, the sheer numbers of people that circulate through urban areas affords a certain amount of anonymity. Within the city, an unhoused person could walk to a different neighborhood to achieve anonymity if they are well known in their own. In rural areas and small towns, anonymity disappears pretty quickly. Leonard prefers working and living in small towns, but frequently needed to move because his reputation was tarnished. In this way reduced anonymity is a kind of rural-specific visibility.

LEONARD

Leonard is a tradesman in his late 50's. He wore a leather bear-claw necklace and a wool peacoat to our meeting at the Midpoint. He said he cycles through periods during which he drinks heavily and gets into legal trouble. A recent episode had resulted in a probationary period during which he was required to attend drug and alcohol support classes in the county seat and remain sober. Leonard has spent most of the past 20 years staying in a town for anywhere from three months to a year. He would work at a job and either stay in an apartment, usually in the

winter, or sleep outside in the woods. "Ah. Sometimes I'll look in a big city to find work because it's easier to find work, but generally I like to live in smaller areas, smaller town areas like this…I'm kind of a gypsy. I am part Cherokee and so um... I've lived the outdoor life most of my life. And so um, being without shelter is not a hard thing for me. But it is for some people" (Leonard, In-Person Interview). Leonard says there are times that he's ended up homeless in the winter or without all his camping stuff because he went into a long period of drinking and not paying rent, or got into trouble with the law and ended up with no place to go and no work. However, because he has a highly-sought after tradesman skill he says he almost always is able to find work. During the periods that he sleeps outside he says he's able to stay clean and commute to work by bicycle or on foot and during those periods he's able to save up enough money to live decently in an apartment in the winter.

At the time of our interview he was housed in a trailer with working water, sewage, and electricity. He rented the trailer from a man he knew because of a previous stay in the area when he came into town with a mobile home and rented land in the man's yard to park it on. When he most recently returned to Hills County he had nowhere to stay. He reached out to the man he had previously rented land from and asked if he could stay in an unused trailer on the man's property with the promise of paying rent after a week or so. The landlord let him just based on trust. Leonard was quickly hired at a local mill and has been paying rent at the trailer since.

Mobility

Mobility has been a key way in which homelessness in the United States is produced and made knowable. People whose stillness in urban public space is considered legitimate generally have a place to call home, or the cultural and financial class resources to be recognized as valued members of public spaces. This might include a student lounging in the sun on the grass reading

a book, or someone in a business suit standing at a street corner thumbing his way through his iPhone. Marginalized people who are often perceived to be violating public space by sitting still—most often people of color, poor people, beggars, youth, sexworkers—often move around as a strategy of safety. Movement allows them to avoid police harassment and arrest, targeted aggressive outreach from social service agencies, or physical violence of non-police.

Moving around has long been a central experience of people who have no permanent legally recognized home. After the Civil War and during industrialization of the United States, a population emerged of usually single, migrant, male workers that often slept in low-income "flop houses," out doors, in police-station "tramp rooms," and in-transit on rail cars (Kusmer, 2002; Cresswell, 2001). Cresswell (2001) traces the way "the tramp" was produced as a knowable entity by scientists, eugenicists, and artists; the tramp was always represented as not merely houseless, but deeply and essentially mobile. Tramps are often talked about as the first homeless population, though houseless migrants and people living in poverty were present throughout the founding of the United States and these houseless people included a wide range of ages, genders, and racial and ethnic groups.

Even as tramps are often identified as the first wave in the trajectory of the production of a population of "the homeless" in the various instantiations of who is considered part of a homeless population, they were not, unlike later populations identified as homeless, presented as solely urban. They are represented riding the rails, sleeping in the woods, and standing on the roadside in rural areas in addition to sleeping in flop houses and standing on city streets. "Migratory workers 'wintered over' in skid row, and returned to it between short-term jobs in the harvests, mines, and woods" (Mitchell, 2011, p. 937). Skid Rows emerged in major cities as districts dominated by Single-room occupancy hotels, lodging houses, charity missions,

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whorehouses, and cheap sustenance geared toward migratory workers. Over time they became the sites of longer-term residents who did not migrate out and back, but rather circulated within the city with Skid Row as home base. Men living in the Bowery (Manhattan's former Skid Row) in the late 1960's usually did not sleep on the streets but instead slept in Single Residency Occupancy Hotels (SRO's), flop houses, or boiler rooms (Hopper, 2003, p. 45). Spradley (1970) documented the consistent cycle of arrest, imprisonment, and release through which police in the 1960's would harass and attempt to regulate inadequately housed men dwelling on Skid Row, using drunkenness as a proxy for managing vagrancy. After the courts ruled this to be illegal, other tactics were employed to contain inadequately housed people in certain spaces, such as skid rows, and remove them from financially valued neighborhoods. When the visibility of people living life on the street re-emerged as a source of public panic in the mid-1980s as a result of post-Keynesian, neoliberal economic changes, these bodies were put into motion by police and service agencies as a way to regulate city streets (Hopper, 2003, p. 100, Mitchell, 1997). Beckett and Herbert (2010) argue that newer spatial forms of control, such as those instituted through zone-based restrictions in which a person is court-ordered to stay out of certain parts of the city or risk arrest, push unwanted populations around the city but do nothing to actually address the conditions of their poverty.

Avoiding, receiving, or response to threats of citations from police for sitting, standing, or 'loitering' in public initiate frequent moves by inadequately housed people (Wakin, 2005; Wehman-Brown, 2015). As a matter of survival, being without an adequate home means moving both in close proximity to the sleeping site and throughout the city to meet daily survival needs such as food, places to urinate, service agency support, and interaction with friends and family (Wolch, & Rahimian, 1993). In previous research I showed how inadequately housed people that

slept in vehicles did not necessarily move in those vehicles, but developed strategies of

proximity by, for example, parking the vehicle near sites that can meet multiple survival needs at

once. (Wehman-Brown, 2015) While mobility is required to meet survival needs when a person

doesn't have adequate housing, mobility is often utilized strategically, balanced with the rest and

stillness that a body also requires.

Even as movement is central to experiences of inadequate housing, particularly shorter-

distance routine movement that punctuates urban inadequate housing, the experience of being

stuck can also characterize housing deprivation. The homeless shelter is one institution that can

provide a place in which a tired body can sleep, but it's more than just a bed indoors. It's an

institution with specific priorities of biopolitical management, which often involves some type of

physical containment. For example, in his ethnographic study of a homeless shelter in Boston,

Robert Desjarlais (1997) notes how the shelter is made up of two parts—a relative spacious

entryway and first floor where intake and entry to the shelter occurs, and a closed-off, locked

upstairs that served as a psychiatric ward (1997, p. 58). Most homeless shelters have time frames

in which they are locked and no one admitted or able to step outside without leaving for the

night. Oftentimes shelters wake up the shelter residents at an early hour, requiring them to leave

and be 'productive' on the city streets (Schultz-Kron, 2004). The Boston shelter instituted a rule

that people couldn't smoke inside, installed sensitive smoke detectors, and said people would be

thrown out for the night if caught smoking (Desjarlais, 1997, p. 95). These kinds of rules

regulating bodily conduct, when paired with the threat of no place to sleep if the rules are

broken, essentially capture people within the building; they are stuck in one place until the

shelter releases them. The physical impulse for a body that craves nicotine must be suppressed

and the body contained in the building in order to sleep in the shelter.

Susan Bennett (1995) documented the ways in which (seemingly intentional) discouraging bureaucratic processes require people seeking shelter services and other kinds of aid are stuck, sometimes all day, multiple days in a row, in offices to apply for emergency shelter or aid. Oftentimes, even after these hours have been spent in waiting rooms with small children, people were still not given aid they were eligible for because of aggressive "verification extremism" that requires people to amass a large amount of document to "prove" that children are legally yours, or to prove need, such as a notarized letter from a family member saying they don't want you to stay with them anymore (Bennett, 1995). This scenario creates a physical stuck-ness in an actual waiting room, but also a uniquely administrative suck-ness. People are unable to produce the documents they need to move onto the next stage of survival and hopefully exit housing crisis; they are dwelling in administrative limbo.

Recent scholarship engaging with the mostly urban-based mobilities turn (Urry, 2007; Hannam et. al., 2006) examines the way in which rurality produces unique rural mobilities. Bell and Otsi (2010) note how historically rural studies has been examined the rural through the lens of stability—the site that holds ties to family, community, ethnicity, and has stood as a fixed contrast through which achievements of the urban are contrasted. Milbourne and Kitchen (2014) agree that dominant cultural constructions of rurality have focused on fixed-ness and stability, but argue that research on rurality, especially in the UK, has long paid attention to physical mobility in rural areas through studies on in-and-out migration and its related social and economic impacts (Milbourne & Kitchen, 2014; see also Milbourne, 2007). Following an in-depth examination of the mobility practices of residents in four county in rural Wales, Milbourne and Kitchen (2014) conclude: "some of the taken-for-granted aspects of mobility in the city are either absent from, or more problematic to practise in rural places" (p. 334). These differences

include spotty and slow broadband access for virtual mobility, scattered amenities including post offices, paved roads, etc. and the very limited access to public transportation. The limited public transportation results in not only increased numbers of people who rely on privately owned vehicles for transportation, but also extended distances that rural people traverse. These vehicles are often driven very long distances, used for the increasingly long-distance commute to cities for work (Green et. al, 1999), as well as 15 miles or more to access amenities such as grocery shopping and healthcare.

These sorts of mobilities—traversing vast physical distance to meet basic needs, significant reliance on car transport, precarious digital connections, and increasingly distant commutes to sites of employment—are uniquely rural mobilities. The ways in which inadequately housed people in Hills County experienced mobility was often informed by similar infrastructure and spatial possibilities and restrictions to those highlighted by Milbourne, Kitchen, and Otsi (2010). However, they are often experienced in ways that are unique to poverty and inadequate housing in the rural environment. For example, while the distance between a house in the countryside and a town large enough to have a pharmacy might be 30 miles, a 45 minute drive for a person with a car, the pace of traveling that distance as a hitch hiker could take multiple days. Lynxster described to me his frustration with a journey from the Midwest to Hills County that took four days, which, if the car had been under his control, would have taken two days or less.

While the lack of jobs in the area might induce some people with homes and cars to make long commutes to bigger cities or adjacent counties for work, most of the inadequately housed participants did not have working cars with which to traverse these distances. Job options were limited to those that could be reached by walking. The amount of travel required to access

services and attend required meetings mandated by courts and the terms of criminalization was also a significant factor informing a stuck-ness for some participants. David's experience in particular is deeply informed by the limitations posed by the great distances between towns.

DAVID

David is in his mid-thirties. When we talked he was living in a tent next to a lake on national forest land. He said that the spot was a bit too cold, more mosquito-filled, and has more bear and other animal visitors than his previous site because it is next to the water. He had previously been camped on the side of a mountain, but the land was owned by private landowners. "So yeah, they just left me a note telling me I was trespassing and stuff, and... you know they'd call the cops blah blah blah, if I didn't leave a certain day. Which was a weird day because it started raining that morning. So I was like 'Oh no!' But it stopped for about a half an hour. Just long enough for me to fold everything up and leave" (David, In-Person Interview). He had been living in the tent for the last six months, following a multi-year sentence in state prisons. He was released earlier than his assigned sentence as part of a prisoner-reduction law that was recently enacted, AB 109. In an effort to reduce the high prisoner population in California, AB 109 mandated that a larger number of low-risk offenders serve the remainder of their sentence out of the prison and under probation. Prisoners are to be released to the counties in which they committed the crime and serve parole in that county, thereby transferring the burden of management onto the county government from the state prison system.

The crime that David committed was a sex-offense, so in addition to having a felony conviction he is also on the Sex-Offender Registry which has a whole system of spatial and social regulations attached to it. Because of the combination of AB 109 county-based regulation in which David is required to report to meetings on a regular basis in the county seat, federal

laws that restrict access for felons to receive public assistance, the requirement to report the felony on job applications, and the social-spatial restrictions associated with being a registered sex offender, David has very limited avenues to secure adequate housing and employment. His probationary period is 25 years. When I asked him about plans to exit living in a tent he said, "It's an endurance test at this point, until I can find work. And I don't think that's going to happen anytime soon. Honestly I'm kind of disheartened. I've kind of given up a little bit, but... I've applied everywhere that was hiring, since day one. Since I got out I've been applying to every job that's hired, and I've talked to every manager that's had a position" (David, In-Person Interview). David described the conditions under which he has to apply for a job, which includes telling the hiring manager the specific offense he committed, and if the manager is still willing to hire him, having David's parole officer drive from 1.5 hours away to speak with the manager before David is allowed to start work. David was employed in the trades before his arrest, and had his own truck and tools, all of which he lost when he went to prison.

The county seat in which David is required to report to meetings multiple times a week is situated in a valley surrounded mostly by mountains covered in federal and state owned forest land. Because of spatial restrictions associated with the Sex Offender Registry, most of the housing in the county seat is too close to schools, churches, or other places that he is forbidden to live near. The only viable option for legal housing is somewhere far outside of town. The market for rental housing in the county seat is significantly limited in general. There are very few rental properties in the sparsely populated regions outside of the established towns.

I talked with David in the fall, as the cold had begun to settle in the mountains. I asked him what his plans were for surviving the winter in the tent:

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David: It's all... surviving in the cold is all about layers and a heat source. So, I got a tent, and I've got a new tarp that's over the tent now, to make it waterproof. And I've been having some troubles with that because my tent's still leaking like on the edges so I like kind of have to finagle it a little bit. The tent walls come like this, like a concave, so the water just kind of sits along the edges and then dribbles in. So, that's why we bought the tarp. And then I'm kind of OCD and I'm a bit meticulous, and so the tarp's folded perfectly in half and then I've got it zip tied to the thing and it's like leaving this gap and the gap's flooding water in it. So like I'm going to have to undo it and spread it out a little bit like that to make it wider, where it's not really wider. And so um... it's supposed to rain Friday, so I'm going to go do that this week. And ah, you know I've got lots of blankets and I've got couch cushions that my girlfriend let me borrow from one of the old couches in their garage and... um, but as far as a heat source. It's not a complicated process. You get a motorcycle battery or a car battery something to that... you buy an inverter. Like a 300 watt. And then you buy a tiny little space heater. One of those kinds that turns off when it falls over. That kind of thing. Turns off when the heat turns a certain temperature. And that's it.

GWB: And you think that your tarp and tent will be strong enough to withstand any snow that....

David: I have no idea (laughing).

The last time I checked on how he was doing before my fieldwork had finished, but after winter had set in, a contact told me that David's girlfriend had rented a house outside of town in the countryside and David had moved in with her, thereby ending this period of homelessness.

David had been homeless one previous time in his life, in his late teens, which he describes as a result of walking away from his life in the Hills County region in attempt to quit addiction to methamphetamines and "become a man," which I examine more thoroughly in chapter seven.

David: I got into methamphetamines…. And I just couldn't… I was insane I guess. Those drugs just ruin your brains. So I decided to become homeless. Because I wanted so desperately to be away from the people and I wanted to be away from that stuff. But what happened was that I became deeper into it, because when you become homeless... and especially I went to the flatlands, so it's like.... that's like the place where they make it. So you'll have dealers that come and take care of you just so you can scrounge up money for them to get more dope. So it's quite a money thing for them, because you're paying $20-$50 for this dope, and it's really only costing them a few cents to make it. You know what I mean, and so they're doing that. They don't even care. They're just like "Here let's get

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you something to eat, and you wanna get high, and you know, so you can get more cans and bottles and stuff. To get more money to buy more dope. You know what I mean? And that was a weird little two year nightmare. I don't know. It wasn't a complete nightmare, but looking back on it was like "Man, I won't do that again." (David, In-Person Interview)

David said that he just decided to quit cold-turkey one day, and came back up to Hills County. He detoxed at a friend's place and started working again once he was clean.

Rural Reasons to Stay, Rural Reasons to Go

David is required to stay near Churchill and report to a variety of meetings and check-ins every week. He must be find-able by his parole officer at the place that he sleeps or one of the places he tells his parole offer that he goes. Ilana was serving parole as part of the alternative sentencing project, but had not been to prison. Because her offense was not a sex-offense Ilana has much more spatial leeway in places she can stay than David. While she has to show up for meetings as part of her alternative sentence, she has much more freedom of movement in and out of the county. She has local family connections in the area, has been living in the area for most of her adult life, and spent her childhood in an adjacent county. Ilana's experience of inadequate housing is also informed by limited employment options, which is a significant factor in de-industrialized and emptied-out rural areas such as Hills County. When she lost her job at the biggest grocery store in the county she lost credibility with one of the biggest employers of people with little formal education, particularly for women.

ILANA

Ilana is a woman in her early 30's. She has a young son that lived with her until she lost her most recent apartment. Her son is now staying with her mother, who lives in the county, indefinitely. She implied there was something or some things that happened requiring the child to stay with her mother, but she did not give more detail. At the time of the interview she had

been staying with a friend, and a couple of days before that she was staying in another friend's house in a town about an hour away, couch hopping, moving from friend to friend's house every few days.

She was connected with the Midpoint and county agencies attempting get into an in-house drug and alcohol treatment center and then a transitional housing facility, the nearest of which, at the time, was about two hours away. I asked if she had been using drugs or alcohol off and on throughout her life, or only recently. She answered, "Throughout my life. But I've changed that. Or trying to change that or make sure that doesn't ever happen again." She then clarified, looking somewhat frustrated, "Or I don't... That's not why I lost my place. But if I ever do that again it could cause bad things to happen... more bad things to happen in my life" (Ilana, In-Person Interview) She had been couch-hopping over the last three months, which was preceded by a series of events she referred to as the most recent time that "things fell apart."

> **GWB:** Are you comfortable telling me what happened when things fell apart?
>
> **Ilana:** Um, yeah. Actually. I had a little bit of a nervous breakdown. I was kind of overwhelmed with bills and trying to keep my place, because my landlord was threatening me to kick me out. Also not having a job. I was really stressed out with a lot of factors. And then once I had that breakdown everything else just kind of fell apart. (In-person interview)

She then told me that her landlord threatened to kick her out because he didn't like her boyfriend, who began living with her and her son in their apartment.

About a year before our meeting Ilana had been employed at a grocery store, but when she didn't request time off to take her son trick-or-treating, and took him anyway although she was scheduled to be at work, she was fired. This is not the first time Ilana has experienced homelessness. As a young adult she was living with her father in a nearby county when her dad lost his house. She said at that time she didn't know where to go or what to do. She was

bouncing around from one friend's place to another place for a few weeks before a friend helped

her out with money, after which her life stabilized for a period of time. I asked her if it was hard

or easy to get her friends to let her stay with them. "Not really! I mean, it's fine for now but it's

not something that I could see myself doing long term. It's kind of difficult. There's not enough

room. There's not really enough space. Yeah. My own place again. I just miss being able to say

'okay, this is my place' and thank goodness it hasn't been too long, but I feel like it's been long

enough. Because it's been three months, and I still haven't gotten anything established. And I've

been trying. Yeah" (Ilana, In-Person interview). When I asked her what her ideal housing

situation was she quickly answered "low income housing! HUD, ah…." She said she usually

lives with her son, and preferred to live just the two of them, without friends. When I asked what

her ideal, long-term vision of housing would look like she started laughing:

> **Ilana**: Um, two bedroom, two bathroom, two car garage with a car and a job. Yeah. That's what I see.
>
> **GWB:** Yeah. A place of your own.
>
> **Ilana**: Yeah.
>
> **GWB:** Um, and who... would people be living with you? Or you'd be all by yourself?
>
> **Ilana:** Um, I would have my kid with me. And I would mainly want to live by myself. Because it seems easier at times... Not all the time! That's why you go out. (laughter) (Ilana, In-Person Interview)

Iana is the only single mother with young children I interviewed. Of the nine primary

participants she is also one of the most deeply-entrenched participants within administrative and

legal intuitions. She is required to interface with drug and alcohol services, mental health

services, legal management of parole, and the Midpoint for helping coordinating all her

intersecting needs and requirements. When I called the Midpoint to check in with them a few

months later they offered up that she had been placed in a drug and alcohol longer-term treatment facility out of the region. After she finished at the treatment facility it was planned that she would be integrated into a supportive multi-service transitional housing facility.

Ilana's movement was the experience of being legally and administratively stuck in place in the county, as well as legally and administratively compelled to leave the county. Her mobility was deeply tied to adherence to the administrative form with the risk of penalty for breaking her parole. Because rural areas are so much less likely to have large medical facilities like drug treatment centers, this in-county/out-county mobility is part of a wider rural experience of dispersed amenities and facilities, which usually compels movement into more urban areas.

In-Migration

While in-migration has been the object of study in rural areas, the case of in-migration of inadequately housed people from service-dense urban areas is virtually un-studied, and goes against dominant narratives that I frequently heard that people leave rural areas when faced with inadequate housing, not migrate to them. I emailed the director of a homeless shelter in a large town in the next county asking if he could verify this trend. He said that he does on occasion see people come through that explicitly came from Hills County and other rural counties in the mountains, but it's not so common to be notable. He said, however, that the paranoia that that was happening, and the conflict it caused, was a frequent conversation with the board members of the shelter and other administrators who feared other counties were sending their problems downhill. Rollison and Pardeck (2006) found that most people experiencing homelessness in a rural region in the Midwest moved from sparsely populated areas to the larger city in the region for homeless services. Christensen (2012) found that most of the people she interviewed who used homeless services in the two major cities of the Northwest Territories of Canada had

pathways to homelessness that started in rural areas. They were motivated to come to the urban areas through a combination of perceived economic or other opportunity in the larger city, chronic housing needs in the remote settlements, and disintegrating social relationships in the rural settlements (Christensen, 2012).

However, Olivia and the friend who she stayed with when she arrived in Hills County made a reverse move. They in-migrated, and for reasons very similar to the reasons that adequately housed people in-migrate from city to country. They out-migrated from a city with a vast web of homeless services because they felt they could get no traction or help in that county. Olivia said, "I figured if was being thrown away, I'm going to be thrown away in a place I wanted to be" (Olivia, In-Person Interview). In a case study of in-migrants in four communities in rural Wales, Milbourne and Kitchen (2014) found that 18% of respondents had relocated for "a different pace of life" (p.330). This experience of slower mobility and value of the idyllic landscape in rural areas is reflected by multiple inadequately housed participants in Hills County, mentioned not only by Olivia, but also by Ilana and Leonard. The beautiful landscape, slower pace, and small-town ways of relating are the primary reasons that Olivia came to Hills County.

OLIVIA

Olivia is a woman in her mid-fifties with a warm, raspy voice. When she walked into the room at the Midpoint she was wearing a black flowing sweater and knit flowered pants with cat-eye glasses and dark curly hair. She was warm with me from the start and very generous in sharing the details of a very difficult life. Olivia was staying at a hotel in the area with emergency housing assistance funds from the Midpoint and the county mental health agency. She had been staying there for four days when we met and before that she stayed with a friend. I asked what her living space was like staying with her friend. She said,

"It's challenging. Um, a very small place. It's a very small place. And we both have... mental illness. And so there's friction at times. You know because we're locked in a very, very small place. And it was.... just time for me to leave. To... I don't want to lose a friend. You know? The friend's more important. And they were kind enough, you know. They put me up there for a week while I'm looking for a place and... (exasperated sigh) It's lovely here. All aspects are lovely here." (Olivia, In-Person Interview)

Olivia came to Hills County from a major metropolitan area in California I'll call San Laves. She said her sister, who she otherwise is not close with, agreed to drive her from San Laves to Hills County. Olivia met the friend that she stayed with while she was sleeping on the floor of an emergency overnight shelter. She described the shelter as a warehouse where a service agency laid hundreds of mats out on a floor and people slept for the night. "It's only open for the coldest part of the winter. You know, and every morning you have to get up. They wake you up by four, you have to be out by six. And it's still dark out, it's still cold out. You know. And it's like 'Oh, what do I do.' And on food stamps, you can't even buy a cup of coffee on food stamps. So, yeah. That's how I met her. They poured her into bed next to me straight from the hospital" (Olivia, In-Person Interview). She said when they met her friend was still in her hospital gown and could barely move, so she and Olivia took care of each other. Her friend came up to Hills County because her son was up here, and she contacted Olivia and said she should come up as well because it was beautiful. "I was eight months on the street in San Laves. And... I figured if was being thrown away, I'm going to be thrown away in a place I wanted to be. You know. And here at least there's trees and…you know, beauty." (Olivia, In-Person Conversation)

In our conversation I tried to trace back to an initial time that Olivia was inadequately housed, and in doing so layer upon layer of trauma and displacement unfolded. She was currently going by an assumed name after living in a domestic violence shelter. She was fleeing a man who raped her, imprisoned her for months in a house, and charged other men money to

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rape her. She was able to flee and connect with a domestic violence shelter, but he found her there and threatened to kill her. She was moved to a shelter in another county and took up a new identity. In the transition out of the domestic violence shelter she secured employment at a company doing administrative work. Over the years she developed a workplace injury. She filed for worker's compensation, received it for multiple years and was able to pay rent on her apartment until one day the checks unexpectedly stopped coming. While trying to navigate the bureaucracy to get the payments reinstated she drained any savings she had and lost her housing and belongings. It was this specific situation, the non-payment of worker's compensation, which led to the period of street- and shelter-homelessness and her current inadequate hotel living and doubling-up. At the time that we talked Olivia had applied for and being approved quickly for SSDI, and she said she had just found out that she had been approved for Section 8 in Hills County and was just waiting to get her voucher and SSDI check so she could find and move into a rental unit that took Section 8. She was so optimistic about the kindness of the community and the helpfulness of the Midpoint and other county and service organizations, who provided her with warm clothes (it was fall and cold during this interview), emergency assistance, integrated her into a mental health support group, and provided her with emergency housing when she needed to leave her friend's place.

Rural Housing Stock

The housing stock in rural areas of the United States is different than the housing in urban and suburban areas in a variety of fundamental ways. This is specifically relevant to the way people are housed and sheltered before/during/after inadequate housing as they are informed by specifically rural experiences in the limited rental housing, lack of oversight because of classed nature of renting, and limited types of both rural housing and rural service provisions.

Approximately 8% of people in Hills County live in a mobile home or RV, higher than the national average of 6.5%., but lower than the average 14% mobile-home-dwellers in rural-designated areas (Housing Assistance Council, 2013). Living in a mobile home ranges from renting a mobile home on a plot of land that is owned by the landlord, renting the land on which an owner-occupied mobile home sits upon, or owning a mobile home that is on a piece of land owned by the homeowner. This last type of ownership is the most rare (Solomon & MacTavish, 2006; Aman & Yarnal, 2010).

Bonnie and her husband's home fell into the second category—they rented the plot of land in a mobile-home community on which the mobile home they owned sat. The double-wide home was paid in full, attached to water, electricity, heat, and plumbing. Solomon and MacTavish (2006) argue that the landlessness that characterizes all rented and most owned trailer homes leaves residents of trailer parks at a high-risk for homelessness (p. 45). Despite the precarity of trailer home living, they are a widespread form of housing in the United States, especially in rural and suburban areas. The construction materials used in the building of mobile homes make them more affordable than permanent structure, but these materials also make them more prone to damage from weather and housing deterioration.

BONNIE

Bonnie and her husband's mobile home was destroyed in a microburst, a fast rush of downward air that can last for the period of seconds or minutes and can be as destructive to trees and homes as a tornado. Bonnie is a woman in her late 60's. She is retired and her husband is semi-retired, working part-time maintenance for a local park in addition to collecting social security. When their house was destroyed they were able to stay in a motel for a few nights. Then, Bonnie's niece drove up a recreational RV from another state for Bonnie and her husband

to stay in. During those weeks Bonnie talked with an emergency-response coordinator who connected her with the county Housing Authority. The housing authority put them on the waiting list for a subsidized senior housing apartment, which came available within a month and was where Bonnie was living when she called in response to my recruitment flier.

Before her home was destroyed Bonnie and her husband would have been considered the 'middle class' of the community—they had enough money to get by on, they owned their mobile home, they had been able to stop working full-time in order to have semi-retirement. But this one disaster maxed out all their economic resources very quickly. During our conversation she frequently reiterated she was so grateful and blessed for the family and community support they received in the form of housing, construction help to remove their trailer, and the salvaging of their things from the house.

Although she had been in the subsidized apartment for many months when we had the phone call, she said it still didn't feel like home to her. She still spoke of their mobile-home as her home, and said "You have to kind of go to a place in your mind where this is no longer home—this is just a shell" (Bonnie, Telephone Interview). Bonnie and her husband had lived in their mobile home for many years. Like most mobile-home owners, they owned their unit, but not the land in the mobile-home park where the trailer sat. Suddenly losing their home was deeply overwhelming for Bonnie and her husband, but in addition to the stresses of displacement and coordinating places to stay, they were overwhelmed with the responsibility to clear off the remains of their home. "When you are in a mobile home park and you don't own that, that is a palace that needs occupied. The hardest part is getting all the framing off. We had to get someone who was willing to salvage that. We just gave him that for free because we didn't have the time to figure out someone who would pay to salvage that" (Bonnie, Telephone Interview).

They received multiple days of help to move their items and break-down their trailer from an international non-profit organization of Veterans that organize into natural-disaster support teams around the country. While she believed they received support from the organization because her husband is a veteran, the organization's website indicates they respond to natural-disaster needs in general, though perhaps his status as a veteran enabled them to be connected so quickly to the organization.

When I asked Bonnie how the transition into the senior living apartment was, she said it had been very difficult. She hadn't rented housing for many decades, and was overwhelmed by the stream of fees that low-income people are charged with—rental deposits, deposits to each of the phone and utility companies. When I asked her if this experience informed the way she thought about lower income people in any way, she said it made her feel more compassion because now she understands all the little fees and the high cost of renting that she had been previously unaware of.

Rural Renter Housing Cost Burden

The Housing Assistance Council (HAC) estimated that more than 40% of households in Hills County were living in what they considered inadequate housing. The number of units estimated to have inadequate plumbing (approx. 1.5%) is more than three times the national average (Housing Assistance Council, 2013). The vast majority of the 40% of households in Hills County the HAC identify as inadequate are because they are cost burdened, meaning the occupants spend more than 1/3 of their income on housing costs. They estimate 20% of house dwellers spend more than 50% of their income on housing costs (Housing Assistance Council, 2013). More than 27% of rural and small-town households are cost burdened, and a disproportionate number of those, 40%, are renters even though renters occupy only ¼ of rural

and small town homes (Ziebarth, 2015, p. 91-92). These summaries of national data on rental housing do not include an analysis of how rural renting cost-burden and housing intersects with people paying their rent in whole or in-part with SSDI. However, the combination of housing cost burden, housing quality, and disability intersected in multiple ways to affect the frequent moves and lack of amenities that punctuate Cathy's experience of inadequate housing.

More than 50% of housing units in Hills County use either wood or tank/propane gasoline to heat their homes, both of which have variable expenses, and can be manually labor intensive (Housing Assistance Council, 2013). Cathy cited problems with a propane heating tank as the reason she didn't have heat for many months. The incorrect installation of the propane tank was also a source of conflict with her landlord.

CATHY

Cathy called in response to a recruitment flier I had hung outside her local grocery store. She was hopeful that talking to me would be an opportunity to air grievances about what she considers the corrupt behavior of most landlords in the area. She started rattling off landlord's names, the properties they owned, and the ways in which they were neglecting their properties and mistreating tenants. I asked if we could talk more about these things in person and scheduled a meeting for the next week. She was an hour late for our meeting at a public park in Rivertown. She apologized for being late. She said she had been making Christmas ornaments out of homemade play dough with the kids of the woman who cleans her house (she has a physical disability that prevents her from doing so). She is an affable butch lesbian in her late 50's. When she walked up she asked if I was Grover. I said yes, and then she came over, shook my hand and said "oh, I'm glad it was you. I thought you were a man!"

Cathy said she moved up to the mountains from a major metropolitan area to be with a woman. She was with her girlfriend for four years, living in that woman's house along with Cathy's eldest son who was a young adult at the time. She said eventually her girlfriend kicked her son out, saying it was time he learned to get by on his own. Cathy said that loss of his housing, paired with the experiences of racism in the area led her son to move to a larger town in a different part of the state. Her housing insecurity began when she and her girlfriend broke up. Cathy has a fixed SSDI income and also works part time in a near-minimum-wage service job. Her income is enough to get bye, but she lives month-to-month, traveling out of the county to do discounted grocery shopping once a week like many people in the area.

After she lost housing at her girlfriend's house she obtained a Section 8 voucher and was renting an apartment in town. She said she lost that housing when the landlord failed to provide heat or water for three months, so the Section 8 program canceled the lease. Section 8 Vouchers are appealing to landlords in the two poorer towns of the area where I conducted research because it guarantees a portion of the rent is paid by the Housing Authority every month, thereby limiting the financial risk for the landlord. However, Section 8 has very clear standards of housing quality that must be met for a landlord to rent the unit to someone with a voucher. This includes providing working heating, water, and safe entrances and exits. These rules are designed to protect the renters from slumlords, but in this case, it removed the voucher subsidy. Cathy would have had to either secure another Section 8 unit immediately, or pay the full rent. She did not say why she didn't pursue a different Section 8 unit in this particular case, though she did say she wouldn't apply for Section 8 again because she didn't like the yearly walk-through's the agency conducts on the property conditions because she feels they are an invasion of her privacy.

She left the section 8 property when her lease was canceled because she couldn't pay full market rate. She moved into a cheaper unit that she could pay the full rent on herself. Cathy said she had to leave this second unit because it was a month-to-month rent, and the landlord served her a notice that she had to leave while she was working at her job. She indicated she and the landlord had conflict, particularly over a grievance in which she didn't have heat because the landlord installed heating tank incorrectly. "Because my landlord at the last place, the kerosene tank was crooked. I couldn't put anything in until... what was it? December? Because he wouldn't come out and level it. And I couldn't lift it. And I'm not going to let my neighbors endanger themselves with that tank falling on them. And the gas company told me they wouldn't put nothing in until it was leveled out, because it could fall over and pollute the yard, and then it would be an environmental hazard. And it took him almost three months to come out and level that thing out! I went October and November with no heat. And it was cold" (Cathy, In-Person Interview).

When she was kicked out of this unit she moved into the Silverlight Motel. She moved into the motel because she needed a place to stay immediately. The motel cost $550 a month, more than she pays for her current studio apartment above a garage, which has a kitchen and bathroom. I had heard the motel mentioned by service providers as a place that they pay for people to stay as part of emergency housing assistance, but this is the first time I had heard about it from someone who had lived there and it did not sound like a good place. "I mean, I could *tell you* all about the Silverlight" (Cathy, In-Person Interview). When she started staying at the motel Cathy asked them to remove all their furniture and electronics, including the television, so she could put her own belongings in there, which they did. Then, when she found her apartment and moved out, they accused her of stealing all their things. They attempted to charge her for their

TV and chairs. She said there was a period recently when her friends Rochelle and Tim and the other residents of the motel all had to use Porta Potties for two weeks because their bathroom plumbing stopped working. Cathy said she moved out of there as quick as she could because they weren't shoveling or putting rock salt on the two inch thick ice that covered the walkway to the rooms. She was afraid of falling and becoming further injured and disabled. She moved into her current studio, where she says she's staying because she has to, but the wooden stairs to her doorway are very old, move when she walks on them, and are rotting. She said her landlord has stopped paying the garbage pickup bill so the garbage hadn't been picked up in weeks.

While inadequate housing and discriminatory landlords aren't isolated only to rural locations, the fewer number of people (and the less class-diverse range of people) that rely on rental housing in rural areas makes rural renters less connected to clear appeals systems. Cathy referenced a time when she applied for rental housing with one landlord, and when she met with him, he told her that he didn't think he could rent to her because her previous landlord got in touch with him and told him he thought she was too disabled to live at his place (which was up stairs). The limited rental housing options (many landlords own multiple properties in Riverton, for example) and small town environment where one landlord will know another landlord increases the potential for discrimination and limited options for a fresh start after difficult circumstances. Even if her previous landlord hadn't talked to her potential landlord, the fact that she would have to report her SSDI income to secure the apartment "outs" her as disabled, which increases the potential to be discriminated against based on disability.

Limited Options and Long Distances

Living in a rural area often means having access to few options of amenities and services, and great distances between residents and services. These limited services can exacerbate isolation when paired with poverty; once a bridge is burned there may not be other options available. While the Midpoint had just lost their emergency housing funding, county agencies such as the department of mental health and the alternative sentencing program had emergency funding for housing available for people utilizing their programs. However, Rochelle said that when she spoke with her case manager at the department of mental health, he made clear to her that she would only have access to the emergency housing funding only if she correctly complied with the evaluation and treatment plans of the agency. She and Tim were attending weekly therapy sessions with a therapist in the town, who reported their attendance to the caseworker. She said she had missed two weeks, and knew she needed to go the next day to get back on track and be eligible for the emergency housing assistance. However, emergency housing assistance almost always came in the form of paying for a motel for the night. The Midpoint had one unit that they owned available for short-term stays, and the Alternative Sentencing Program had another, but they were often full, and located in the County Seat. Because Rochelle and Tim lived in Riverton, and already lived in the low-cost motel in town, from which they were in the process of being evicted, emergency housing in Riverton was already closed off to them. However, the people that owned this motel also owned the low-cost motel in another major town in the county. That left few other options for them to be placed in another low-cost motel in the county. This uniquely rural experience of only one of any amenity (such as the motel), if the amenity exists at all, leaves very little wiggle room to maneuver around burned-bridges for people living in poverty in rural areas.

Rochelle and Tim

Rochelle and Tim are a couple in their mid and late thirties. They have been married for four years. Tim spent his teenage and young adult years in the area on-and-off, and they were living with his mom until his mother died. "The bank foreclosed on the house after my mom died and I couldn't make the mortgage and I couldn't get a modification low enough to keep her house so we got um... house got foreclosed on. Lost my house and um... we've just been struggling ever since" (Tim, In-Person Interview). After they lost Tim's mother's house they traveled around the West Coast, living in their truck for six months. Then they moved into an apartment in a city in a different part of the state but Tim said they "had to get out of there. We were living in a really bad neighborhood, someone tried to kick our door in and it was just all bad so we decided to come back up here" (Tim in-person interview). When we talked they were in the process of being evicted from the Silverlight Motel, where they had been for about five months. They had been staying with a friend for the six months before they moved into the hotel.

The eviction notice came after multiple days of extended conflict with the management. While it seems that Rochelle and Tim and the management staff had on-again-off-again semi-friendship interspersed with conflict, this particular series of events began when the management intervened into a verbal fight Tim and Rochelle were having. They told Tim he couldn't stay in the same room as Rochelle, putting him in a different part of the hotel for a few days, but then got upset when they found him back in his room reconciled with Rochelle. They had called the police on Tim and Rochelle during their loud argument, but the police said there was nothing they could do, they were just a couple having a fight. This is the motel Cathy mentioned had to use Porta Potty bathrooms for two weeks. Rochelle elaborates on the disrepair of the building:

> You know and... it's a sorry excuse for a motel, I'm telling you. And it's the people who are running it. You know. I mean, they... the cops asked her, and this is very, very, highly illegal, she has an extension cord stretching from one end of the hall

going past my door to about halfway to the other end of the hall and nothing to cover the extension cord until the cop says 'Hey, what's this all about?' Well all of the sudden I've got a little carpet that covers it now. I'm like you people are stupid? You think I'm stupid? I knew that was highly illegal and it took a cop to tell you that! (Rochelle, In-Person Interview)

The hotel had been charging Tim and Rochelle an extra $100 a month as prorated payment for a one-month's deposit they charge residents of the 3rd floor, where the rooms are reserved for long-term stays. Only some of the rooms have small kitchenettes with microwaves and a sink. When I met them Rochelle was eating food out of a rice-cooker, which is an electronic appliance that does not require a fully functioning kitchen in order to cook food.

 A few months previous Tim and Rochelle missed paying rent one month because their cash was stolen, so they have also been trying to pay that money back in small chunks. They said the hotel was charging them 2% interest a day on the back-rent, and they felt like they were never going to catch up. Now that they are being evicted they know they will not recoup any of the money they paid in the deposit installments because it is being applied to the back-rent plus interest. While they were being charged for interest, back rent, and a full-month's deposit on their motel room, they were also doing unpaid work for the motel that never got applied towards their debt. What I find significant about this is that these times of unpaid labor were relayed to me as parts of the conversation about social relationships with the management, not about the very high rates for the room, fees, and deposits.

> **Rochelle:** And I helped them clean the rooms that next day. And I'm like, you're stabbing me in the back like this? Piss on you. I don't want to help you no more. You know. And then they had my husband working with Ben, which is the maintenance guy, which is no problem, but what does he get from it? You know what I mean, besides, oh yeah, after we kick her out, we can move you back in.
>
> **GWB:** Uh huh. And did they pay you to work on maintenance?
>
> **Tim:** No, no. I volunteered.

GWB: They didn't pay you?

Tim: No, they put me up for free in a room for two nights.

GWB: Okay so they said that the room was in exchange for the maintenance work?

Tim: No, not necessarily.

GWB: Okay.

Tim: I just offered to help. You know, get out of the room. I didn't want to just sit there all day by myself.

GWB: Yeah.

Tim: So I just... and I'm a painter and they used me on some painting, and I helped them out a bit. That's all.

While Tim's impression is that his labor was a fair trade for a couple of nights in an extra room, Tim and Rochelle indicated previously that the management moving Tim into a different room was required by the management in order for them to not get immediately kicked out. They also believed that the current eviction was in part because the management found that Tim had left his separated room and reconciled with Rochelle.

Tim receives SSDI for a physical disability, and Rochelle has no income, though she is in the process of applying for SSDI. She said the county mental health office was going to help her with the SSDI application and also help them with emergency rental assistance, but only if she showed up to appointments without missing them. She had missed the last two but said they were going to go to the one tomorrow to get back on track. When I asked them what they planned on doing after the five business days of their eviction period had passed and they said they didn't know. They had a car, but it couldn't drive until Rochelle could repair it.

When we ended our interview I gave them the name of someone at the Midpoint who might be able to help facilitate getting emergency housing support from the Department of Mental Health. When I mentioned the Midpoint they said they had gotten help from them in the past, and that the worker at the satellite office in Riverton was really helpful, but the last time they passed it they saw it was closed. I asked if they had applied for Section 8 yet, and they said they were overwhelmed by it because last time they had to drive into Churchill to put in the application, and their car was currently broken. I asked if taking the bus was a viable option, and they laughed, saying it was not very useful because it took all day just to get the 45 minutes to Churchill and back. Allard, Tollman, and Rosen (2003) found that spatial proximity to social service offices in the Detroit Metropolitan Area increased the utilization of services among welfare recipients, with the greater distance between home and the service agency reducing the frequency of utilization. The geographical barriers to accessing services may be exacerbated by concurrent barriers such as age (Edwards, et. al., 2009) or ability, such as those faced by Tim and Rochelle. In Hills County governmental and non-governmental service agencies attempt to have satellite service in many of the small towns besides the county seat, but these services are not open as consistently or frequently as the main office in the county seat, and are often one of the first cuts made when the agency faces financial challenges.

Conclusion: Rural Inadequate Housing

The nine people I spoke with who experienced inadequate housing in Hills County had many experiences in common with inadequately housed people in urban areas—no stable place to stay either currently or in the last year, limited or no incomes, difficulty finding steady paid work, physical or mental disabilities, challenges with addictions, and restrictions imposed by the criminal system. However, there are aspects of their experiences of inadequate housing that were

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different. The over-arching narratives to make sense of urban homelessness, such as hyper-mobility, are different in rural areas. This is influenced by different experiences of visibility—while urban people sleeping outside are likely to be seen by housed people at some point in their day, a person sleeping outside in Hills County might go the entire day, or even a week without being seen by another human. If they come into town, they can leave their things in the woods with a low likelihood that someone will steal their belongings or destroy their shelter, thereby passing as housed.

The housing stock of rural areas of the United States has unique characteristics. Houses are more likely to be mobile homes; they are more likely to be lacking a fundamental feature considered adequate housing such as heat, a kitchen, or full plumbing. Rural homes are more likely to be heated by labor-intensive materials such as propane tanks or wood. They are likely to have high cost burden and limited housing options, especially rental housing. The small-town networks of landlords and homeowners make the possibilities for discrimination and burned-bridges from past negative experiences high. And the distance between towns and less efficient public transit make living in a new place or traveling to social service locations more difficult. Because of these factors inadequate housing in Hills County is a specific experience of rural inadequate housing in the United States, likely sharing many characteristics with rural inadequate housing in other regions of the country.

Chapter 4: "Real" homelessness and the role of the social imaginary

When I began field research, I was told by both everyday housed residents and many service providers that homelessness was not a problem in the community. People that did eventually acknowledge homelessness in the area said that unhoused people live in the woods for a while, then move "down the mountain" to larger towns with homeless shelters and warmer climates through the fall and winter. These people were characterized as outsiders. When pressed about what a local person does if she or he experiences a housing emergency, I was told they seek services at a non-profit organization that sufficiently resolves their housing problems. However, after reviewing data kept by the service agency that provided emergency assistance to people who experience housing loss, and after talking with a variety of people who experienced homelessness and inadequate housing in the area, it became clear that the actual ways most people dealt with a lack of stable housing was very different than the narratives provided by housed residents.

This disconnect is not merely a discrepancy between what housed residents knew when I spoke with them and what they might know if given accurate information. Even when provided with alternative information respondents returned to the dominant narrative. The disconnect is a specific investment in dominant discourses and epistemologies that are informed by widely circulated discourses about urban-centered, street and shelter based experiences of homelessness. I highlight narratives commonly put forward by housed residents to explain how homelessness is experienced in their community in order to account for the disparity between the collective imaginary and lived experience. In the sections that follow I argue that urban-based discourses

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saturate understandings of what homelessness is and who is homeless in such a way that certain infamous characters and mobile outsiders are thought to represent "real" homelessness. Tracing the narratives relied on to account for what homelessness was and who experienced homelessness, I highlight the urban and outsider epistemologies of homelessness. Cornelius Castoriadis (1997) characterizes social imaginaries as collections of unities that animate the institutions of society, but that "do not correspond to, or are not exhausted by, references to 'rational' or 'real elements" (Castoriadis, 1997, p. 7-8). Charles Taylor (2004) extends this concept by arguing social imaginaries, as the "collective practices that make up our social life" not only communicate a sense of how things "usually go" but are "interwoven with an idea of how they ought to go" (Taylor, 2004, p. 24). I situate discourses of 'real homelessness' within the social imaginary to not only account for the existence of these unities, but theorize what work these unities do. I argue that it's not only a lack of knowledge about unhoused people that lead housed people to put forth certain consistent discursive accounts of homelessness in their community; these imaginaries also unify normative understanding of the problem of homelessness in this community in a way that obscures the imperative to reckon with deep and challenging social, economic, and political problems. These discourses function to maintain a certain dominant social-emotional indifference about the problem of homelessness, and attempt to side-step community anxiety about economic decline in the area and its related consequences.

One way social imaginaries of real homelessness manifest are through stories of two "infamous" characters. Tracing the ubiquity of common knowledge about these people, I argue that the specific ways urban-biased understandings of homelessness informs housed residents' identification of these people as representatives of what homelessness is. While these people may actually exist and represent a specific experience of a specific person, the "infamousness" in the

re-telling reproduces a certain narrative about (real) homelessness in general. I then introduce three dominant themes that emerged as ways housed people narrated the trajectory of how unhoused people in the area managed their inadequate housing. Pointing to the particular ways landscape, region, and outsider-ness inform these discourses, I consider what these particular social imaginaries of homelessness do and deflect for housed residents.

Seeing the Urban for the Trees

Hills County is covered in forests, and these forests are largely owned by federal agencies. Much of the land along the rivers is owned by a private energy company. The bigger towns (no town is bigger than 3,000 people) are made up of fairly dense neighborhoods of houses fanning out a block or two from usually two main streets. These streets contain storefronts and government buildings such as a library and a post office. Before the draught, the area received fairly heavy snowfall and was cold from December-March. It gets very hot (90's-100's F) in the summer months. These geographic factors greatly inform how housed residents perceive homelessness in the area. I asked housed residents if they were aware of homelessness in their community. If they were aware of homelessness, they would first tell me that people who are homeless sleep in the woods. They would also tell me about the high number of hitch hikers that travel along the highways in the warm months. Then, I was told unhoused people left the area and went into the valley or over the mountains to larger cities when it turned cold. Housed people said that they left the area during the cold months to access shelter services in bigger cities, or to continue to sleep outside in a warmer, less snowy climate. I heard this narrative many times, from many different types of housed people. It imagines the unhoused person to be a semi-migrant traveler, not a resident with long standing ties to the community.

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I would then ask what they think people who are from the community, such as families with children, did when they lost their housing. Most housed residents talked enthusiastically about the excellent services provided by only organization that provided emergency housing services in the county, the Midpoint. If a local person experienced housing loss, most housed residents believed the Midpoint would solve their housing crisis immediately. However, when I started my fieldwork the Midpoint had recently lost their emergency housing grant funding, along with many other funding streams. Because of urban-centered administrative formation of Continuum of Care federal funding to address homelessness administered by the department of Housing and Urban Development, it was unlikely that the agency was going to get emergency housing (or any other homeless service) funding back anytime soon. The Midpoint was struggling to keep their doors open at all, but the story in town was that the agency provided emergency housing assistance to anyone who needed it. When I talked with unhoused informants about their options when they lost housing, some people expressed confusion about why they were denied emergency housing assistance from the Midpoint. Some had heard directly from the staff that the Midpoint had lost emergency housing funding which is why they weren't provided emergency motel housing. Despite this, the Midpoint housing coordinator said many clients expressed anger that the Midpoint was unable to provide funding, believing the lack of assistance was a reflection of the Midpoint restricting access to only that individual person because of personal grievances, not because of a funding gap.

Everyday housed residents such as store employees, motel owners, or servers often asked what I was doing in the area. When I told them I was studying homelessness, the majority of people responded with a comment such as "you'll not find a lot of that around here." Oftentimes they would follow up with an exception, such as "except maybe the hitch-hikers with the

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backpacks that camp in the woods." The perception that there wasn't really homelessness in the area, excepting itinerant travelers in the summer months, is informed by a very limited conception of what constitutes homelessness in the US. The way that people who are housed define and 'see' homelessness is largely attached to a narrow and urban-based idea about what constituted homelessness—primarily sleeping outside or staying in a homeless shelter. Because the community doesn't have a homeless shelter, housed residents then identify the non-local travelers that pass through the community in the summer months as representative of the overall population of people who experience homelessness in the area. These people are visible to the housed residents because they stand on the side of the road with signs asking for rides, they walk along the side of the highway (in a community where most people drive), and they stick out with alternative cultural markers such as non-normative clothing and large backpacks.

The technical definition of 'homelessness' in the United States according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development extends beyond street and shelter homelessness. It includes any person who lives in a shelter not designed for or deemed adequate for human habitation (such as a car, dilapidated buildings, barns, or tents), children who live in houses with more than one family present ('doubling up'), who live in campgrounds, or are migratory (McKinney Vento, 2009). The definition of homelessness used by the Department of Health and Human Services extends even further, including people who live doubled-up with friends or family because they lost housing, people who are about to be released from prison or the hospital with no stable housing to return to, and generally inconsistent/unstable living arrangements (Department of Health and Human Services, 2012).

Celine-Marie Pascale (2005) argues that in the United States economics, morality, and the visibility of sleeping rough as an expression of extreme poverty coalesce so that "to the

extent that poverty is evidence of personal frailties and failures, the public visibility of people living in poverty is one more expression of failure: the failure to hide one's poverty" (Pascale 2005, 256). The marginalization of people who experience homelessness manifests in well-documented violence, discrimination, and representation of homelessness as "the bottom" of the social hierarchy (Fish, 2014; Ruddick 1996; Spradley 1970; Wasserman and Clair 2010). The visibility of certain kinds of usually street and shelter based homelessness are most often tied up with characterizations besides their sleeping-spot. Mental illness, addiction, being surrounded by many items, and poor hygiene come to be presumed or synonymous with homelessness, and these characteristics attach to homelessness within a narrative of "real" homelessness. When unhoused people are clean and well dressed, are not mentally ill, do not have many items on them, and do not exhibit signs of mental illness they are often talked about as "good" or "unusual" people experiencing homelessness. Kim Hopper (2003) argues that the belief that people who experience homelessness are "badly damaged" is "fed by a steady stream of opinion pieces and press accounts, the idea that 'the street' is simply a compressed symbol for the strange and disturbed has fast assumed the trappings of common sense*"* (p.117). The fixed association between homelessness and the exhibition of certain behaviors in public, such as having poor hygiene, or carrying many things are has become "common sense" in both urban and rural areas throughout the country. Despite economic, industrial, weather, landscape, and other kinds of diversity between regions of the country certain consistent characters such as the "crazy bag lady" and the dirty panhandling man are universal.

Craig Willse (2015) argues that "the putatively generic category of 'homeless' actually signifies something very specific. Homelessness is not just a material state. It is a cultural artifact, a political-economic effect of racial capital's urban disorganization" (2015, p.12). Citing

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the example in which populations of migrant farmworkers are not considered "homeless," yet are a population of exploited and largely inadequately housed people, he argues the categorization of "homelessness" and the various policies said to have the goal of ending it carry "very specific ideas of housing deprivation" with the aim of "economic management of its continuation though the production and circulation of those ideas and aims" (Willse, 2015, p. 12). The characteristics that adhere to "homelessness" surfaced frequently in conversation with adequately housed residents, accumulating into discursive unities of "really homelessness" or "a real homeless person." Two infamous characters in particular emerged in conversations with multiple people. In one case an informant leaned over to other adequately housed residents and asked them all to fill in bits and pieces of the picture they were painting of this infamous person. These stories were emphatically presented to me as important information that I should have about homelessness in the community. They were presented to me as information about homelessness in the area much more readily than other information about housing deprivation that I learned were visible to librarians, service providers, and volunteers on a day to day basis.

The Infamous Homeless Person

As I talked with housed people about housing and homelessness in their area, there are two characters that kept being mentioned as people that I *really* should look out for, or know about, or go find. Two infamous characters consistently were described as the best example of homelessness in the area. One is a woman I will call Deanne, and the other a man I will call Ed. Darryl, a volunteer for a service organization, set up the accounts of Deanne in this way: "I got to tell you the story about this one lady in town. Her name is Deanne, and I hope you remember her name. Deanne…" He then continued with an elaborate physical description:

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When you see Deanne, she has one of those little metal shopping carts with two wheels she drags behind her. She is dressed typically in four or five layers of clothing. Petticoats, tennis shoes, socks. Always has makeup on. And she's a homeless person. Who chooses to be homeless. She has a little... there's some mental issues. She's very wealthy. Um, her wealth is estimated at around a quarter of a million. All of us in town, when you say 'Have you seen Deanne' we know who Deanne is. (Darryl, In Person Interview)

Deanne was hitchhiking one day when Darryl picked her up in his truck and drove her down the road to where he was going. When he parked he expected her to get out but she did not because she wanted him to drive her to a town two hours away. He just left her sitting in his truck as he took care of his business, and when he came back a few hours later she had gone. Another person told me she also saw Deanne hitchhiking one day, but said she told Deanne she was going in the opposite direction because she just didn't want Deanne in her car. In my interview with Darryl he initiated conversation about Deanne with other people sitting near us:

(Turning to crowd of women sitting at the table next to us)
Darryl: If I said the name Deanne to you would you know who I was talking about?

Woman at the Table: Of course.

Darryl: (Laughing)

Woman at the table: What about her?

Each person at the table told their own story or corroborated each other's stories about Deanne. Not only was she known, but stories about her were a way to chit chat, to reminisce. In addition to the many stories about Deanne breaking social norms, the people at the table that night talked about her beautiful singing voice; they have walked into a courtyard or vestibule of post office boxes to hear her singing filling up the space. There were many different stories, all with similar themes of Deanne violating social norms, or Deanne being a skilled trickster. Deanne stands on the toilets, attempting to hide inside while the librarians lock up. Deanne is seen climbing in the

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church basement window and later found sleeping in the boiler room. Deanne takes a crap

between the toilets. Deanne doesn't pay 40 cents for copies at the library even though "everyone

knows she's rich."

When Darryl initiated conversation with the women at the table next to us, a woman

started telling her story about Deanne. Instead of listening Darryl attempted to steer the speaker's

description to fit within a certain trope image of 'real' homelessness, the bag-lady-with-a-cart.

> **Woman at the Table:** She would.... You know I worked at the Library for years,
> and so I was often the last one there in closing up, and she would often like try to
> go in the meeting room and figure that no one would see her.

> **Darryl:** With her cart.

> **Woman at the table:** Huh?

> **Darryl:** With her Cart?

> **Woman at the table:** I don't know. Anyway.

Through the items she carried with her, and her mobility practices she was the quintessential and

essentialized embodiment of a "homeless person". Darryl ended the Deanne section of our

conversation, by saying, "So, she's our most famous homeless person, and she's still alive"

(Darryl, In-Person interview). In addition to the essentialized characterization and her visible

presence as the 'famous' bag lady, an additional piece of (somehow) public knowledge

circulated through each conversation: her wealth. The consistent inclusion of her well-known but

unutilized wealth serves a specific function in the social imaginary of homelessness. Talk of this

wealth enables people to believe she didn't *have* to be homeless; that she chooses it. In the seven

months I traveled in and out of the area I never encountered Deanne. They say she comes and

goes. I believe she exists, but I never saw her. Her real existence isn't as important to me as the

role of the stories of her. Even as the attitude prevails that homelessness isn't really a problem in

the area, an entire table of people at dinnertime can rattle off a list of their encounters with a woman who experiences homelessness. This is done with great detail. The stories are told with a kind of affection and pride at her trickster attempts, alternating with a kind of disgust or scorn at the norms about hygiene or property that were violated.

Ed, the "infamous person" of a different town, was spoken about differently than Deanne was; with no affection and much more scorn. Key to the story of Ed is that he has a house. Everyone said they knew Ed had a house, yet he frequently was cited as an example of homelessness in the area.

> There's this guy that comes all the time and you probably will see him sitting on a bench right now. He's an older man. He has a house... ah and there is a young woman that now lives with him and takes care of him and cooks for him. Because she was homeless... ah I used to see her coming here to the health department to get birth control and checkups because she was ah… being out there. (Marie, In-Person Interview)

By "being out there" she later clarified that she meant Marie believed or had information that the woman was a sexworker. Ed and his girlfriend are associated with homelessness because of two reasons—because they panhandle, and because he has poor hygiene.

> **Marie:** the businesses across the way—the corner store, you know, it gives bad look to the place, and so... people don't like to smell him there standing there. Um, it's just like that. He was here... he comes in here, very often.
>
> **GWB:** He comes in here? Into the office?
>
> **Marie:** Yes, because he likes to talk a lot.

One librarian said Ed came into the library one day and she wouldn't let him use the computers because his pants were soiled with urine and she couldn't let him sit on the cloth seats. His girlfriend came back with his library card to take care of whatever he needed to take care of. The librarian told his girlfriend that she needed to pass the message on to him that he couldn't come

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back until he showered and had clean clothes. As the librarian was telling me this story a patron overheard and walked up to us, adding in that he too knows about Ed, and wanted to point out to me the corner that he usually stands on so I could go find him. He then added "but he does have a house you know." The story about Ed seems to hinge on these dualities that seem hard for people to reconcile—That he panhandles but has a house, that he has poor hygiene but has a house. His story is told to me as information I should know about if I want to know about homelessness in the area. Ed is the main character of these stories, not his girlfriend, who people understood to be homeless before she started dating him. She is always a secondary character in stories, despite evidencing more accurately the experience of unhoused people in the area. The stereotypical attributes often associated with street homelessness such as panhandling and poor hygiene make him central to a town-based narrative about homelessness even as he his housed.

In the Woods

> And what happens is in the spring, summer, people come up here that are homeless from there. And they come up here. And they live on the river. And they do their thing... you know, whatever, up here. Because there's a lot of woods to live in. (Linda, In-Person Interview)

Of the nine formerly or currently homeless people I did in-depth interviews with, three had slept in the woods as all or part of their experience of homelessness, and all of those people were able-bodied men. I heard second-hand accounts and saw documentation from service providers that male-female (heterosexual) couples living in the woods would occasionally seek out services. But I saw no evidence of single women living in the woods. The majority of people seeking emergency housing services at the Midpoint were not living in the woods, and the majority the nine primary informants did not use woods as a place to stay. As I traveled through the county during the summer months I saw itinerant travelers walking or sitting along the road

who had large sleeping packs and sometimes dogs with them. They were likely staying in the woods to some extent in combination with other sleeping tactics such as sleeping at festivals in tents, sleeping in transit, or sleeping in houses with acquaintances. In my interview with one traveler, Lynxster, he talked about sleeping in the woods or outside only as a last resort. He was much more likely to use his social skills to secure housing on the floor of an acquaintance, to hitch-hike or sleep on an overnight drive, or to pool funds with other travelers for a motel room (Lynxster, In-Person Interview).

Veterans are a second sub-population that likely lives in the woods in small numbers year round (Southard, 1997). One informant said when she worked at the Midpoint fifteen years ago she did outreach to Veterans living in the woods, and at that time there were perhaps three or four known individuals living in tents or lean-to's in the woods. Darryl talked about interfacing over the years with veterans who live in the woods, who he says don't like to interact with other people. Darryl is himself a Veteran, which increases the likelihood that a veteran living in the woods *might* talk to him or show him where they are staying. I asked directly for details such as where exactly he thinks homeless vets that lived in the woods lived; for example, do they live on private land or federal land? He said:

> A lot of them are within the sound of a gunshot or a large holler. They're that distant. So probably the closest campsites are maybe 500 to 1000 feet from one another, but most of them are farther than that. So I don't know. I have not known of any veterans that are living communally out there, but I know there are veterans that are living in community amongst themselves. They do watch after each other. As far as I know they do not steal from each other. But neither do they share that much either. (Darryl, Transcripts of interview)

When I interviewed the county Veterans Service Officer he said he didn't know of any veterans living in the woods. He had been contacted multiple times about a veteran who was unhoused or at risk of losing housing, but these people were not camping in the woods. The Midpoint also

kept a count of the number of veterans receiving services, and those numbers and their specific

circumstances did not seem linked to the woods.

Whether or not Darryl and others' accounts that veterans do or do not live in the woods

are *true* or not is not as telling as the fact that these accounts are offered with initial confidence.

It entirely possible that there are a couple of veterans living in the woods in the area that are not

connected to services, but the experience is likely a minority experience of homelessness in Hills

County. What is notable is that is offered up as one of the first explanations of homelessness and

housing insecurity in Hills County. There is speculation that people live in the woods,

embellished with details about how they live outside. This is offered without concrete evidence

that it's actually true. The fact that veterans were so frequently mentioned as examples of people

who are unhoused is what started to become significant. Veterans are a sub-population of people

who experience homelessness in the United States at disproportionally high rates. Invoking their

presence fits with this wider national focus on an existing and politically significant

phenomenon. But the way in which the national narrative of veterans is incorporated with the

mythology surrounding the woods as the appropriate place for homeless people is telling. The

woods are in some ways a catch-all for "I don't know."

Housed residents don't generally know where unhoused residents sleep. But, drawing on

national narratives as ways of knowing what homelessness is, they think homelessness is

sleeping rough, so they make the accurate correlation that sleeping rough in the area would

involve sleeping in the woods. This imaginary is returned to even if the housed resident

technically knew otherwise, such as happened when I spoke with former service provider who

helped people in housing crisis. The epistemology of homelessness as the experience of sleeping

rough overrides knowledge about other kinds of housing deprivation.

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Similarly, image of the young traveler hiking or hitch hiking on the side of the highway fills-in the imaginaries of housed people about who experiences homelessness in the county and what homelessness is. Travelers are highly visible, they are outsiders to the community, and they are traveling through. The imaginary that travelers and vets who don't want to be contacted are the vast majority of people who experience homelessness in the area enables housed residents to justify a diminished sense of collective responsibility about the problem. The narrative that people sleep in the woods are *really* homeless allows people to believe that "for a lot of people it's a choice." This sentiment about choice is one of the most frequent characterizations about homelessness I hear, and I hear it in both urban and rural contexts. When the imaginary of the woods is paired with the logic of choice, living in the woods makes a person un-findable and un-seeable. To a person who believes living in the woods implies choice, this would seem by design—people sleep in the woods so they can't be found. The woodlands are so vast and the population so sparse that outreach, accountability, or even the supposed "burden" of having to see homelessness in the community seem impossible or unnecessary.

Down the Mountain

The trajectory that housed residents imagine unhoused people in the area experience starts with living in the woods. But the next step in this trajectory is that people who live in the woods during warm months go down the mountain when cold weather arrived, or when they tired of sleeping in the woods and needed an overnight shelter. Linda described the perceived pattern of migration initiated by homelessness in this way:

> The way that it works in this county basically is this is not a county that's conducive of living homeless in the winter. So what happens is this: Um, if you are a resident and you become homeless. Then if you can't get resources to help

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you then you leave the county and you go to (one of two larger cities at a lower elevation)[2]. They both have homeless facilities there. (Linda, In-Person Interview)

Service providers recommend to clients that they leave the county and go to the shelters in these larger cities if the agency wasn't able to provide emergency assistance and didn't see other options for the person in the county. They would even offer to help find funds or strategize transportation options to get the person to the city. They said sometimes people took them up on this and left the area. But other times they offered this option the person needing housing never followed up to accept the offer of transport, or directly declined it.

Despite the county lacking an emergency overnight shelter, none of the inadequately housed people I interviewed said they would seek emergency overnight shelter in a different area if their current living situation stopped being viable. I explicitly asked Rochelle and Tim if they would go live with family located down the mountain if they lost their shelter again (which they were at critical risk of). They said they likely wouldn't because they thought of the area as their home and didn't want to live in the area down the mountain.

One informant, David, told me that during a previous period of homelessness, about a decade before, he did in fact go down the mountain to a slightly larger and warmer community. However, the primary factor for leaving Hills County was not climate or the availability of shelter services. He had become addicted to drugs, and he left the county to try to quit "like a man"— by breaking ties with his community, setting out alone, and sleeping rough. He ended up not getting sober, but rather becoming more addicted. He slept outside and scraped up money by collecting cans and doing odd jobs. As discussed earlier, Ilana went down the mountain in order

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[2] list of cities provided by participant has been omitted for confidentiality purposes

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to access a drug treatment facility, but was slated to return when the program was finished. In both of these cases where the informant spent some time "down the mountain" the motivating factor was not weather or climate, nor emergency overnight shelter. In the first case, there was a social motivating factor. David wanted to leave the community to distance himself from the community in Hills County; to set out alone with the hope of transforming himself. In the second case, the informant wanted to stay in the place she considered home. She was administratively required to go down the mountain in order to adhere to her treatment plan associated with parole, and to hopefully obtain long-term sobriety, but her absence did not fully disconnect her from the community. Her treatment down the mountain was paid for by the county, and she was slated to return to the county when her treatment program was over. It was administrative requirements that sent her down the mountain and administrative rules would require her to be back.

The imaginary that people who experience homelessness eventually migrate out of the area is deeply linked to a perception that people who experience homelessness in the area aren't really from there or don't really have any strong ties to the area. Embedded within this imaginary is the idea that housed residents aren't really responsible or accountable for these people (who were just passing through or unwanted parts of the community anyway). Again, an urban-based epistemology of what homelessness, in this case shelter based homelessness and sleeping rough, informs the imaginary used by housed people to make sense of the phenomenon in the context of rural Hills County.

At the Midpoint

The Midpoint is a non-profit organization that administers a wide-ranging suite of services to the community, including anti-violence education, advocacy for youth in foster care, and nutrition programs. Until recently this organization was the only organization in the area to

provide emergency assistance to people who are at-risk or have lost housing, but shortly before I

began my research in the area the organization lost its emergency housing funding. Residents

facing housing crisis who are connected to the county via mental health or addiction services or

are on probation or parole might be eligible for a small amount of emergency housing services

through that specific county agency. Navigating the county system to seek this emergency

assistance was often facilitated by the Midpoint. Staff at the Midpoint are committed to

providing emergency housing assistance, but the loss of emergency housing funded limited the

ability of the Midpoint to meet the demand of emergency housing needs.

While the Midpoint provided a great number of services despite limited resources they

were not able to meet the demand of people needing emergency or long term housing assistance.

However, the perception in the community was that the Midpoint, as the primary service for

people who experience a housing crisis, was able to solve these problems sufficiently. An

informant, Gretchen, said she just didn't see homelessness in her community for the most part.

But she did see that sometimes people were "on the edge." I asked her to elaborate:

> **GWB:** In what other way do you tend to see that people are on the edge? Besides
> coming here? {To the Food Program}
>
> **Gretchen:** Well, they just look like they're in need. Or they'll tell us…But as far as
> seeing people around town. I have to confess. Maybe I'm not looking hard enough, but I
> don't... tend to see the people that look obviously like they don't have a place for the
> night. And the Midpoint here does an amazing job, helping people out. We did have, I'm
> just remembering, a couple of years ago, one woman who arrived in town. It was raining
> very, very hard. And she came to the Food Program and told us afterward that she had
> no place to go, and so um... it was {a person who volunteered at the Food Program} put
> her up in a motel, and the next day we were able to coordinate with the Midpoint some
> assistance for her. But um, it isn't as prevalent in our eyes here. (Gretchen, In Person
> Interview)

In this one instance Gretchen does interact with a person she understands to be homeless. As

Gretchen perceives it, the combination of the generosity of one housed-citizen with one

connection with the Midpoint is able to solve the problem of this person's homelessness. By passing the hope of resolution and responsibility of service off to the Midpoint housed residents are able to believe that the housing crisis has been addressed for that person. She does not know how long the woman received emergency housing assistance, or if that assistance enabled her to secure more permanent housing.

Functions of the Imaginary

Social imaginaries of homelessness in Hills County are informed by a national-level lens through which homelessness in general is represented and made knowable. The extent to which homelessness in the United States is discursively linked to the urban environment and its architectural and institutional designs seems, at this point, almost inseparable in the discourse and imaginaries of most Americans. The kind of derogatory, technical, and descriptive terms used to organize or indicate populations of people who experience homelessness give a glimpse of this urban–biased characterization. Think of the images that arise from derogatory terms used in place of inadequately housed or homeless such as: bag lady, hobo, garbage picker, street kid, or panhandler. Urbanity is also intertwined with the words used to describe the spatial locations of homelessness such as tent-city, the salvation army, the soup kitchen, the shelter, skid row/the tenderloin/the piers. The extent to which urbanity and homelessness have been fused together creates in many ways a naturalized set of urban characters and sites that culminate in a national imaginary of what homelessness *is*.

This naturalized urban characterization of homelessness then makes the experience of being unhoused in rural areas almost unspeakable as 'homelessness'. So, for example, couch surfing or living in a garage are called those names more so than they would be characterized as homelessness. When the word homelessness is used, rural housed people attempt to translate the

urban experience of sleeping on the street or in a shelter to the rural environment. This enables the imaginary that people who are homeless must only live in the woods, seek homeless shelters elsewhere, or move about as hitch hikers to emerge. Housed residents imagine people move on to other communities or successfully end homelessness through services at the Midpoint. This imaginary is a way to make sense of their inability to see or imagine people in their communities as struggling with homelessness or housing inadequacy. The epistemological construction of homelessness within a very narrow range of experiences as well as the specifically urban-biased form of these experiences makes the problem of homelessness in this rural community largely un-seeable, un-knowable, and for some people, un-imaginable.

The epistemological construction of homelessness as urban homelessness enables rural (and urban) housed residents to see homelessness as not-a-problem in this rural community. The imaginaries of "in the woods," "down the mountain," and "at the midpoint" enable housed residents to literally not see and therefore not be compelled to deal with homelessness and housing inadequacy as a problem in the community. Underlying each of these imaginaries is a sense of a homeless person who is deserving of services (and will, therefore, receive them) and a homeless person who chooses to be homeless. The social imaginaries of real homelessness perform an additional function that needs to be named in order for people who experience homelessness and housing inadequacy in the community to be seen as co-present members of the community. The imaginaries of chosen-ness, migration, and available paths to easy resolution enable the minimization of the very deep, entrenched, and chronic problem of economic (and its related social) depression in the community.

The decline of the logging industry and its related jobs, followed by the construction boom and bust associated with "the Great Recession" has led to population loss and change in

community identity. Long-time residents of the area have seen a loss of collective county revenue, loss of personal assets and wealth, emptying-out of community businesses and services, and rise in addiction and unemployment. Homelessness and inadequate housing tends to correlate to any one of these trends. Like many rural communities, residents of Hills County have seen a fundamental change in the economy and employment. Even the jobs considered well-paying and stable (because they're not seasonal), such as jobs working for the county, are unstable due to fluctuating revenue. These jobs tend to be worked by women who have increasingly taken the role of primary breadwinners in a community that previously centered on hard manual labor and men took pride in being the primary breadwinner (Sherman, 2009). The workers of moderate waged county jobs are now the "well off" people of the community. These residents are in community with people whose houses in foreclosure, a large number of people who rely on rental and other government assistance to get bye, and a community reckoning with high proportions of people using and addicted to drugs, alcohol, and prescription pills.

When asked about how they think their community is doing, many informants laid out a picture of a region-wide downward spiral. They named the experiences of stress, depression, and hopelessness as widespread in the community. These informants believe stress and depression drive people to self-medicate with substances, leads to higher rates of divorce, breakups, child neglect or abuse, and an overall sense that the community has little hope of changing. In this new social context, in which such a large number of people in the community experience financial hardship, there are merely tiers of insecurity. To acknowledge the full range of experiences that constitute the lived realities of homelessness and housing insecurity in the community would push housed residents to recognize the proximity of their tier of insecurity to those that are inadequately housed. Even if a 45 year old county employee doesn't imagine she will lose her

job, savings, or house in the short term, she might imagine that the newly-single teenage mother who lives in her parent's garage could feasibly be her daughter; the young addict couch surfing with friends could be her son, or the elderly man living in an dilapidated trailer her uncle. Seeing and acknowledging the pervasiveness and complexity of homelessness and inadequate housing in this community means reckoning with the deep economic and its related social challenges in the community; challenges that most residents, housed and unhoused, feel powerless to change. They have little faith in state, federal, and oftentimes local government entities to respond in ways that would change the conditions in the area. This pessimism stems from historical actions, such as the federal forestry bans that gave the final blow to the diminishing timber economy or the lack of investment from the state in an era of intensified wealth in the major cities.

Skepticism about the will of the state to bolster the community is evidenced in a number of ways. For example, many people told me that if the state cared about the economy of the community then Cal Trans, the state authority that repairs the highways, would hire labor locally to fix these local repairs. Instead, multiple people told me Cal Trans hires crews from outside the county. In my time driving in and out of the county, highway repairs were being done almost every pass up or down the major highways. A local crew performing all the work in the county would be a fairly stable job for a handful of residents. Disillusionment with the state is also clear in the form of visible public participation in the secession movement, which explicitly charges the state with taxing local citizens and businesses with little to show in the form of re-investment in the area.

Conclusion: Real Homelessness

A handful of housed participants offered up their hopes for what impact this research project could have in their community. Their hopes, offered up independently, were that results

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of the research could reduce the NIMBY attitudes they feel predominate in response to social problems in the community. They cite many decades of community resistance to long-term housing in the town center of the county seat for marginalized sub-populations such as people with mental illness, developmental disabilities, or addicts in recovery. By identifying social imaginaries at work I have been able to parse out the elements that contribute to housed residents not seeing or talking about the range of experiences of inadequate housing in the community. These imaginaries draw on epistemological narratives circulated at the national scale, which serve to enable local narratives about real homelessness; the infamous homeless person and the imagined trajectory of into the woods, down the mountain, or to the service center translate national narratives into the local rural context. These imaginaries deflect the need for local accountability and distance housed residents from reckoning with widespread economic insecurity. The way belonging, exclusion, and the distribution of housing in Hills County operate give a sense of how collective resources and housing are allocated. In the next chapter I highlight divisions in belonging and exclusion, and consider these divisions in relationship to the way small-town communities are supposed to operate.

Chapter 5: Rural Exceptionalism

When politicians in the United States campaign for national office the campaign trail is punctuated by scheduled events that are specifically quaint—presidential candidates are said to "host a town hall" and "chat with constituents at a local diner." For presidential candidates these stops aren't coincidental—"everyone's gotta eat!" They're tightly scheduled and constituents are invited to come to the town hall. These kinds of events draw upon origin stories of democracy in the United States, but function very differently than small-town political town hall meetings in place at the founding of the United States (Zimmerman, 1999; Gustafson, 2011). John Dewey describes the origin story in this way: "American Democratic polity was developed out of genuine community life, that is, association in local and small centers where industry was mainly agricultural and where production was carried on mainly with hand tools" (1927, p. 111). A famous Norman Rockwell painting called "Freedom of Speech" (1943) shows a white man in a working-class plaid shirt and stretched out leather jacket standing and speaking in a room of white men wearing suits and ties that look up at him with rapt attention.

Figure 2: Freedom of Speech

"Freedom of Speech" by Norman Rockwell (1943)

This painting represents a quintessentially American fantasy of mixed-class democratic equality; the possibility of equal public participation through the idealized democratic form. This is what Frank Bryan (2010) calls "real democracy" through face-to-face deliberation and political decision making of a political body for the entire municipality (Bryan, 2010, p. 4). This kind of town hall democracy can be seen represented as a central feature of the lives of characters that live in a fictional Connecticut town in the popular early-2000's show *The Gilmore Girls*. The main character, Loreli, shows up faithfully to each town hall meeting often bringing snacks to watch as if it's a spectator sport. As the show develops she is occasionally at the heart of a conflict discussed in the town hall meeting. There may be yelling and impassioned speeches, but by the end of each episode the reciprocal relationships between citizens usually force an

amicable resolution of the problem. For example, after her new restaurant conflicts with the

business of a restaurant in town she loses access to her favorite diner because the owner is angry.

Because she can't cook, she can't eat if she doesn't make amends with the diner owner. She

makes a concession in her demands, proposes a compromise, and tranquility is restored.

Figure 3: Gilmore Girls at a Town Hall Meeting

Two main characters on the "Gilmore Girls," chatting about boredom
at a town hall meeting. (Epenson, 2003)

While this is a fictional representation of town-hall democracy, it draws on widely held cultural

narratives about small towns. I name this idea—that small-towns are still the vessels for 'real

democracy' where everybody-knows-your-name face-to-face real-talk is imagined to solve

problems concerning the collective—*rural exceptionalism.*

Rural Exceptionalism is made up of two assumptions. The first assumption is that rural

areas, because of small populations and localized town centers, are the natural sites for face-to-

face interactions through which difficult public problems can be solved. The second assumption

is that because this face-to-face "real-talk" is possible, power differentials such as race,

immigrant status, ability, sexuality, or economic class are minimized or even neutralized within

the democratic form of the small town. When they are not, the small town is thought to be an un-

ideal place; it is a town with a problem. In what follows I trace the way that rural exceptionalism

emerges as democracy transitions from the town-hall to representative democracy with the westward-colonization and industrialization of the US. The spatial relationship of the small town is tasked with holding the ideals of small-town democratic practice, even if it does and perhaps cannot do so. I show specific ways residents of Hills County feel frustrated or disillusioned with their community because hierarchies of belonging and exclusion are at work, and because the community is unable to adequately support those who experience housing deprivation and poverty. Ultimately I argue that rural exceptionalism detracts from recognizing the wider regional distributions and other state-and-nation scale inequalities that inform housing deprivation and exclusion in rural areas such as Hills County.

Care for your neighbor

At the heart of the critique of rural exceptionalism is the expectation that rural communities function differently than more urban communities because they are anchored by interpersonal care-for-your-neighbor practices and therefore less in need of other supportive mechanisms. This is not to say that these practices of care-for-your neighbor (or even care for the stranger) do not ever happen. Take, for example, Olivia's enthusiasm about Hills County because of the kindness and care she received from strangers.

> **GWB:** Okay. So what do you think it is about this time, this community or this time in your life that makes you feel like you can move in to be part-of.
>
> **Olivia:** The people.
>
> **GWB:** So the people in this town feel different than in other towns?
>
> **Olivia:** Yeah. They care. The small town I lived in before? It was up in Washington State. It had a general store that was part of a gas station that was part of your fabric store. And next door they had a post-office that was also the meat locker. Okay. Ah, because you'd slaughter your own cows up there. Cows and pigs and that sort of thing. There was one restaurant that just opened up. And i think there were 3 bars. That's it. That was the whole town.

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GWB: Right. So in many ways this small town is actually a pretty big town.

Olivia: It's a pretty big town It's a pretty big town, you know. But the people, you know, that's what makes it. I love it. (In-Person Interview)

When I spoke with Olivia she had lived in the community for a little over a month. From what she described she did experience a significant amount of care-for-the-stranger in the community, both interpersonally and through her ability to access and gain valuable resources from administrative publics. She is comparing this experience with her experience many decades ago living in an even smaller town. The support she received in Hills County is in stark contrast to the lack of care she received while unhoused in San Laves. For Olivia as well as Bonnie, who received relatively quick inter-personal and administrative community support when her mobile home was destroyed, care for your neighbor was an effective complement to administrative care. In many ways they were inter-related and both women were able to secure safe shelter in a relatively quick manner. However, for the rest of the unhoused people I spoke with, care-for-your-neighbor was anemic if not non-existent. Care for your neighbor is temperamental and based largely on how your neighbor feels about keeping you in the community and investing in you as a person. Normative values about what makes a neighbor worthy of a helping hand are more likely to exclude those with criminal or addiction histories, for example. Housed people and more middle-class people are more likely to be able to provide care that makes an impact in the form of funds, technical assistance, or social connections that have the ability to change circumstances in a significant way.

Joan Tronto (2013) advocates for a shift in values that centers care, not market logics, as the foundation of democratic political practice. She argues that instead of focusing on distribution (who gets what, when, how) in democratic society, we instead focus on how we

assign responsibilities of care as a way to think about political life. She shows how current ideas about care (and democracy) misunderstand 'freedom' as 'choice' which prevents reckoning with care as an issue of justice. Reformulating democratic processes to center the politics of care requires changing the citizen identity from primarily autonomous to reciprocal. It also requires shifting resources so those care responsibilities can be executed; for example, it is not enough to designate that the state be in charge of educating children. Public schools must be adequately funded to do so. Rural exceptionalism hinges on interpersonal care offsetting the lack of state resources without compensating that labor. It also is a *narrative* of interpersonal care, not the actual assigning of responsibility of care. The idea that the care is or should be happening stands in for the actual care. When this care doesn't happen, blame is directed at a supposed other (the neighbor who didn't care) instead of the wider political entities that assigned the responsibility and resources for care to no one. In the context of economic disinvestment and spatial distance from sites with resources the need to actually care for your neighbor increases while the capacity to do so diminishes.

Density and the Democratic Form

While some small towns in New England still hold town hall meetings to make political decisions, town hall meeting as deliberative practice in the United States faded as settlers in the Midwest and South occupied larger tracts of land and formed municipalities not centered around a town-square. Frank Bryan (2010) argues "urban industrialization played havoc with town meeting. In the south (Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut), where town meeting had first taken hold, urbanization was chewing up the towns and the potential for sustained real democracy" (p. 31-32). The town hall meeting functioned with whatever efficiency it was able to function specifically because of the spatial-cultural makeup of New England towns. There was

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close enough proximity to walk or ride horses quickly into a town center where a meeting could be held, but had low enough populations for a small enough collective to deliberate and be managed at the 1-1 level.

Figure 4: The Town Green
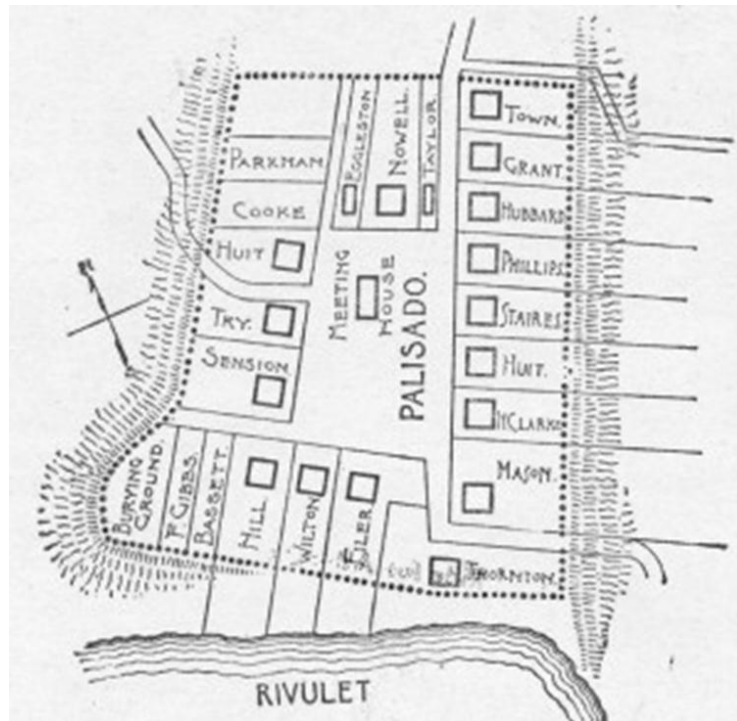
The original plan for the Town of Windsor, Connecticut. Note the meeting house in the very center of the town green, surrounded by homes. Windsor Historical Society. Windsor, CT. (Cited in Gagnon, 2012)

These face-to-face and nearby social-geographic characteristics of New England towns came to characterize the spatial relations of ideal American democracy. However, as industrialization, westward expansion, and more dispersed land relationships emerged in the settlement of regions outside New England, the spatial organization of the town center served as a proxy for that practice. The downtown strip of small towns are often modeled spatially and

visually after this New England model of town settlement, but the Town Hall meeting was not the political format. The proximity is designed in the center of small towns, where the demarcation of a municipality and the proximity are thought to produce the environment for to ideal rural cultural practice. The town hall is associated with rural political practice even as most rural communities outside of New England function via representative democracy in the form of town councils, mayors, county commissioners, etc. Bryan (2010) cited the decline of New England town halls in areas of New England that industrialized, and in the development of representative democracy as the political form of the newly industrial city of Boston. This rise of representative democracy in city of Boston and fixing of town-hall democracy in small towns in New England have anchored ideas about how political practices might function in each urban or rural region. A city like Boston would require a representative democracy—there are just too many people to fit into a town hall. In the densely populated city, where people within the municipality might not know each other, let alone see each other from day to day, heated conflict is largely expected. While there's lip-service paid to the idea that representative democracy will resolve the conflicts of society in a reasonable manner, anger about being misrepresented often bubbles up.

Take, for example, a very visible conflict that took place recently within the City Hall in the urban city I live in at the time of writing—Alameda, California. The cost of housing in the San Francisco Bay Area has skyrocketed in the last three years, and landlords have been aggressively evicting tenants and raising rents by drastic amounts. The City of Alameda does not have rent control, and people are being evicted and priced out of the city in large numbers. When the town council planned a meeting to discuss these rent increases, landlords came early and filled most of the seats in the room and filling the speaking schedule. They dominated the

speaking time at the two hour meeting. One person advocating for renters got in a physical altercation with a city official as she tried to move into the room to vie for speaking time, and police responded by throwing her to the ground, bloodying her face. The representative model of democracy used in the city gestures toward the historic town-hall style democracy that the nation was founded on. They, like most city governments, planned a meeting with the ability for the public to give comment to the representative council members. However, unlike town hall style democracy this meeting of representative democracy differed in some fundamental ways. Instead of the assembled people deliberating face-to-face the representative town-hall chambers face the podium to the city council members seated up front. Citizens are entitled to speak before a vote is taken, and are able to directly vote on the matter at hand. Instead of extending the meeting to allow all people to speak, leaders of this meeting set a firm time limit and renting constituents were not granted equal speaking time.

The techniques of public deliberation have in many ways adapted to representative democracy. In the first picture below, we can see that the renter's coalition and tenants union came prepared for visible, symbolic protest in the form of a tent city on the lawn of city hall.

Figure 5: Protest at Alameda City Council in November, 2015

1. Protester sets up tent in action outside Alameda City Hall (Skinner, 2015).	2. Protesters in the hall outside the Alameda Council Chambers (Oakland Tenants Union, 2015).

| 3. A protester in confrontation with police about access to the council chambers of City Hall in Alameda, CA (Dennis & Muhammad, 2015). | 4. Police arrest the protester after a physical confrontation between the protester and a city official about unequal access to speaking time (Wang, 2015). |

Renters came prepared—they predicted that as part of a city run by representative democracy that were unlikely to have their opinions represented by the representative leaders. They needed to persuade those leaders to consider their perspective. Public protest and critical masses were two techniques used in attempts to be recognized by council representatives as constituents whose opinions should be considered. In this case, the extent to which the landlords were listened to and the renters were not was particularly lopsided, adding to the anger of protesters. The second picture shows the hall outside of the city council's chambers filled with constituents holding Renters' Coalition signs. The third picture shows a constituent arguing with police, and the fourth shows her bleeding while being arrested after a physical altercation with one of the city representatives over access to space at the meeting.

Of course, the Mayor could have run the meeting differently in order to reduce the tensions about access that surrounded the meeting. Residents of Alameda were somewhat surprised to hear that protesters were arrested at a city council meeting about rent, in part because the City of Alameda is often considered a smaller, quainter city. Alameda sits just outside of Oakland, a city that has frequent protests and a very organized network advocating for under-represented constituents that engage in direct action hold the city accountable. While the

bleeding and arrests at the council meeting were unusual for Alameda, in general the conflict in this city adheres to the way contentious issues are deliberated in cities in the U.S. Renters were represented by organizations, such as the Renter's Coalition, in addition to non-membership concerned citizens. Renters prepared an action in which some people protested outside the city hall, some were prepared to speak to the city council, and some were expected to be a visible presence in the council chambers. This example of a public disagreement over housing and economic issues in this city evidences how collective disagreement is expected to be resolved via certain formations within the public body that petitions representative democracy. Landlords understood these formations and attempted to get prime early spots speaking to the representative council. Renters understood these formations and were angry when they didn't secure equal ability to formally petition the representatives. They understood the economic/political dynamics of the city well enough to presume that they were going to have to have a very strong showing, both in speaking time and through public protest, to have their concerns taken seriously before the council.

Great communities come in small containers

John Dewey (1927) argued that under westward expansion and industrialization, town-meeting practices and ideas splintered into the newer formations of public institutions that mediate the local and the state. "We have inherited, in short, local town-meeting practices and ideas. But we live and act and have our being in a continental national state. We are held together by non-political bonds, and the political forms are stretched and legal institutions patched in an ad hoc and improvised manner to do the work they have to do. Political structures fix the channels in which non-political, industrialized currents flow" (Dewey, 1927, p. 113-114). The town hall meeting might manage local issues well, but with the colonization of the United States

and the economic turn to industrialization, what characterizes "the local" is increasingly informed by the state and national scales. Dewey then explains how networks of communication and the technologies that enable them, including newspapers and railways, became central to the interaction and exchange of ideas through which a system of public culture influences the governing of the state. However, in the institutionalization of public culture in which "stratification of society into immemorial classes within which each person performed his stated duties" stripped the Public from public culture (1927, p. 116-117). Public practices are transformed into administrative bodies, interest groups, and experts who engage in public disputes close at the hand of policymakers who are far removed from the interests of everyday, largely disinterested people. This transformation is, for Dewey, the epitome of our failed modern (and now postmodern) public.

Dewey sees two linked pathways to recuperating the public, better communication to create a shared experience for all members of the public body and a smaller container within which to constitute a public body; "Our concern at this time is to state how it is that the machine age in developing the Great Society has invaded and partially disintegrated the small communities of former times without generating a Great Community" (Dewey, 1927, p. 126-127). This small container, "small communities in former times", is often imagined to still exist in small-towns within idyllic notions of rural life. In the small container, intra-local issues such as should a landlord provide access to rental housing to his neighbor, regardless of ability status, would be resolved with a bent towards equal access. The landlord would not be disinterested, nor would he be able to hide behind the dispersed accountability of the administrative or even representative form. The small container is thought to enable face-to-face interaction, which

would be accompanied by social pressure to treat your fellow man reasonably; to hear her out like the working-class citizen in the Rockwell painting is heard by his middle-class peers.

Small rural towns are still thought to be places where grievances can be resolved in the small container, even if they use the form of representative democracy. As large cities emerged in New England and across the country, small-town democracy as part of American cultural identity was not lost completely. When the town hall meeting is still happening, it's held up as an object of nationalist pride, a unique remnant of a purely American political practice. This white-washed meeting house in Phelam, Massachusetts is celebrated as the site of the longest-running public town hall meeting in the U.S. While the town only has one meeting a year in the meeting house these days, it stands as a symbol that the purest form of American democracy is still alive and well. Small town residents such as the residents of Phelam are tasked with preserving it.

Figure 6: The Meeting House
Meeting House in the town of Phelam, MA. "(B)uilt in 1743, is the oldest town hall in continuous use in the nation and is still the site of the Fall Town Meeting, often referred to as the purest form of democracy practiced widely in New England communities." (Town of Phelam, 2015)

The small container of the communities in Hills County does not result in a "great community." In fact, the very small-ness of its small town culture can reduce the ability for members of the public to interact with robust generosity towards fellow man. For example, when I interviewed Rochelle and Tim I offered to talk within inside an almost-empty pizza shop. They declined, saying they'd feel more comfortable talking on the sidewalk because there were people in the pizza shop who they wouldn't like to overhear us. In a town as small as Rivertown, being overheard is more likely to have negative consequences. The distance of communicative chains between people is quite short—the manager at the pizza shop is likely to know the motel manager down the street who Rochelle and Tim were in conflict with. The consequences of being known, visible, or overheard can be quite serious when a person has a marginalized experience such as poverty, disability, or being a person of color in a largely white community. In the Rockwell era a large range of people not considered white, male, propertied were explicitly excluded from formal democratic practice. They were also subject to exclusion from or harsh treatment within the collective spaces and benefits of society. The legacies of formal and informal exclusion have been the central concern of public culture theorists concerned with how minoritarian communities engage in counter-public participation (Warner, 2005; Fraser, 1992; Benhabib, 1992). These kinds of exclusions operate in Hills County as well, though generally without the critical mass or chains of communication that would enable populations of people with disabilities or people living in poverty to engage the normative public through sub-cultural public practice. In the next section I documented how people witnessed or experienced exclusion based on economic class, race, criminality, and (dis)ability in Hills County. The demarcations of inclusion and exclusion show some of the specific ways that rural exceptionalism is a fantasy, not the actual practice, in this rural community. In outlining the demarcations of belonging, I

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argue that anger or frustration about these hierarchies is in informed in part by rural exceptionalism.

Divisions and Exclusions

There are multiple ways in which people articulated a perception of valued and devalued members of Hills County. These distinctions were mostly articulated along class-based lines. In this case class refers to both economic social class and the managerial class of people that are in charge of the collective bodies that re-distribute collective resources. Insider/outsider distinctions also fractured along the lines of able-bodied status, and along the lines of race. The police in one town were said to intimidate and profile people based on race and perceived shelter status. While there are other marginalized populations, such as LGBTQ and indigenous people, in the county, I highlight the dividing lines of us/them that were articulated to me by participants. Generally I had to explicitly ask the participants who exactly they were talking about when they talked about "them" or "the powers that be." The majority of distinctions prioritized class and able-bodied status in participants' analysis of community divisions. A service administrator, Cynthia, described the us/them split as a class split between laborers/unemployed/poor people and white-collar workers in a way that was unique in that it was presented from a neutral or outsider perspective:

> The few board of supervisors meetings I've gone to, that's the impression I get. So... yeah. There's some sort of class differential that goes on in this town that appears unspoken, that I consistently hear that "us vs. them" statement being said, you know. From both ends! From people coming here to get food vouchers to people in these muckety-muck meetings. So where is that coming from? I don't get that because the muckety-mucks are saying we're here to get these programs in place to help these guys get the food bank vouchers, and the food bank vouchers are saying well we want to do something better with our lives but (laughing) they won't help. (laughing) I don't know! I don't know where the disconnect is. And I can't get stuck in that. (Cynthia, In-Person Interview)

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Cynthia's description of how us/them operates within community relations is in one way just a discription—noticing that "us/them" language is used by people are the decision makers in "muckety-muck" meetings as well as by the people who rely on the distribution of resources through service agencies, such as food vouchers for the local food bank. However, this description of the operations of us/them flattens the power imbalances between different actors in the collective life of Hills County. While us/them is a distinction that evidences a break in identity, the break occurs along class lines that matter. The experience of being an "us" as a collective decision maker vs. an "us" as people that rely on the distribution of aid by others are significantly different positions of power. Cynthia's equation of us/them as interchangeable flattens out this power differential, as if it were merely something that people said and felt, and not an indication of the articulation of power imbalances. She then says "I can't get stuck in that". She is the administrator of an organization that gathers resources from county, state, federal, and non-governmental funding sources that then delivers aid and services to people in need—the "them" to the town decision makers. She clearly distances herself from the town decision makers, who she calls the "muckety-mucks." However, she invokes the culture of poverty (O'Connor, 2002; Leacock, 1971) discourse in expressing frustration that recipients of services won't help themselves.

She seems to understand herself as merely an administrator, a kind of neutral observer that shuffles money into services and vouchers and then passes them on to people. This illustrates, as Willse (2015) argues, the impossibility of administrative service organizations to advocate as effective representatives of poor people to the decision makers of the local political body. Dempsey (2011) identifies a myriad of ways that non-governmental organizations promote themselves as representing the interests of clients, but have a variety of competing interests that

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often compromise their ability to do so. Cynthia's job relies on maintaining relationships with managers who are potential funding sources in addition to serving clients, and her ambiguity reflects this tension. She sees the class rift and positions herself neutrally between them. While I know that she thinks of herself as an advocate to these decision making bodies on behalf of the organization's aid recipients, in this conversation discursive tensions about class are neutralized and she does not critically interrogate this split. It is presented as a phenomenon, a problem in that a split exists, but not primarily a problem of unequal distribution of wealth and collective resources. Cynthia seems frustrated *that* the rift exists, indicating that people on both sides of the rift should somehow reasonably interact with each other. The class conflict is minimized or ignored, but the discursive conflict between managers and the poor is a wider problem of community relations.

Cathy lives in Riverton, outside the county seat. She described an us/them split in terms of racism, saying that her Black son had to leave the area because police were often pulling him over or coming to the house to question him for crimes that he was never charged with and never committed. She also said people with disabilities are discriminated against in the housing rental market. She said she was once denied rental housing because her former landlord told her potential landlord that he shouldn't rent to Cathy because she was disabled and wouldn't be able to live in the house she had applied to rent, even though her disability didn't prevent her from living there. She said, "It's not fair the way they treat people, the disabled up here. Or even the low income. They figure, well we can screw you over. Screw you. You're not worth it, you know, you're low income. That's their attitude. If you don't make money they don't even want you in their clique, you know" (Cathy, In-Person Interview). I asked her to clarify who specifically was the "them" in us/them:

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GWB: Um, so in Rivertown, is there a split? Like who is.... who is the people in power?

Cathy: Well, okay. The people in power don't give a shit.

GWB: Is it like... landlords? Are they all wealthier people?

Cathy: Well the ones that are well off, yeah. Are the ones that are landlords. There are a few that aren't well off that have a tendency to be real kind to people, but then they'll… It's not the landlord. The tenant fu*ks them over and screws up the place so bad they don't want to rent again. Because they make a bad name for all renters. And that happens anywhere you go. I mean but they... The tendency up here is if they've screwed up a landlord, they'll close the place up and leave it empty. And that's available housing, damnit! And not all of us are like that! (banging table) (Cathy, In-Person Interview)

In this particular conversation she both names landlords as a class of people that treat poorer people badly, but then amends it to distinguish between two types of landlords: landlords that don't take care of their property, give notice to tenants for no reason, or keep their money with inflated charges and landlords that seem to be nice and fair.

She sees that within this dynamic between renters and owners there are renters that also don't respect landlords' properties, which makes her angry because it then "gives a bad name" to all renters such as herself. She needs renters to have access to rental properties with the fair landlords, but the landlords stop renting because it's not worth it if their property is damaged. She first understands herself within the group of 'them' as the poorer renters within the class hierarchy, but then makes a second distinguishing category within renters. She falls into the category of renters that respect rental properties, and there's a separate population that does not, giving renters like her a bad name. This distinction draws on rural exceptionalism, in that landlords, are described as a 'clique'. Instead of a class of people, they are described as a small exclusive group within a larger group. A clique within a high school would be made up of a small group of people that are known by the rest of the high school class, for example. So in

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many ways the fact that landlords are people known within the community, and known to be exclusive is part of a narrative of rural exceptionalism, not just class hierarchies of ownership and renting. Within the sub-population of renters Cathy distinguishes herself as a good renter, in comparison with bad renters who soil her reputation by association. Renters in a large city might also easily describe themselves as "good" renters who suffer from the poor reputation of "bad" renters that encourage landlords to make strict rules. However, in a community as small as Riverton, reputation matters a lot. It matters not just in the general sense, but in a very specific way because there are a limited number of landlords. A bad reputation may quickly be known to the landlord clique and Cathy would be faced with no housing options.

David experiences the stigma around criminality, and particularly the sex-offense crime he committed, is a deep chasm within the community that he does not feel will change anytime soon. He had been applying for work for many months. He applied to every open position he was qualified for and not had one job offer.

> I mean I can't really change the bigotry or anything like that, and I get it because I was the same way before I went to prison. I was the same as everyone else. You know, I hated on most types of people who had those types of crimes and stuff and this... this is just how it goes. People never see the people once you have that on you. It's like the mark of Cain, you know. You're just labeled that way. (David, In-Person Interview)

He sees doing paid work and living within the community without committing any more crimes as the way to gain community acceptance. "So I have to do that and I have to show them that's who I am you know. Because right now, they'll probably never see me as me. They'll probably see me as like, what's on the paper. Like this guy, you know. And it's an emotionless thing, you know" (David, In-Person Interview). While David committed a crime that has particularly deep social stigma attached to it, many people within the county are on probation and parole.

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Employers all over the country use a felony or other criminal convictions as initial criteria via which to make the first cut in a large pool of applicants. In Hills County there is a particularly high rate of unemployment, so physical labor jobs such as those David is applying to are likely to have many applicants for each position. The terms surrounding his sex offense require that he disclose the specifics of his sex offense to an employer before he's hired, in addition to checking any "felony" box on a rote application. David's particular crime makes it much more difficult to be seen "as me" and not his crime. Stigma around criminal conviction is one way that "good" and "bad" community members are distinguished in general. It's also an additional barrier to employment in a region with already minimal opportunities for stable paid work. However, as the next section shows, race and housing status are likely to inform interactions with police.

Marie, a Hispanic program administrator that lives in Grandmont, named the police as representative arms of the "powers that be" who harassed and regulated the movement of people based on racism and anti-homelessness or anti-migrant practices. She articulated this as part of telling me about publicly visible travelers that move through town hitchhiking and stopping in town for a short time for rest or to shop. No other informants specifically cited police harassment of unhoused people in any other town or area of the county.

> **Marie:** They don't last... I tell you the police they are on top of them just yesterday afternoon I'm passing by the bridge and there is this man you can see he's dreadlocks, you know, like this big. He's white, young; barely 30's? And he had a dog, and I don't know if he was wearing a top, I think he had his pants, I guess his shirt was tucked into his pocket. But you know, there was the police. [Information omitted for anonymity] And they had him right there and they're questioning him. You can tell that they're asking him "what are you doing here?" "Where are you going?"
>
> **GWB:** Uh huh. So he was getting sort of messed with by the police just for being there and looking like an itinerant...

Marie: Yeah, they don't let them stay here too long. You know, they find they see them they right away you know start getting on them so they can move away and get whatever they need to go.

GWB: Ok. That's interesting. Do you find that's true in the other towns?

Marie: I don't think so! You know I see it here. I think I've only seen it here.

GWB: Because I haven't heard that in any of my other... interviews.

Marie: I think I've only seen it here because they do the same thing with the Hispanic... that's why they move away, so....

Marie then told me a story about when her niece, who was visiting from Mexico and driving Marie's car, was stopped by the police. A peer recognized Marie's car and came in the office to tell Marie something had happened. Marie came running up to where her niece was being interrogated by the police who told Marie that her niece didn't "have her papers" despite having a driver's license from Mexico. "I'm like "do we need to carry our papers?!" (voice changes to imitate deeper vocal range) "Well she's, I don't think she's legal that she's driving" (Marie, In-Person Interview). Marie told these stories together as a way to show that the police in Grandmont, like many police forces, regulated belonging based on race as well as class, and use similar tactics of intimidation to make itinerant and Hispanic people feel unwelcome in the town.

Police intimidation of Hispanic, Black, and itinerant people evidence that rural exceptionalism is not working, but it is also a way that rural exceptionalism keeps working. Rural exceptionalism is predicated on an idea that members of a community can and should interact with each other face-to-face to resolve problems. If a population is seen as incommensurable with the community then excluding them from the community would serve a purpose—if 'the powers that be' don't see Hispanic immigrants, or Black people, or 'bad' poor people as reasonable people within whom to have face-to-face resolution, then getting them to

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'move on' from the area would preserve rural exceptionalism. Even if the town currently does not function through an effective town hall style democracy, the lingering idea that certain types of people are capable of this small-town civility is potent. Certainly move-on policing tactics are present in cities as well as small towns throughout the U.S., as I showed in chapter three. It should be noted that I only heard about police intimidating itinerant people in Grandmont, though racist discrimination was mentioned in other towns.

While practices of discrimination should be documented, my critique of rural exceptionalism is not a critique of the individual members of this community, or some specific flaw of the communities in Hills County. I document these hierarchies of belonging to show that rural exceptionalism is not happening in this town. But more so, the previous accounts show how the lines along which belonging and exclusion are demarcated are informed by wider operations of inequality informed by wider-scale power dynamics. Rural exceptionalism refers to a specific idea about democratic practice and, in this case, is concerned with the possibilities of rural areas to address community problems associated with poverty such as inadequate housing. Rural exceptionalism points to the way in which scale and regionalization have been used to naturalize the spatial containers in which certain public practices are thought to naturally operate; the small town is expected to carry on town-hall-style democratic ideals, even if that practice was never in use.

Small Town Disappointments

Ilana said she liked living in Churchill because it was quiet and beautiful, but implied that because she's been here most of her life things have become trying. She indicated that as time has gone on and she's encountered many periods of hardship, her perception of community

support has eroded. She expressed the desire to move to a more urban area to have access to

more opportunity—both economic opportunity for jobs, and in terms of supportive services.

> **GWB:** You grew up here. Are there things you like about the area? Like? Is it a community you like to live in or do you just live here because you live here?
>
> **Ilana:** Um... I did when I first moved here. I liked the community here and it was a really helping hands community, but there's just parts that I would say I don't really like about it that would make me move to the city.
>
> **GWB:** Like...can you say what?
>
> **Ilana:** Like the services that they don't offer. Or the...what is it, there's more opportunities there too for jobs there in the city. But I like it because it is quiet. It is beautiful up here. There's swimming holes to go to. You can go hike, go swimming. There is a lot of things you can do up here, but. I've just been up here… most of my life, so it makes it difficult.
>
> **GWB:** So, you feel ready for a change?
>
> **Ilana:** Yeah. But I can handle it (laughing). It's tolerable. Yeah. So I liked living here the time I have.

The beauty and quiet of the area provided by the forests, mountains, rivers, wildlife, and low-

population density is a valuable part of life for many people who live in Hills County. The

landscape is beautiful and nurturing for many and the community is supportive of some people at

some times. But that support is temperamental depending on whom the recipient of such support

is. Many service agencies expressed frustration at providing support for people who are part of

families that have received government aid for multiple generations. Some providers even said

flat out they stopped giving support to certain people that are part of these families. This

diminished support is also limited by the capacity of resources that can be distributed in the

widest sense. Part of Ilana's disillusionment with the community is with the inability of the

community to provide the resources she needs for the long-term. She needs employment, she

needs access to affordable housing, and she needs access to transitional supportive housing.

Ilana's weariness with the lack of opportunities in the town is articulated as failures of the town and community, but is informed by much wider political and economic decisions.

Tim and Rochelle also understood the lack of opportunities as a specific failure of the town they lived in, Riverton. Tim said he thinks of the area as home, but when they talked about relationships with others, they seemed to have very little community of friends or peers they felt they could rely on. Aside from Cathy the only other people they talked about interacting with in the town were the people who worked at and owned the motel they lived in, with whom they had a very contentious relationship. Tim and Rochelle had extensive information about the staff's personal and financial lives, which indicated a complicated oscillation between friendliness and adversaries during their time living in the motel. Rochelle considered the contentious relationships, lack of supportive community, and little to no administrative public support as specifically sited within the micro-local of the town of Riverton. She seemed to consider the lack of supportive community to be based on the fact that Riverton was a periphery town to the county seat of Churchill.

> **Rochelle:** So, and it's just like... everything that you normally would need is in Churchill and not here. And when you're having difficulties with transportation, you know, to getting over there and to getting back, it makes it even harder. You know. But yeah, it's, it's... It's just one big hassle over there. Like I told babe, it's just worth leaving. Not even dealing with it.
>
> **GWB:** Yeah. Do you think it would be easier in a different county?
>
> **Rochelle:** It doesn't really need to be a different county. Like from here to Churchill would be okay, because my daughter's in County Seat. But...
>
> **GWB:** Oh, I see, just moving to Churchill.
>
> **Rochelle:** Yeah, just anywhere but here, because there's nothing here for us.

When they asked me to help identify people in the county who might help manage their housing emergency I gave them a couple of names for critical support at county or non-profit administrative agencies, both of whom they were familiar with and who work out of Churchill. I also told them that the Section 8 application was open and that they seemed to be eligible. Tim replied, "Oh, really? Because we've been over to the building in Churchill and every time we go over there they say it's closed" (Tim, In-Person Interview). Tim and Rochelle, as well as other housed people I spoke with that lived in Riverton and Grandmont, seemed to consider Churchill the political and geographic center of resources and collective life, and their respective cities as the peripheries. In some respects this is true, as Churchill has the highest per-capita income, and its main street of businesses are more populated in comparison to the generally emptied-out feeling in Rivertown and Grandmont. Administrative agencies based in Churchill did have satellite locations to attempt to make it easier for people like Tim and Rochelle to access administrative services, but when we talked the Riverton satellite location of the nonprofit that managed urgent needs was closed because the staff had recently quit. The physical distance between where they lived and the resources in Churchill seemed overwhelming to them. There is a public bus service between towns but it takes a lot of planning to make the right bus on time, conduct business in Churchill, and get home before the bus stops running. To do so would take up much of the day and require planning skills that might be difficult to execute, especially in a time of crisis.

Rochelle and Tim hoped that the administrative presence and more robust town culture in Churchill would diminish their hardship, which they linked specifically to Riverton. The county seat is thought to hold promise of economic resources and collective investment in administrative publics, while the towns on the periphery are thought to get the short-end of

resource and economic investment. Despite their integration within multiple sites of administrative publics (SSDI, mental health), Tim and Rochelle didn't know where specifically to turn to ask for help in navigating their eviction and next-steps as eviction loomed. This is not to indicate that there is something wrong with them in failing to navigate these systems, but rather to show that the presence of administrative public processes in someone's life does not guarantee widespread public investment in the ways someone may need critical support. Tim and Rochelle attributed their lack of social and administrative support to the specific town of Riverton while Ilana (a Churchill resident) linked the lack of support to the county level. Ilana, Tim, and Rochelle are focused on surviving housing deprivation, and are optimistic that a different town or region will provide them with the opportunities to have a more stable life. The place they live in has value and comfort for each of them as the site they call home, and a quiet, beautiful place. However, Ilana notes that it was once a "helping hands community" and is not any longer. Rural exceptionalism is at work even in its absence.

Conclusion: Rural Exceptionalism

The failure of support services is thought of as a problem of place. But the reason so many people need support services to survive poverty (and those services' absence from the area) are informed by national and state priorities about economics and distribution of resources. Focusing critiques about inequality inward as evidence of how a town is problematic closes off the project of recognizing how wider inequalities produce this particular conflict. For example, anxieties about widespread unemployment and poverty are not the focus of critique, but instead divisions about good poor people and bad poor people emerge from both the managerial owners of the town, and poor people who think of themselves as "good." The inability of the area to receive substantial support for widespread economic insecurity informs the specific failure to

recognize and respond to housing deprivation in this community in this case. Rural exceptionalism indicts individual members of a community for not adequately caring for their fellow resident, which is not the same standard of care for fellow man in urban areas. In expecting a greater level of intra-community care, it obscures the unequal regional distribution of the ability to petition the state.

There is a crucial difference between the historical emergence and cultural associations of the practices and their execution in spaces determined to be urban and rural. Rural communities, despite supposedly having the envied ability to engage in face-to-face community deliberation are undermined by a wider collective disinvestment from those communities. In the next chapter I will show how public engagement about the re-distribution of capital happens through administrative public forms at the state, national, and non-governmental agency level. Rural exceptionalism makes inequalities and exclusion from collective public spheres seem like an added failure of a small-town community to rise to a mythic potential of care-for-the-other. There are hierarchies of belonging and operations of exclusion at work in Hills County that are part of the wider distribution of benefit, burden, and disinvestment in the wider U.S. publics at large. Widespread operations such as the Prison Industrial Complex or the poverty-level cash benefits associated with SSDI are being enacted at this county and town level scale. They exist and shape public-cultural practices and community belonging in Hills County, certainly, and they do so within a wider scale of public culture and the distribution of benefits and burdens. It is within this wider political-economic context that I wish to situate hierarchies of belonging and public culture in Hills County. I next consider the evolution of public cultural practice in the United States and its regional contours in general. Doing so exposes wider scales of belonging and the distribution of public resources at work to shape the possibilities of public practice in

Hills County at all. In the chapter that follows I outline the regional characteristics of the normative account of the public sphere, with a specific emphasis on the way in which administrative publics is intertwined with homelessness as a public problem. Ultimately I argue that rural housing deprivation is an experience of dual-abandonment in a neoliberal, post-industrial era.

Chapter 6: Dual Abandonment: Rural Homelessness and Public Culture

In his book *The Value of Homelessness: Managing Surplus Life in the United States* Craig Willse (2015) makes the argument that homelessness is not just a material state that some people live within, but also a carefully articulated and managed "cultural artifact, a social-political effect of racial capital's urban disorganizations" (2015, p. 12). Willse argues that campaigns to "end homelessness" aren't really campaigns to end housing deprivation for all people in the US. He cites, for example, the way in which migrant farmworker housing is bracketed off the cultural artifact we call homelessness and integrated into different projects of biopolitical management of a specific laboring population. Homeless, he argues, is a specific project in the management of surplus bodies that are not just surplus labor in a Marxist sense; they're not a pool of workers ever-ready to take up the project of work. Rather, homelessness is a cultural formation of "surplus life" made profitable for capitalism through the administrative systems of homeless services and the production of evaluation of homelessness through research. As such, the aims of 'end homelessness' projects in the United States do not end housing insecurity, but produce cultural legitimacy for moral claims through which homelessness management non-profit industries gain financial backing and academic researchers build careers. I agree with Willse, even as I recognize how devastating as this critique is to the actual people that execute the systems of administration with the hope that their work alleviates suffering; myself included.

Willse argues that homelessness is not a condition of bare life, where people are "excluded from the political order and stripped of political agency, incapable of assuming

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representation" (Willse, 2015, p. 48). The social exclusion of housing-deprived people produces the economic inclusion of the industries that manage these people. The housing deprived people are said to be represented by the organizations that service, advocate for, deliberate on the behalf of, and get paid in their name. Willse makes a convincing argument that homelessness is in fact both a product of administrative management and produces administrative systems. It's a product of administrative systems in the form of state-based distributions and management of housing and resources. Homelessness produces administrative systems in that populations of people called homeless are mobilized in order to fund and give purpose to the organizations that make up the homelessness-based nonprofit complex. While homelessness might be represented in public culture in the form of bodies-in-public-space and through representative media, homelessness and the people said to be represented by it is overwhelmingly engaged with public sphere through administrative public forms. To be "homeless" is to always-already to be represented in the public sphere by administrative publics, like it or not.

The link between certain inadequately housed people as "homeless" and "homelessness" as always-already subsumed within administrative publics poses a certain quandary when considered in the rural context. Willse's book argues specifically that homelessness is the result of State projects of racial and gendered management in the mid-1900's through a "bifurcated welfare apparatus" (Willse, p. 39) wherein white male-headed nuclear families were supported by social entitlements such as social security. These entitlements were attached to a formal workforce, and black families and women not attached to white men were absorbed under sub-federal social welfare programs which were more likely to be discriminatory, punitive, and means-tested. In a post-Kensyian neoliberal era the populations once sustained to live in welfare so they were available as labor's surplus are deemed redundant decades later as the health of the

economic market is prioritized. In Willse's tracing of this historical emergence, "neoliberal reforms shift responsibility for managing the dangers of living in capitalism away from the state and once again directly onto reprivatized individuals, who must figure out for themselves how to survive low wages and endemic unemployment" (Willse, p. 44). So far, all of Willse's account is true in Hills County; the drastic decline in the logging industry, extreme fluctuations of employment in building associated with the housing construction industry, and the mechanization of labor within the few remaining lumber mills in the area left a population that was historically workers figuring out how to survive in an economically decimated regional context with few hopes that the federal or state governments will provide any safety net.

However, in the case of Hills County, the change of both the economy and the state's relations to the population from Keynesian management to neoliberal management does result in surplus lives, but doesn't necessarily result in the saturation of administrative organizations to manage the surplus lives. In this case we have a surplus population *in a surplus region*. Willse's analysis often explicitly considers homelessness the result of a specific form of urban management. "Neoliberal economic restructuring, including the selective destruction of city neighborhoods and infrastructures that produces mass housing deprivation, generates a disorder that from a Fordist-Keynesian model appeared as a threat to capital growth" (Willse, 2015, p. 47). This threat in the urban environment is re-captured by knowledge and service industries, and these industries come to represent, for better or worse, the people abandoned as surplus life through the homelessness services sector. Homelessness is an abandonment that is reabsorbed as valuable through the administrative form, but in this rural context, housing deprivation is barely re-absorbed by any public formation. It's barely recognized and certainly not represented by anyone to the state and federal government in any effective manner.

Even when housing deprivation is taken up by an administrative body such as the Midpoint, because of the regional abandonment of Hills County in relation to the state and the federal scale it's extremely difficult for the people experiencing housing deprivation to receive any economic safety net at all through these administrative formations. Housing deprivation in Hills County is a double abandonment. Not even the flawed scraps of care that is the ability to sleep in an overnight shelter trickles through. In the next section I show how administrative publics, as the dominant form of public culture through which homelessness is deliberated and managed, is regionally biased. Hills County is specifically tasked to absorb rural-specific layers of social, economic, and political abandonment as part of its regional role within the Prison Industrial Complex, for example. Urban-biased characteristics are naturalized into conceptions of publicity such that they are not considered urban-public forms, but rather just ideal or successful ways of doing publics.

Regional Bias of Public Culture

Harold A. Innis's *Bias of Communication* (2008) introduced the methodological technique of tracing the economic and physical extraction, transformation, and transportation of materials and ideas; he then linked that trace to the acts of communication that enable the exchange of ideas and therefore the government of communities over a wide geographical space. Innis argued that space-biased cultures were able to govern a wide geographical range of territory because of the ability of ideas to quickly circulate. Time-biased cultures relied on durable, difficult-to-transport materiality, such as stone, buildings, or oral speech. These communication technologies are centralized which enables unifying governance and community cohesion. His early works focused on the political economy of extractive and productive materials and technologies such as trees that get turned into paper, which circulate information in

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the form of newspapers and unify public thought. His later work included organizations and institutions as primary kinds of communication media through which people interact (Innis, 1946). While an entire sub-field of Organizational Communication has emerged to account for the ways in which organizations are forms that transmit culture and power (Mumby, 2013; Mumby, 2011; May, 2013; Dempsey, 2012), I integrate consideration of administrative forms and public culture using Innis's theory for two reasons. Innis's attention to how power operates is primarily theorized through materiality, which is particularly useful to account for the power imbalances characterized by unequal distribution of burdens and benefits between this rural area and Sacramento or Washington, D.C. Innis's focus on region, transmission, and power are central to the unfolding of ideas about how communication and power operate. The way in which extractive economies and space-biased communication technologies are intertwined is particularly relevant to the power relationships that structure Hills County. Innis's term "bias" allows us to see regional power relationships not as a zero-sum power relationship, but one that is produced through both distribution and extraction. In this case a focus on the regional bias of the administrative form emerges. Hills County might be given a county designation and some funds to operate county offices by the state of California, yet these offices are unable to compete with more populous counties for the distribution of enough funds to actually execute impactful collective projects. A regional bias is inherently embedded in the organizational form of administrative publics, and most normative forms considered "public culture" in general.

The collectives said to represent normative public cultural practice are actually made up of certain forms that are unable to effectively deliberate and secure resources for residents of this (and other) rural communities. Hills County has a set of newspapers for each major town in the region, all owned by the same company. These newspapers do deliver focused local news such

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as when events like parades and tree lighting ceremonies are happening, as well as crime reports, reports on infamous murders, and reports on decisions and deliberations in town and county meetings. The paper also publishes articles reporting on decisions made by the state and federal capitals that effect the area such as new environmental protections, or emerging decisions about how the forests will be managed (which effects employment). These newspapers are valuable sources of information for residents in the area, and can report on news that might encourage the community to cohere around one priority or intervention. However, this information circulates within Hills County, but doesn't provide a platform to "speak back" to regional or national power centers.

A reader in the periphery might get a copy of a newspaper from an urban center to read, but a person in the urban center is quite unlikely to come across a newspaper from the rural periphery. Innis showed how the technology of paper and its resulting printing industry "tend to check the movement of ideas and to contribute to the building up of monopolies" (Innis, 2008, p. 128). The marginal territories provide the raw goods—in this case trees—that get turned into paper. Information is distributed primarily from the presses in the cities and circulates out to the peripheries. A reader in Hills County might see a Sacramento Bee headline about LA's declaration of a state of emergency about homelessness, but there's virtually no route through which someone in Sacramento will pick up a Hills County Newspaper and become outraged about a reduction in logging and its implied, but often not explicitly stated, economic and social devastation. It would not be possible to read about homelessness in Hills County, even if they were to find a local paper, because it's not reported on, certainly not on the front page. Members of the communities in the periphery often know that they need to organize themselves into a formation that is recognizable to the urban center, and may even do so—such is the case when

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residents of Hills County formed and continues to staff and utilize the Midpoint. But the limits of the organizational possibilities in a rural community to provide palliative services, let alone end homelessness, quickly become clear.

The Sisyphean Project

In the United States the majority of funding to programs that address homelessness comes from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)—which shows its cards right there in the name. HUD distributes funds to manage homelessness through an administrative grant cycle/system it calls "Continuum of Care" (COC). COC requires those petitioning HUD for grants to form into COC regional or local planning bodies through which they may apply for grants and distribute those grants to sub-local organizations such as homeless shelters, government agencies, or non-profit management organizations. Before I began fieldwork, I saw that Hills County was part of a COC made up of five rural designated counties. These counties covered a wide range of territory and each county had different economic bases (agricultural vs. extractive industry vs. tourism, for example). These different economic bases result in significant differences; differential funding streams result in uneven administrative labor capacity to serve on the committee. Each county has different needs related to the economic and density characteristics of their counties. I saw indications in the archival research I was conducting online that there hadn't been much activity from the COC for multiple years. When I first met with a staff person from the Midpoint and asked about their COC body, she laughed. The COC had fallen apart years ago, and they were not going to even attempt to form another COC with other county agencies for the next five year grant cycle.

It was a Sisyphean project. To explain why, she named the organizational obstacles of counties with a varying level of resources and no physical proximity attempting to produce a

large and complex grant application and funds distribution plan over the telephone. But aside

from communication challenges and the average run-of-the-mill dysfunction that often plagues

organizational processes; she said it wasn't worth it because HUD and COC were not designed

to resource rural areas. As an example, she told me about a trip she had taken a few weeks before

to the state capital to attend a HUD conference on Ending Veterans Homelessness. The Midpoint

funded the trip. She arrived prepared to ask the specific technical questions she needed answered

in order to try to compete effectively for this new push of grant funding. Then, she said, she sat

in the opening speech outlining the program. They explicitly said they would distribute X

amount of dollars to counties with the number of potential people impacted being the primary

determining criteria. In her opinion, she had no reason to be there. In a way, there was no reason

to hold the conference at all—the funds could just be distributed based on population size with

the largest grant going to LA County, then San Francisco County and so forth until the money

ran out.

The regional bias embedded within the Continuum of Care model used by HUD is one

specific example of the way people who are already abandoned outside a system of housing and

economic opportunity experience a second form of exclusion from the forms of collective

management of the problem of homelessness. The concern is not only that people experiencing

homelessness in Hills County don't "get" to be captured in this administrative system, though to

scoff at the trickle-down services provided such as money for emergency housing in a hotel

room is a certain privilege. Many of the primary informants I talked with had previously and

would likely again be glad to spend a night alone in even a crappy motel, with its semi-privacy

and running water. My concern is that exclusion from the formations of public culture that battle

over the distribution of resources—even neoliberal resources that capitalize on surplus life—is

permanently and inherently regionally biased, closing off residents of rural areas from being able to become a recognizable entity to be acknowledged on a state or federal level. In the section that follows I overview the current trends in what is considered Rural Public Culture, arguing that ultimately the combined regional and social exclusion tied together in dual abandonment must be integrated into the way public culture operates if problems such as poverty and homelessness are to be adequately addressed in rural areas in the U.S.

Theorizing Regional Disinvestment

Scholars from a wide range of disciplines have identified the phenomenon of urban-centered social, political, and economic priorities. The term "urban bias," has been used to talk about the distribution of resources and economic priorities of developing or "third world" countries, which often centered the economic development of urban areas, leaving rural areas as poor or poorer than before development initiatives (Lipton, 1977; Varshney, 2013; Jones & Corbridge, 2010). Within U.S. based analyses of cultural biases and priorities, Jack Halberstam (2005) uses the term "metronormativity" to identify the privileging of the urban in an urban/rural binary in the U.S.; specifically the way in which queer sexualities are thought to be incompatible with rurality and naturalized in urbanity (Halberstam, 2005, p. 37). The term "rural gentrification" has emerged to describe the influx of middle-class residents from urban areas moving to formerly working-class and poor rural communities and changing the economic makeup, services offered, consumption practices, political priorities, use of open space, and the stylistics of rural buildings and landscapes (Ghose, 2004; Nelson et. al., 2010; Phillips, 1993). I introduce the term *dual abandonment* to identify the way in which marginalized populations in rural areas experience exacerbated disinvestment from national, regional, or statewide public deliberation because they

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reside in a region that is politically and economically neglected as well as spatially isolated from sites of decision making.

Michael Woods is the preeminent scholar writing about rural public culture and rural democratic practice. Based in the UK, Woods' work condenses a wide range of research and political changes in rurality from a global perspective, and produces original research documenting changes in rurality in Wales, and throughout the UK and Europe. (Woods, 2005a; Woods, 2005b; Woods, 2006b; Woods, 2008; Woods, 2010; Woods, 2012) Identifying what he terms the "paradox of rural citizenship" (2006a, p. 459) he traces the urban-bias of public culture as it coincides with the emergence of the concept of citizenship. Citizenship coincided with the development of the Greek polis, which only intensified as the modern Western city became the locus for the communal institutions that made up civil society. While citizenship, democracy, and urbanity evolved hand-in-hand, rural areas were often characterized by agriculture and large landholders. It was in these rural areas that hierarchies were more deeply entrenched and only the wealthiest fully recognized as citizens. Rural areas served the role of cultural repositories, wherein "[r]ural people and rural cultures were valorized as the guarantors of ancient tribal or national values and histories" (Woods, 2006a p. 460). Rural areas were a counter-balance to nation-state narratives that combined a unique and stable cultural identity held in the countryside, and cultures of innovation and exchange housed in urban sites. He argues that over the last century social and economic restructuring has shifted these dynamics, wherein rural communities have been included in new instances of governance and regulation, for better or worse. He identifies current national narratives about rural citizenship as "active citizenship" as they correspond with the emergence of neoliberal governmentality and the disinvestment from collective entitlements based on simply being a citizen of the polis. Woods argues that

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governmentality is articulated to specific tropes of rural identity, championing that rural people already know how to "help themselves" through an ethic of hard work, and initiatives of "community engagement" which emphasize local-based collective "problem solving." These tropes are emphasized as a way to deflect criticism of wider nation-based disinvestments from its citizens in general (Woods, 2006a, p. 462).

Turning from citizenship in general to acts of rural protest, in "Deconstructing rural protest: the emergence of a new social movement" (2003) Woods highlights the emergence of protests in the U.S., UK, and France that cohere not around a single economic or environmental policy, but the right to rurality and rural culture. These new social movements tend to have three main characteristics through which they are differentiated from older-models of public deliberation in rural areas that formed primarily into pressure groups or unions: They're more reliant on grassroots participation; members are recruited through attachments to rural identity rather than an investment in specific economic or special interest projects; and newer groups are less interested in being integrated in the production of specific policies, but rather are "motivated by the defence of their identity, with activities focused on drawing public attention to their concerns, opposing perceived threats from external actors, and seeking to limit the scope of government intervention in rural affairs" (2003, p. 313). Citing tactics such as mass demonstrations representing rural issues in urban capitals, road blockades, and dismantling a McDonalds under construction in France that gained mass media attention, he likens these new organizations to other "new social movements" such as anti-globalization and environmental activists.

However, these protests seem to center on leadership by men and landowners, not the most disenfranchised members deeply economically disinvested communities in rural areas, and

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the protests are often about issues to preserve existing conditions of rurality such as local food systems in France or the preservation of hunting rights in the UK. The lack of the ability to address the political regarding homelessness in Hills County derives from a double disinvestment—the disinvestment of people from houses, and then the disinvestment of the region from the economic order and deliberative forms recognized by the nation and the state of California. His analysis takes for granted the ability to form into a body that would be recognized as a deliberative or representative body in the first place. A tractor blockade is an effective tactic to express frustration around the preservation of rural areas and rural identities *in general*. But the targets to demand an end to housing insecurity or the need to fund services for rural people experiencing homelessness cannot be easily represented by invested constituents or representatives of this marginalized population within this marginalized community. A group would first need to grab the attention of state and federal publics to the fact that Hills County is suffering deep economic deprivation, and a demand about homelessness could only trickle down from that.

Woods' work also highlights symbolic or reparative projects led by rural residents, such as volunteers in Vermont that converted an old school into a rural health clinic, or residents who created murals telling the community's history in response to the closure of sawmills, which drew tourists. "Each of these initiatives — and the thousands more like them — have involved individuals assuming a share of responsibility for the governance of their own community" (Woods, 2006, p. 458). He's correct that this does show initiative and community engagement, but this kind of political participation or response is a patch on a wider problem, not the correction of it. For example, before the housing bubble crash Hills County had a Community Economic Development agency. They attempted to draw tourists to the area, advertising it as an

idyllic, snowy, culturally rich location. They painted murals and encouraged the establishment of art galleries and bakeries in some of the storefronts on the main streets. And these things do attract some tourists, but the tourist economy didn't even begin to staunch the economic wounds of the lost jobs from logging reduction and closed sawmills, both in terms of number of jobs, and in the wages those service industry jobs pay when compared to jobs in a sawmill. These are kinds of public sphere participation, and they're good for communities. But they do not do the work of effectively advocating for the housing deprived and other disenfranchised members of disinvested communities at the scale of securing resources to solve those problems.

There's no clear way for rural homelessness to surface as a priority within existing accepted public formations that petition decision makers at the state or federal level. This is not only because of the urban bias of public formations, but operates in tandem with the economic class biases of the general public in the U.S. which generally relegates deliberation about the critical immediate problems of a person experiencing homelessness the administrative public form. I agree with Willse's argument that this administrative public form is not an effective way to solve the problem of homelessness, but rather is a way to manage and profit from surplus lives. The acceptance by the general public in the U.S. to relegate engagement about homelessness to the administrative public sphere serves to further distance housed Americans from the economic and discriminatory roots that cause homelessness. However, the way in which the administrative form emerges from and operates in dense urban sites produces a dual-abandonment of people who experience homelessness and housing insecurity in rural areas from even the ability to be counted, seen, and receive scraps through administrative management. The administrative form is naturalized as the "appropriate" form to deal with economic disinvestments that are framed as cultural problems. Poverty in rural Native American

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communities and the exploitation of migrant farmworkers are examples of communities experiencing a second layer of region-informed abandonment in addition to economic and racist disinvestments. Dual abandonment names the regional and classed bias of current-era public cultural practice.

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Chapter 7: Differential Disposability: managing misogyny's excess

> I call it a dumping ground. But I... I got there a week earlier. I was dumped there from Kaiser Permanente. And I... you know... I didn't have a place to go. And you know, it's like a 1/4 inch mat on the floor, you know like the... it's a nasty place. (Olivia, In-person Interview)

This place that Olivia describes above as a "dumping ground" is a cold-weather seasonal overnight shelter where people slept on thin mats on a warehouse floor. It's the kind of shelter that an average housed person in the U.S. usually talks about as a good or good-enough solution to homelessness. It's one physical site in which a variety of people who have been excluded from paths to adequate shelter are clustered for an evening before being required to make their way through the day out on the sidewalks, parks, stores, libraries, and laundry mats of urban areas. She was dropped off at this shelter by a transport from a major California hospital and health system. Disposable is one way to describe Olivia's social status at the time she was dropped off at the shelter and the months that followed. In this chapter I examine different ways disposability is at work in the context of abandonment by the state and collective culture. On one hand, I consider the ways people who are disposed of into what Olivia considers "dumping grounds" of the spatial and economic margins of collective life forge quick, intense, and productive relationships that are powerful because they are disposable. On the other hand disposability, as a shared experience of being deemed un-valuable in the dominant economic and social order of the United States, is shared in common by most inadequately housed people I talked with but has very different gendered origins and impacts. I believe these differential impacts and origins should be understood when attempting to make sense of how abandonment and disposability operate in current considerations of precarity and neoliberalism.

Henry A. Giroux (2007) articulates disposability as a key characteristic of neoliberalism in the current "New Gilded Age" of massive wealth consolidation; disposability is paired with the use of market-logic to evaluate human worth and social usefulness. He identifies the spectacle of racialized and classed disregard for human life made publicly visible during Hurricane Katrina as characteristic of abandonment in the current era. The public visibility of abandonment of black and poor people exposed a new politics in which "entire populations are now considered disposable, an unnecessary burden on state coffers, and consigned to fend for themselves. The deeply existential and material questions regarding who is going to die and who is going to live in this society are now centrally determined by race and class" (Giroux, 2007, p. 307). This era of disposability goes beyond a previously theorized experience of biopolitical management identified by Foucault (1997), in which a market-logic permeated state-based governance that orders public (and private) life through management of the self and life itself. In the New Gilded Age a vast majority of the collective body is managed via the actual marketplace through privatization and the prioritization of profit over all else. Evans and Giroux (2015) argue that the way in which Olivia and others are treated as disposable within the national collective is not just disturbing because of her treatment in the now (which it is). The way Olivia was treated is disturbing because of how her disposability is considered inevitable, as opposed to an error within a system of distribution that must be corrected immediately. "(F)orms of disposability are so abhorrent precisely because they now shape disposable futures. The future now appears to us as a terrain of endemic catastrophe and disorder from which there is no clear escape except to continue to show allegiance to those predatory formations that put us there in the first place. Devoid of any alternative image of the world, we are requested merely to see the world as predestined and catastrophically fated" (Evans & Giroux, 2015, p. 16). In Olivia's case

the logic of disposable futures sounds something like this: if the corporate hospital dumped Olivia there, they must have had to do so because there was nowhere else to put her. In this logic of inevitability the hospital has no duty to care for her if she has nowhere else to go; they considered her treatment finished, and their priority is ultimately profit so ejecting her from the system into the realm of disposability is the obvious next step. The shelter is considered an acceptable place to go because it's a place that exists for people that have nowhere to go. It's assumed that this way of living in the shelter must be okay or have value, because someone is paying the organization to manage and run the shelter. Why would they spend that money if it's not valuable? What's buried and made blurry within these many layers of narratives of inevitability—that Olivia just *is* homeless after a period of illness—are many different ways in which the logic of profit trumps the value of human life over and over again.

In the previous chapter I showed how rural homelessness and housing insecurity coalesce into the experience of dual abandonment. Dual abandonment results in the political inability to form into a representative collective that might be recognized on a wider scale. In this chapter I consider the ways those deemed disposable within the New Gilded Age, in this case people who are inadequately and unhoused in Hills County, survive within the realm of disposability. I identify three aspects of gender differentials that I term *differential disposabilities*. Multiple male respondents slept outside from time to time, while only one woman respondents did. I show how enduring in the realm of disposability poses differential gendered risks of violence. I argue that homelessness is one realm of disposability that manages misogyny's excess, showing how misogyny is maintained and managed by managing the populations that exceed its durability. This includes both the women whose lives are broken apart by it, and the (non-rich) men who are legally punished and spatially regulated for being "too" misogynist. I compare the cases of two

people who bore the most severe forms of housing insecurity. Each arrived at this place of abandonment through very different gendered channels in the system of misogyny: One informant was the consistent survivor of gender-based violence. The other was relegated to persistent housing insecurity by the state through Prison Industrial Complex, which is a consequence of him perpetrating gender-based violence. Differential disposabilities such as these must be attended to in order to understand the full complexity of the problems at hand. Disposability from the collective or political order via poverty (and in this case via housing inadequacy produced by poverty or criminalization) results in strategic formations of productive but quickly formed and often as quickly dissolved social ties Matthew Desmond terms "Disposable Ties" (2012). I show how similar care practices are at work in this rural context, arguing that the particularly gendered differentials in the labor of care among inadequately housed people evidence not just disposable ties, but also particularly gendered dynamics of *disposable care*. These practices, mostly performed by women, are the labors that enable bodies endure even as they are abandoned from the state and economic order.

Disposable Care

While an ideal story about rural communities in the United States is that the system of family is more salient than urban areas, the majority of inadequately housed participants did not rely on blood kin or even long-term intentional family formations to meet their survival needs. The ways that inadequately housed participants in Hills County survived housing insecurity differed from one person to the other in terms of the specific strategy. For example, Bonnie, who lost her housing as a result of a natural disaster, relied on a combination of family support, volunteer organizational support, and the governmental safety-net in the form of subsidized senior housing and Housing Authority emergency assistance. Lynxster sought shelter through on

a combination of shorter-term social relationships, a sub-community of travelers, sleeping en-route, and sleeping outside. Tim, Rochelle, and Cathy all relied on living in a motel for housing, which is more expensive in the long-run than renting an apartment. It does not provide adequate cooking space, and at some times didn't provide adequate toilets. Tim and Rochelle were in the process of being evicted and they, like Cathy, said their adult children were aware of their housing insecurity but they did not believe they would go live with their children if they lost their current housing.

Instead of family ties, the inadequately housed people I talked with received day-to-day social support for survival from what Matthew Desmond (2012) calls disposable ties. These ties are often intense social ties that form quickly and are characterized by semi-reciprocal or reciprocal exchanges of support. Desmond conducted ethnographic research with people facing eviction in two communities in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He found that people did not rely on strong ties (Granovetter, 1973) to survive these crises, which tend to be relationships characterized by long duration and mutual confiding, such as a family or long-term friendship tie. They also did not tend to rely on weak ties, which are characterized by shorter-term, less intimate acquaintances that tend to be a bridge to new social groups such as co-workers. Instead, Desmond found that the people experiencing eviction in Milwaukee mostly relied on disposable ties to meet their most urgent needs of housing, food, and other survival-based resources. Disposable ties are characterized by accelerated intimacy that lasts for a relatively short amount of time relative to kin relationships, a high amount of physical co-presence, and reciprocal exchange of resources (Desmond, 2012, p. 1311). While most people he interacted with did have some kind of connection to kin-ties, these were not the source from which the majority of

supportive resources usually flowed. This finding is similar to the ways I saw people utilize social ties to survive housing insecurity in Hills County.

Even as most people I spoke with mentioned some kind of short-term response or support from a family member at some point in time, such as parents taking custody of a grandson, or sending money once for a specific reason, the ways that most people actually obtained shelter or got through housing insecurity on a day-to-day basis through food, rides, and companionship were through these shorter-term intense connections. For example, when we spoke Ilana was sleeping on the couch of a friend's house. She became friends with this person around the time of the death of her boyfriend, who she'd been dating for about five months. When I asked her if there was anything good about her living situation she said "No (laughing) not really! I mean I'm happy with my friend. I mean, he's a good person. He's been there for me. I mean, that's the positive part. I mean, I do have that one friend that's willing to accept me into his home, and help me and... so I... that's the positive part. There is a positive part" (Ilana, In-Person Interview). Because they endured one difficult time together (the death of her boyfriend), she feels close to her friend, who is now supporting her through another difficult time, even though they've been friends for less than a year. While the ties are significant and the relationship with the person was important at the time I talked to informants, they were also not rooted in a family system.

For example, all of my interactions in meeting up to talk with Tim and Rochelle were facilitated by Cathy. Tim mentioned that Cathy was one of the only people that they could talk to and trust. On the day of Tim, Rochelle, and I's meeting, Cathy left her house to drive Tim and Rochelle the two short blocks to where we were meeting. She said she just wanted to be sure they were able to find me. These short, concrete ways of caring for her friends helped Tim and Rochelle endure the stresses of insecure housing and poverty. While Tim and Rochelle's survival

is deeply intertwined with each other, a friendship with Cathy is the only non-service provider relationship they cited as helpful or supportive. The "small things" such as rides or access to sleeping on a couch carried big meaning, in part because it is offered in response to what must be a sense of vulnerability for the other person to offer them. Because the tie is short and intense these ties can be an ideal relationship in which vulnerability is made visible and reciprocal dependence is enacted. Ties are not necessarily durable and hard to shake off in the way that the tie formed in birthing or raising a child is, or the way in which legal marriage requires a lengthy bureaucratic process to formally sever the tie. The vulnerability today will not add to or accrue to other real or perceived failures in the relationship, because there are few previous periods of relating. The lack of a historical relationship is an asset in this case because the relationship is based on the present struggle. A disposable tie generally starts with a clean slate, unlike strong ties. Disposability is productive in that a disposable tie is the means through which care for another happens, and is able to emerge because of a lack of historical baggage.

However, I want to return to the concept of disposable tie (Desmond, 2012) and suggest that perhaps there *is* some historical baggage at play, even as disposable ties tend to be short and formed with relative strangers. That is the historical baggage of gender that is entwined with caring itself. In *Caring Democracy* Joan Tronto (2013) argues that men have primarily taken up the caring task of protection and production (in the form of earning) and gotten a "pass" on virtually all other responsibilities of care. In of the popular press literature debating the gender gap in care much of this debate has centered on the unpaid labor women perform in caring for children, the elderly, and housekeeping, often while also doing unpaid work (Slaughter, 2015; Khazan, 2016; Glann, 2010; Herrington Meyer, 2000). There has been discussion of the low-wage work that is paid to women who perform the majority of care and service jobs in the U.S.

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and for upper- and middle-class families throughout the world (Ehrenreich, 2001; Ehrenreich & Hoschchild, 2003; Walburn, 2012; Borris & Parrenas, 2010). But there has been significantly less attention within the sphere of these debates about how care practices that maintain daily life in the realm of disposability are also specifically gendered. Certainly scholars that study how women survive poverty have been making arguments for decades about how poor women and women of color do the life-giving labor of maintaining the bodies of family members (Carney, 2015; Feeman, 2015), birthing and caring for children (Mullings, 2001; Roberts, 2002), and spearheading grassroots political participation (Berger, 2004; Gumbs et al., 2016) in the face of significant state disinvestment. However, I want to consider the differential gendered dynamics at work in these generally newer and shorter yet still productive relationships in disposable care. *Disposable care* is neither unpaid labor that is performed as part of a long-term supposedly durable relationship such as family or a site-specific community, nor is it paid caring labor. It's caring labor that is performed as part of a disposable tie, executed to offset the abandonment from state and economic spheres.

Desmond's theory of disposable ties points to the ways social ties that are disposable are formed between people living in poverty, which differ from other theories of social ties in their duration and purpose. He notes that most of the people managing and surviving evictions are women, who primarily form disposable ties with other women. He also identifies the forging of disposable ties between women and men that are formed primarily on sexual/romantic relationships—a man might help a woman informant with cash, or food, or lodging for the duration of the romantic relationship. But there seems to be a different intensity in the time spent laboring and the impetus to care for the other that flows mostly from women to women, or women to men. While both women and men that I talked to relied on disposable ties, by charting

the labor of caring at work, we can see that the labors performed to sustain life after the abandonment of the state are differentially gendered in what kind of labors of care are performed and by whom. Analyzing these relationships as examples of *disposable care* exposes another labor of how differential gendered labor in caring specifically offsets abandonment from the state. Returning to Tronto's (2013) analysis that men's responsibilities of caring in the U.S. have traditionally focused on physical protection and earning, while women's responsibilities for caring generally include all other kinds of care. These kinds of care include childcare, food provision, housekeeping, emotional labor, caring for sick, the labor of remembering (such as appointments, or your mother's birthday) and the less acknowledged differential sexual labor. In the realm of abandonment from the state, these caring labors will look very different than the labor performed by stably housed and non-poor women.

David's status as a former prisoner, unhoused, and especially the sex-offender designation hampered his access to employment in a community with already high unemployment. The lack of income closed off his ability to rent a house outside of town that met the legal requirements, and prevented him from being able to buy a means of transportation over long distances. He was both required to be near the county seat, and essentially spatially prohibited from sleeping overnight in the county seat. It was a legal-spatial fixed exclusion; it essentially forced him to live in the wilderness or return to prison for violating the spatial restrictions. He was able to exit his time of living outside because his girlfriend wanted to live with him. She was living in town, and he couldn't live there because of spatial restrictions. She looked at multiple houses outside the town limits, eventually renting a house in the countryside and moving herself and her adult children to the house so she and David could live together.

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Olivia slept outside and on the floor of a seasonal emergency shelter that set up a mat on the floor in a warehouse for hundreds of housing deprived people when she was living in San Laves. She became unhoused after the state unexpectedly stopped paying her worker's compensation. She quickly ran out of any money to keep her apartment; she had nowhere to live and no one who would let her stay with them. She tried seeking administrative services only to be met with dysfunction, over-worked case managers, and ultimately no path to stable housing, let alone any emergency housing option besides the warehouse floor. She met a woman who was "poured onto" the mat next to her one night in the warehouse still in her hospital gown and still very sick recovering from the condition that sent her to the hospital. Olivia cared for her, and they developed a friendship of co-reliance. Her friend had a relative that lived near the Hills County region and she eventually came up to Hills County and found stable housing through a combination of state and non-profit services. She wrote to Olivia and told her Hills County was beautiful just like a place Olivia had once told her friend about. Olivia convinced her sister to drive her up to Hills County and slept for a while in her friend's studio apartment until the close-living quarters shared by two people with mental illness made doubling-up unsustainable. Olivia was given a motel voucher set aside for mental health department patients in housing emergency, and was approved to receive SSDI and a Section 8 Voucher. The combination of these administrative resources was on track to provide Olivia with stable housing when we spoke. At the time we spoke Olivia and her friend were still very close.

Both Olivia and David relied on disposable care relationships with others, through which pathways to housing emerged. At the time I spoke with them these relationships had been in place for a matter of months. It might seem that they had somewhat similar experiences—severe and critical housing deprivation that didn't seem to have a clear exit that was resolved after a

new but intense relationship was formed. However, to look at their stories with analytic attention to gender shows vastly different gendered experiences in a system of misogyny. While both relied on disposable ties to minimize the impact of their housing insecurity the man's tie was forged through romance with a woman while the woman's tie was forged through first offering aid to another woman, which resulted in friendship. David's housing crisis was resolved by forming a romantic, sexual relationship with a woman, who did significant labor of searching for a house, paying for moving costs, and paying the rent to cohabitate with David and resolve his housing crisis. Olivia relied on friendship, not a sexual or romantic relationship, as a first-step in resolving the very critical housing deprivation she was experiencing in San Laves. Her friend paid the rent on the apartment that she couch-surfed in for a few weeks, but this was after Olivia did the labor of caring for her friend when her friend was critically vulnerable, poured onto her mat from the hospital. There is a clear reciprocal relationship of care and labor in this friendship. Olivia both received and performed disposable care—the life-giving caring that offset the abandonment of the state. David primarily relied on a large amount of labor performed by his girlfriend also receiving life-giving care that offset the state. I am not suggesting that David provides no care or value to his romantic partner. He likely does. In our conversation, David mentioned things like doing the dishes, helping heat the house with firewood, etc. when he described what their life was like when they were together. In general David seemed like a smart, driven guy with a strong work ethic. However, it wasn't a friendship with a man that he formed—such a co-reliant relationship in which a man would do a significant amount of the day-to-day caring labor for another man seems rare. Romance, not friendship, was the motivating connection. As I show in the next section, Lynxster relied on romance to forge one disposable tie that was in place when I spoke with him. But he also was skilled at forging disposable ties with

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all kinds of people. However, the ability to forge these disposable ties without performing reciprocal disposable care is specifically gendered. Specifically, the ways in which Lynxster and other men are able to initiate disposable ties have very different physical risks compared to women's ability to do so. These differential risks, as well as the gendered differentials in disposable care, are two examples of a range of differential disposabilities—the differential risks and labors performed within the realm of disposability.

Differential Risk

Most of the inadequately housed participants I spoke with relied on disposable ties to meet survival needs. Most of the people I spoke with were in a cycle of housing insecurity that had lasted many years, if not their whole lifetimes. The only informant I spoke with who seemed to be stably and securely housed after a housing crisis is Bonnie, who owned her mobile home before the natural disaster and received housing directly from a federal support in the form of a permanent spot in a government-subsidized housing facility specifically set aside for aging seniors. While the other eight inadequately housed informants had the experience of being adrift outside a system of stable housing, this adrift-ness—the experience of being disposed of and disposable—was characterized by differential impacts and risks. These differential impacts and risks are differential disposabilities. In this data set I noted gender as a primary differential between informants, though other kinds of differential disposabilities would be noted when examining other realms of disposability. These kinds of non-gendered differences are evident between those that are eligible for and able to secure whatever scraps of social support are available through SSDI, Section 8, and other federal safety nets and those that are not. It is felt differentially between those who are able bodied and are either able to work for pay or carry the hope and possibility that working for pay will end their housing insecurity.

Housing insecurity entails different options of where one can safely sleep and pass the time based on gender. While three of the men I spoke with reported sleeping outside at some point, only one woman reported sleeping outside, and the experiences of doing so were quite different. For women, there is a significant risk of violence when spending any amount of time, particularly sleeping, in public. As I mentioned before, David slept outside for many months, including in cold weather, after he was released from prison. Unlike Leonard, he did not feel at peace or gain strength from living outside, but he harnessed outdoor skills learned as a youth to make living outside as sustainable and survivable as possible. Legal requirements associated with both his probationary period and his status as a sex-offender prohibited him from living in basically any dwelling within the town limits, but still required him to be within an accessible distance to that town center for regular meetings.

When I met Lynxster he was traveling with a woman that was his lover, with whom he strategized and shared resources. Lynxster has an entire worldview centered on disposable ties that he describes as a characteristic of festival or traveler culture:

> **Lynxster:** You know. And that's the beauty of festivals. If the whole world was like it and had the whole mentality of it. Like. I've met many people just like this gentleman that have seen me on my way from another place and be like, oh, well come in. We were in Chicago, got off the train. Here's the perfect example. I was going to have to sleep on the streets of Chicago. But I knew I wasn't going to. Because I believed in the Universe or the Creator or whatever kind of belief, you know. And these two drunk guys get out of the cab, and they're like "rah rah rah rah rah". You know. (He starts side conversation with passer-bye: "Budweiser does suck. Love your shirt sir, your smile! And your beautiful assistant! You guys are great… Oh, I was talking to her Sir..") So. So.

> **GWB:** You were in Chicago?

> **Lynxster:** We were in Chicago and two guys said oh, we live in Milwaukee there's Summerfest. We'll get you more west. Our sign said *West or Adopt Us*. They adopted us. Fed us. Drank us. Everything is good. Drove us there. But it was literally like midnight. And all else. They had been to festivals, they go to festival, and they knew that kind of life.

Lynxster's description of finding himself in Chicago late at night and needing to find a place to sleep is embedded within a discourse of the metaphysical; he believes that "the universe" will provide. From a different perspective, it seems that Lynxster's optimism is rooted in his skill at initiating and forging a disposable tie. These quick, productive ties are the way he most often secures day-to-day support in finding transportation or a sleeping spot. In many ways the life of a traveler like Lynxster is a life forged of disposable ties in a state of permanent disposability. However, his ability to show up in a city confident that he can quickly forge a productive disposable tie with a relative stranger is also evidence of differential gendered power dynamics at work within the population of those who are disposed of. In this case, a woman who arrived in downtown Chicago alone or only with other women would be at great risk of physical danger if she started asking stranger men for rides. This is one specific and widespread gender differential—the different ways men and women are at risk of violence simply for being visible in public. It can be seen in the ways the three male respondents who slept outside reported that it was uncomfortable or hard on their health (David and Lynxster) or even somewhat enjoyable (Leonard) as opposed to the feeling of being terrified (Olivia) or the fact that it was not even an option the other women I talked with entertained when faced with nowhere stable to sleep.

This is not to say that unhoused women never sleep outside. Casey, Goudy, and Reeve (2008) found that 62% of 144 women they surveyed who experienced homelessness in the UK slept rough during their period of homelessness. However, they also found women "do" sleeping rough differently, "rejecting the highly visible profile of many male rough sleepers in favour of hidden locations (such as bin bays, storage units, covered car parks, and out of town locations not recognised as rough sleeper sites)" (2008, p. 903). The tactic of sleeping in hidden sites to reduce exposure to risk of violence is specifically gendered (Wardhaugh, 1999; Day, 2000;

Smith, 2005). This gender-based increased risk of violence is in addition to significant risk of violence experienced by both men and women that sleep visibly in public (Radley et. al., 2006; National Coalition for the Homeless, 2014; Wachholz, 2005). Southard (1997) found that women with children living in public forests frequently reported fear of "predatory males" or armed men and had specific plans for how to respond of a man approached the vehicle they slept in (Southard, 1997, p. 58). In the next section I examine the different gendered contexts in which two informants' housing insecurity is situated in relation to gendered violence. The labor of disposable care performed within disposable ties and the risk of harm within the highly public exposure that often accompanies disposability are differentially gendered; they are two types of differential disposabilities. A third aspect of differential disposabilities can also be seen in the origins of becoming disposable. These two cases show how trajectories into disposability unfolded through very different routes of violence, though both rooted in childhood violence and a system of misogyny.

Severed Social Connections

Both David and Olivia reported abuse to be present in their childhood. David mentioned that he witnessed his mother being abused by male partners as a kid, which he cited was often a reason for their frequent moves. He said this violence and frequent change was part of why he felt he didn't have a male role model growing up. Olivia is a survivor of incest and said that speaking out in adulthood about this abuse created a permanent rift between herself and the rest of her family of origin. In the last 15 years public health research has focused on the impacts of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) as the most significant predictor for poor adult health outcomes including drug abuse and mental illness and early death (Felitti et al., 1998; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). Experiences that are correlated with these poor health

outcomes include: childhood physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, witnessing violence in the family, witnessing traumatic events such as someone being murdered, and other significant stressors. Olivia and David have these early childhood traumas shared in common. But experience-in-common resulted in very different and gendered responses to trauma—harming others, vs. being more likely to be harmed by others. The experiences themselves are gendered, as girls are more likely to be sexually assaulted in childhood and boys are more likely than girls to be hit.[3] David linked being fatherless with a harsh self-imposed expectation of manhood; manhood as non-addiction, as living without, or living outside.

> **David:** I was just gonna figure out how to become a man by being homeless. Just gonna get off my addiction and stuff. So, yeah. I don't know. That's a weird concept for men I guess-- how to be a man. It's like something that you have to conquer, or something that you have to understand how... it's just... when you reach a certain point in your life you're like "How do I become a man?" If you don't have a father to just tell you that or show you that, then you don't get to figure it out. So basically I just had to become homeless and just like... go through the shit. And so... yeah. (David, In-Person Interview)

He attempted to sever the social ties he thought were a bad influence by leaving the area and trying to learn or achieve manhood by exposing himself to harshness. Severing ties is an attempt to achieve manhood because he understood manhood as largely tie-less, to be independent of both people and drugs.

When talking with Olivia I tried to trace back with her to a first experience of housing insecurity. In doing so a violence-filled and socially-severed life history unfolded. She met, married, and had multiple children in her early adulthood. They moved to California for better employment and their marriage fell apart. Her husband left her, took the children to another state and refused to let her see them. She said he told her kids she was crazy and turned them against

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[3] To be transparent, David didn't explicitly say he had been hit or abused as a child. However, the likelihood that he lived with many men that were violent towards his mother, but not a boy-child seems unlikely.

her. Eventually he moved somewhere completely without notice. She said she paid a private investigator for years to try to find her kids but did not regain contact with them until they were adults. She said she saw her ex-husband for the first time at her adult daughter's funeral.

At some point during this period of searching for contact with her children, she started dating a guy for a couple weeks she described as "charming." She said one day he took her to a different house, they had sex, and then he held her captive in the house for months where he beat her and brought in men who paid to rape her. She escaped from the house one day and was connected with a domestic violence shelter. While she was there the man found her, and threatened to kill her. She was transferred to another county, was given a new name and identity, and trained to work a new job. She worked there for many years, living in her own apartment by herself and making art. It was in this new job that she acquired her job-related injury for which she was paid worker's compensation for many years. This series of events explains a lack of a social support network that might have absorbed some of the harshness of losing her apartment after she abruptly stopped getting an income—severed ties to her children, to her family of origin, ties of friendship in the community in which she lived before she was abducted. She did not walk away from her world to try to become a woman—normative womanhood is not often associated with tielessness, but rather many strong ties in the form of a partner or children. Being a woman without strong ties increased her risk of sexual violence. Data tends to show that past sexual violence puts a person at risk for future sexual violence (Tyler et. al, 2001; Molnar et. al., 2001). The chain of violence and severed relationships started in childhood.

David harmed a girl-child with sexual violence while he was chemically impaired. He said this was a one-time event, that it was fueled by the lack of impulse control while impaired, and that he knows it was wrong and will never happen again. He says before he went to prison he

had a good relationship with all his children; the court has allowed him to maintain contact with them, but he said he hasn't been in touch yet because he's embarrassed to not have a job or a home and wants to interact with them from a more respectable place. David was critical of the prison system, giving a basic analysis of the failures of the Prison Industrial Complex which has little capacity to reform individuals but serves to profit off of the imprisonment and harsh treatment of prisoners.

> **David:** Because I am underneath severe restrictions that have nothing to do with my crime. And even though it was a bad crime it wasn't severely evil or anything like that. It's just... California doesn't care anymore. They just blanket you with all these things. And they're counting on the fact that you don't fight it and you just accept it. And I'm not going to sit down and just accept it, because it makes life complicated. Like, I'm homeless because of the rules I have stipulated. Like I've had places I could stay but it's too close to areas I'm not supposed to be around. So it's just like... they set it up that way. The system's not... and that's what I was saying earlier about my perception changed about how I saw people in Prison, or felons and that law. Because the law's not really set up to help people. It's not really completely set up to protect people like it used it. It's really set up to make them money. And it's a really sad fact. And they're all in on it, and it sounds really conspiratorial, but it's the reality of it. [information omitted for brevity] And the state also awards each prison a money amount per inmate which is $64,000 a year, per inmate. That's a lot of money. (David, In-Person Interview)

David's analysis is in-line with a wide array of critiques of the Prison Industrial Complex (Coyle et. al., 2003; Davis & Shaylor, 2001; Chang & Thompson, 2002; Fulcher, 2012). Critics of the prison system and advocates of restorative justice argue that locking people in cages or relegating them to surviving without money and sleeping outside does not teach them not to harm other people again, nor does it keep the community safe from future harm that might be committed out of anger or desperation to acquire resources to survive. Attending to a chain of violence can help us understand how violence often produces more violence.

Violence was a pre-cursor to a chain of events that resulted in housing deprivation for Olivia and David, but Olivia was the recipient of violent acts and David perpetrated a violent act.

A kind of institutional violence was then imposed on David and legal and regulatory abandonment is still happening to David. I believe David should have a path to stable adequate housing; a path that doesn't rely solely on the stableness of a romantic connection to a woman he's known for a few months. He should be able to compete for a job at a local saw mill on equal footing with all other potential applicants without disclosing stigmatizing information about his crime that has nothing to do with working that job. However, the spatial-legal regulatory abandonment that produces David's housing and economic insecurity could be changed via political advocacy, convincing one business owner to employ him, or a change in the law. Meanwhile, the conditions that severed the social ties and produced the trauma and mental illness that Olivia lives with was enacted through the system of misogyny. The violence perpetrated by men and tolerated or ignored by men and women produced the severed social ties. Olivia was abducted from one life and then had to re-start another life in order to flee violence. A domestic violence survivor support agency did right by Olivia in sheltering her, re-housing, and re-training her. But there is no clear direct legal or political change that could have prevented Olivia's housing deprivation besides permanent, culturally appropriate federally guaranteed housing for all people, or an end to misogynist violence. For years after exiting the domestic violence shelter she was held within a system of housing through worker's compensation. Either an institutional data management failure or some kind of misunderstanding of the bureaucratic process on Olivia's part resulted in a rapid descent into homelessness because she had no durable social ties that would prevent her from tumbling into severe economic abandonment. What has to change to prevent Olivia from being severed from community ties is a vast cultural change in practices of misogyny and violence against women, girls, and children in general.

A vast cultural change in practices of misogyny and violence against women, girls, and children in general likely would have prevented David's housing insecurity as well as Olivia's. The imagery and possibility to harm the girl was culturally produced and available in David's milieu of possible actions when he was drunk and had an impulse to harm. Ideas about hyper-sexualization of girls and the naturalization of sexual violence towards girls permeate our culture so much that molestation of girl children is often considered "not that big of a deal" (North, 2010; Bonavogilia, 2010). David said in our interview "even though it was a bad crime it wasn't severely evil or anything like that." The gendered trends of perpetrating sexual violence emerge not from a biologically broken part of the functioning system of males, men, and masculine people—they are socially learned and shape behavior.

Managing Misogyny's Excess

Boys learn to receive violence and suppress emotions at very young ages. While girls learn to prioritize the needs of others and manage negative feelings such as worry or anger by internalizing them, boys learn to preserve-the-self and externalize negative feeling (Rosenfield, et al, 2005; Chaplin& Aldao, 2013; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012). Researchers have documented how boys learn to mutate responses to sadness, anger, loneliness, or jealousy into self-harm through coping mechanisms such as drinking. They also are taught to mutate negative feelings into physical, emotional, and verbal dominance because anger and bravado are two of the few permissible emotional responses in normative masculinity (Plummer and Goefroy, 2010; Reidy et. al., 2015). As a parent to young children I frequently see the ways in which boys are treated with physical harshness and punished for verbally expressing sadness or other kinds of vulnerability. In their book *Raising Cain: Protecting the emotional life of boys* practicing therapists Kindlton and Thompson (2000) argue that boys are fundamentally mis-educated

about emotions which contributes significantly to the increased anger and aggression that characterize normative expectations of boys and men. Fivush et al. (2000) found that parents are more likely to talk to girl children with using naming emotions than with boys. They found in general that mothers talked more than fathers and mothers talked more about emotions to researchers. The diminished emotional coaching in boyhood is reflected in reduced attention to and naming of emotions in manhood.

In *The Value of Homelessness* Willse (2015) argues that the system of homelessness serves to manage and extract value from the unwanted populations within of a system of racial (and to some extent heteropatriarchal gendered) ordering—primarily Black men. He is correct. But also, homelessness is a system that contains and manages the excesses of misogyny. Not just a gendered order, but a misogynist order of violence against women and girls, of which gendered ordering is a part. We all wade through our days with an array of gender regulation happening all around us. In the case of housing insecurity and homelessness, when human life is teetering at the edge and enduring through crisis makes up daily life, the consequences of the gendered order of misogyny are stark. The consequences of gendered ordering are a tangled cyclone of violence and trauma. For women, this misogynist ordering of gender within disposability is often informed by a history of trauma, and the trauma is met with frequent risk of more trauma: for sleeping in public, for being vulnerable, for having needs.

David and Olivia's trajectories are examples of how homelessness absorbs the excesses of misogyny. The simplest definition of misogyny is the hatred of women/girls/femininity/females. Misogyny first orders people into gendered communities of girls and boys, women and men, feminine and masculine. Within this system there is a wide range of behaviors and practices via which girls/women/feminine people are expected to

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emotionally, physically, and in a variety of physical and discursive ways sexually care for men/boys/masculine people. Boys/men/masculine (M3) people are expected to dampen most caring emotions besides breadwinning and a specifically gendered response of protection of certain girls/women/feminine (F3) people considered 'theirs' or 'worthy' of protection. They are welcome to express anger, frustration, or excitement. Within a wide-ranging scale with specific cultural variations boys/men/masculine people are expected to express sexual interest and control on girls/women. In the United States, "acceptable" or even "cute" on this scale of sexual domination ranges from boys chasing a girl on the playground to kiss her when she doesn't want to be kissed, rom-com romanticized stalking of young women, and anger and vilification of women and girls who ignore or outright reject men's initiated verbal or physical contact. Within the system of misogyny, men and boys being like girls and women is considered a terrible outcome; boys and men that violate this norm are often punished harshly, and women and girls that are thought to be treading on the territory of men and boys are also disciplined in a variety of ways.

In the United States the national community has decided that there is a range of misogynist behaviors that are unacceptable (at least in law), such as Childhood Sexual Abuse, and rape when it corresponds with abduction. These crimes are punishable by law if the perpetrator is caught and the victim is believed by their community and the court. There's a whole array of behaviors of misogynist domination that are not managed by the system of law and are tolerated at different levels by different sub-communities that are differentially enacted by M3 and endured by F3. The entire range of behaviors— from gendered sorting, to "cute" stalking, to the behaviors deemed illegal— contribute to a system of misogyny. The entirety of the United States social and economic culture is founded on unequal gender relations. It still

requires these relations to maintain business-as-usual through the un- and under-paid labor of women and the desensitizing of men to violence who then produce profit through war and policing. So instead of a fundamental eradication of misogyny, the boundaries of "good" and "bad" misogyny are managed by the law and its perpatrators, such as David, are abandoned outside the system of employment or state support and therefore the system of housing. Those abandoned to the margins of the functioning order of housing and the wage economy include both the people who endure misogyny (Olivia) and those who perpetrate the kinds of misogyny considered "out of bounds" (David).

David's abandonment to housing deprivation is a byproduct of the Prison Industrial Complex and punitive spatial laws, but it is also the result of the excesses of a system of misogyny. The Prison Industrial Complex is a very profitable way to manage those excesses and the way the United States has, for the most part, chosen to proceed. The system of homelessness is also a way that those excesses are managed. Both imprisonment and abandonment from the system of housing are considered punishment for behavior that crossed the current line set up about acceptable vs. unacceptable misogynist behavior. David's punishment and the social taboo surrounding the way he harmed another person cut him off from social support ties, a path to economic self-sufficiency, and therefore housing. Olivia's body bore decades, basically a lifetime, of misogynist violence. Surviving it involved a variety of severed social and spatial relations, which also severed long-term ties of social support. By no means do I make this argument to attempt to absolve David for the responsibility of his actions. He is responsible for the violence he committed on another person. But also that violence springs from a misogynist and gendered system of management that he was ordered into. In examining homelessness and housing insecurity we see the populations of people washed ashore by misogyny's excess and

related abandonment, especially when state punishment for misogyny is paired with economic inequality.[4]

Conclusion: Analyzing Disposability

In this chapter I've argued that housing insecurity is one way in which populations are disposed of in the Gilded Age of Neoliberalism in the U.S. Within the cultures created out of necessity by people and populations that have been disposed of disposable characteristics of care emerge. This happens not only in urban communities, as Desmond identified, but also in this rural community. The ways in which someone is deemed disposable or disposed of also has gendered characteristics that should not be glossed over in an attempt to identify the wide-spread nature of disposability. In this case, disposability both has differential impacts based on gender in the ways in which a person is exposed to potential violence simply for being a woman who is disposed of into the open air of the public street. While both boys and girls (M3 and F3) are sorted into and regulated by a system of gender expectation and misogyny, and both boys and girls experience harshness and violence as part of that process, over time the bodies of men and women experience misogyny differently. For a man such as David to reach the limit of acceptable life within a system of misogyny and get disposed of into a world housing insecurity is to have reached that limit by harming others. For women, such as Olivia, reaching the "limit" of misogyny often means being disposed of after enduring chapter after chapter of violence and its related social severing.

Once inside a system of housing deprivation the risks of further violence and exploitation continue to be gendered through the different risks of harm men and women who move through

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[4] There's ample evidence that wealthy people who perpetuate misogynist violence are rarely held accountable and even if they do face legal action or social uproar, they are not then abandoned outside systems of economic utility and housing.

public space are exposed to. There are also differences in the way a heterosexual romantic relationship is potentially a ticket to be cared for, and for whom it is potentially the entry into a new chapter of violence. There are of course a variety of other ways in which people are differentially at risk within the experience of disposability, and different causal factors to being disposed of. (Dis)ability is one clear fracturing line that both exacerbates the experience of being inadequately housed and is a causing factor to inadequate housing, as discussed in a previous chapter. While it is important to identify the widespread phenomenon of surplus and disposable lives, we must also attend to the ways in which differential disposability greatly increases the risk of death, violence and harm, and the extent to which someone is disposed of because she had the audacity to not die at the hands of such violence and indifference.

Chapter 8: Conclusion:

Hills County is a place with vast, beautiful landscape populated with people who generally share a proud, working-class, outdoorsy, and self-sufficient cultural attitude. It's also a place with widespread underemployment and its related challenges with little concrete hope of economic conditions changing. Inadequate housing and the system of homelessness in the area are specifically rural and, as such, are not visibly identified, discussed, or reckoned with in the ways that urban homelessness is. This dissertation has shown the specific ways that people endure inadequate housing and homelessness in Hills County, and the ways the housed community understands and responds to the problem. I have argued that inadequate housing and homelessness are unlikely to be reckoned with on a community-wide scale in Hills County because dealing with homelessness and inadequate housing at the local scale will require recognition and the ability to engage at the federal and state scales about two types of disinvestments: regional inequality, and housing deprivation. I argued that the spatial biases naturalized within public cultural formations, specifically the current dominant reliance on the administrative form, restricts the ability of rural communities to respond to and ameliorate social problems that are rooted in issues about economic inequality such as inadequate housing.

I first highlighted the differences between urban and rural housing deprivation in visibility, mobilities, housing stock, spatial relations, and the draw of the rural idyll. Answering the question "What's rural about inadequate housing Hills County?" allowed me to highlight the complex ways the nine people inadequately housed people I spoke with navigated housing deprivation, specifically highlighting the ways rurality informed their experience. For example,

urban homelessness is often characterized by frequent strategic or reactionary short-distance movements, often initiated by policing or threat of policing. An informant, Lynxster, stays mostly in rural areas or on the move to avoid the harsh policing of urban areas. In many ways his mostly rural-based housing inadequacy is a product of the visibility of urban homelessness. While urban homelessness is often understood through the visibility of bodies sleeping and living on the streets and other public places, the majority of Hills County is forested public land. Rural housing inadequacy is characterized by a complex visuality; for example, living in the woods enables the ability to sleep and camp without being seen by another person for an extended period of time. However, in small towns anonymity disappears pretty quickly.

Rural mobilities often involve traversing vast physical distance to sites of amenities such as stores, services, healthcare, or employment. Rural mobilities involve significant reliance on car transport, precarious digital connections, and increasingly distant commutes. While the distance between a house in the countryside and a town with amenities might be 30 miles, a 45 minute drive for a person with a working car, the pace of traveling that distance as a hitch hiker could take multiple days. The housing stock of rural areas informed the reasons people lost housing, such as the durability and ownership practices associated with mobile homes, or the limited options to seek other low-income housing after conflict with or discrimination by landlords or motel owners This uniquely rural experience of only one of any amenity (such as the motel), if the amenity exists at all, leaves very little wiggle room to maneuver around burned-bridges for people living in poverty in rural areas.

Limited employment options are a significant factor in de-industrialized and emptied-out rural areas such as Hills County. When Ilana lost her job at the biggest grocery store in the county, she lost credibility with one of the biggest employers. Because they were under the

supervision of the criminal justice system, Ilana and David were legally tied to the county seat. However, because of the lack of amenities, Ilana was also administratively compelled to leave the county to fulfill drug treatment requirements. Her mobility was deeply tied to adherence to the administrative form with risk of penalty for breaking her parole. Because rural areas are so much less likely to have large medical facilities like drug treatment centers, this in-county/out-county mobility is part of a wider rural experience of dispersed amenities and facilities, usually into more urban areas. The combination of spatial restrictions, the sparse landscape surrounding a dense town center, and restrictions associated with a sex offense resulted in a very restricted swath of area David could viably live in while not breaking his parole. Most of the housing in the county seat is too close to schools, churches, or other places that he is forbidden to live near. The only viable option for legal housing is somewhere far outside of town, away from other houses and schools. The combination of legal restrictions and spatial limitations basically required David to sleep outdoors.

A different pace of life, the rural experience of slower mobility, and value of the idyllic landscape in rural areas were reasons multiple inadequate housed participants gave for staying in the region. They are the primary reasons that Olivia in-migrated, sharing characteristics with in-migration by people with more economic resources. For Olivia, the high-concentration of services did not draw her to stay in a big city like many housed residents and service providers presume. The dense services did not actually help Olivia end her housing crisis, but the more sparse rural administrative services did.

During my fieldwork, it quickly became clear that the actual ways most people dealt with inadequate housing was very different than the narratives provided by housed residents. This disconnect is not merely a discrepancy between what housed residents knew when I spoke with

them and what they might know if given accurate information. Even when provided with alternative information respondents returned a dominant narrative that either elaborated on one or two "infamous" people who are thought to epitomize homelessness, or focus on the ways they imagined people would quickly stop being inadequately housed in the area. I argued that these narratives function as a social imaginary, which is productive for housed residents who rely on the social imaginaries to elide inter-personal or community responsibility, and obscure their own position within tiers of insecurity associated with the widespread lack of economic opportunity.

While there is widespread economic disinvestment in Hills County, there were also frequent grievances that public interactions were characterized by dysfunctional and hierarchal political processes; these grievances often splintered along the lines of class, race, and (dis)ability. I put these distinctions within the context of debates about public culture more generally, specifically the idealized story of a 1-1, everybody-knows-your-name rural public culture that is best embodied in the political form of the town-hall-meeting style of public deliberation. I showed how the evolution of urban-biased public cultural forms that emerged during industrialization and westward expansion naturalizes this ideal democratic practice within rural communities, who are expected to execute ideal democratic practice and care for their neighbor while at the same time existing in a wider context of regional neglect and abandonment within a wider body of public administration. I name this specific ideal rural democratic practice and the expectation of small-town interpersonal community care-taking "rural exceptionalism." Rural exceptionalism obscures wider political analysis of the unequal distribution of resources through which the community might address some of the needs of the residents facing the hardest challenges. It truncates possibilities for collective demands on the state to emerge through town-wide public engagement with critical issues of inequality by placing the blame of

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hierarchical or ineffective public cultural practices on the members of the town themselves. This cycle informs the specific limitations of the community to recognize and respond to housing deprivation in this community in this case through demands on the state and national scale.

In Hills County the administrative forms that are generally thought to manage and advocate for people experiencing homelessness are under-funded and small. I traced the development of formations of public culture with specific attention to the ways density and proximity are core to conceptions of publicity in its various adaptations. I showed how this spatial bias operates through the specific Continuum of Care program that federal and state governments use to distribute funds to manage homelessness, arguing that ultimately the urban-bias of public cultural practice exacerbates regional inequalities of urban-center and rural-periphery. I considered current theories of rural public culture, arguing that despite their rural applications, the formations of publicity themselves are still rooted in conceptions that naturalize urban social organization. I introduce the term "dual abandonment" to identify the way in which marginalized populations in rural areas experience exacerbated disinvestment from national, regional, or statewide public deliberation because of the spatial bias of these public formations combined with residing in a region that is politically and economically neglected, and spatially isolated from sites of decision making.

Dual abandonment is first the experience of first being abandoned outside the system of housing (Willse, 2015), within a regional community that is economically, politically, and spatially abandoned to the outskirts of wider public engagement. Dual abandonment has significant implications for people experiencing homelessness and other poor or otherwise marginal populations in rural areas of the U.S. The way in which the administrative form emerges from and operates in dense, urban sites prevents people in rural areas from even the

ability to be counted, seen, and receive scraps through administrative management. The

naturalization of the administrative form as the "appropriate" form to deal with economic

disinvestments that are framed as cultural problems such as homelessness is spatially biased, and

needs to be more seriously considered as a regional and classed bias of current-era public

cultural practice.

In the final chapter I considered how people who are disposed of into what Olivia

considers "dumping grounds" of the spatial and economic margins of collective life dwell within

the realm of disposability. I showed how disposable ties, which Desmond (2012) identifies

specifically at work in an urban community of people facing eviction, are at work in the rural

context of Hills County. I argued that care practices performed in relationships formed through

disposable ties are a specifically kind of gendered labor I term disposable care. Disposable care

differs from both unpaid gendered labor that is generally theorized to maintain the family unit

and paid labor that is said to maintain the neoliberal economy. While disposability is harnessed

to sustain life, it has very different gendered origins and impacts that I believe should be

considered in making analyses about the widespread phenomenon of disposability. Comparing

two specific cases of people enduring longer-term housing deprivation, I argued that housing

deprivation is one way misogyny is maintained and managed; the existing system of criminality

and homelessness are used to manage the populations that exceed misogyny's durability.

Implications

The work has highlighted a wide array of challenges to ending homelessness and

inadequate housing in the United States. These challenges include the way collective problems

are debated and solved, the regional distribution of resources and burdens, and the harsh impacts

of misogyny. Intellectually, this work challenges the fundamental spatial assumptions about

public cultural practice and deliberation as the primary way people in the United States engage about collective problems and petition the government. I argue that when it comes to issues affecting the most disinvested people in rural areas, the current forms of public deliberation are not plausible paths to rectify these inequalities. Scholars debating the functions of public space, public culture, and the public sphere have been re-formulating the constitution of public processes in relation to the changing power relations and design of cities for decades. Public cultural scholarship needs to de-center the city form and its streets as the center of public life, and integrate rural spatial relations within conceptions of public deliberation. This will require not just tacking rural locations into analyses of processes currently recognized as public formations. Instead it will require a reconsideration of what is considered a public formation and analyzing how these formations operate in a diverse range of spatialities. This dissertation builds off the work of scholars of rural public culture, which have often focused on marginalized subjectivity, or the economic regional marginality of rural areas. I argue that the distribution of the possibilities of public deliberation itself bias the urban form. This results in a bleak outlook to solve problems of inadequate housing and homelessness in rural areas without a change in conditions. In future research, scholars of public culture and rurality should examine the distribution of the possibilities of deliberation in relation to other economically and politically disinvested populations, both in the U.S. and in other countries. This might include analyzing inadequate housing in other rural areas as well as rural communities facing harsh conditions informed by economic inequality intersecting with another aspect of disinvestment such as disability, racism, or immigrant status.

Scholarship on rural homelessness in the United States remains relatively rare. Studies on housing inadequacy in other rural, suburban, and presumably wealthy areas need to be

conducted. When this research is done, however, I hope researchers join me and other scholars in recognizing that the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness is not an adequate metric. I hope that other scholars will integrate Willse's critique that research on people experiencing homelessness that is de-linked from an analysis of the systems that produce their housing deprivation merely feeds a broken and profit-producing system. Scholars must continue to link findings about people who are inadequately housed to the economic and political causes of housing deprivation and be critical of the ways investment in administrative forms is not working to end homelessness. This work has highlighted many concrete ways administrative public culture has failed to meet the needs of inadequately housed rural people through poor execution. If a person was invested in repairing the administrative form, there's ample opportunity to do so. For example, federal programs such as the Continuum of Care program need to find a different way of evaluating need than numbers. The numbers game privileges urban areas over and over again. Even when HUD and other agencies release funding set aside for rural areas, these funds benefit areas most able to organize together and produce the grant which are more likely to be higher-density rural areas and areas near intellectual centers or urban centers. The expectation that more remote rural counties work together to compete for rural and urban grant funding asks under-resourced areas execute complex coordination and neutralize competing priorities that single-county entities do not have to deal with. Four or five under-resourced counties coordinating an entire grant application via telephone, each with different bosses, funding streams, and technical tools seems like a fools' errand, and that's what the Midpoint experienced in its attempt to do so.

Ultimately, ending inadequate housing will be linked to increasing access to (both stable and flexible) affordable adequate housing and economic security for all. I have identified how

rural exceptionalism stands in the way of linking local problems to national accountability; this poses an interesting challenge for future research in building a platform to institute nation-wide political action towards economic justice for the poorest Americans. Similarly, this critique of the administrative form suggests that new forms of public deliberation and consensus building must be developed. In the founding of the United States there was significant deliberation about how to even out the interests of rural and urban areas. The compromises that were designed are not working, and new ones must be developed. While this work has been critical of the administrative form in relation to regional bias, in its widest analysis ending inadequate housing is linked to providing adequate housing for all people in both rural and urban areas. This work has identified how rural inadequate housing is related to rural housing stock in general, so any research that can help develop a national housing policy that works for both urban and rural areas, with their very different housing needs, will be valuable.

Ending dual abandonment will require, on one hand, ending the marketization of and capitalization on things needed for people to live, such as housing. There are a variety of political movements underway to challenge the corporatization and marketization of human life and collective public resources, such as the Occupy Movement, Black Lives Matter, and movements to make public education publicly funded and publicly controlled. The regional abandonment at work in dual abandonment begs that urban and rural people, scholars and non-scholars alike, pay attention to and push back against the extraction of resources from rural areas and poor urban communities that are harnessed to create extreme wealth. Finding ways for disinvested urban people to care about the lives and needs of disinvested rural people and vice-versa could potentially be an effective way to build new social and political relations that could repair regional abandonment.

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California in particular has dramatic examples of these intensified exchanges of extraction and investment, with subsidies for tech corporations literally changing the physical landscape of San Francisco and its surrounding areas. The big players of tech, large corporate farms, and the film industry dominate the economic and political engines in Sacramento, leaving few avenues for the needs of regions such as Hills County to be seriously considered. The extreme economic and opportunity inequality of California could be productive, however, of alliance relationships between disinvested urban communities and neglected rural communities. Cross-regional alliances between neglected communities could be powerful tools to articulate class-based claims for resource equity that sidestep a process where urban and rural poor communities separately petition for the scraps of government investment, changing the overall economic priorities.

Scholars of public culture often note that public cultural formations are designed as sites where people can have and hopefully resolve conflict. Rural exceptionalism is heavy with the expectation that conflict take a rosy, optimistic form that is more technical than emotional; however, most critical conflicts are largely emotional as well as technical. Explicit conversations about homelessness in Hills County in a local public venue such as the local newspaper seemed taboo to many service providers I talked with. This was particularly true if the public statement was going to ask housed people to change behavior, such as stopping NIMBYism. While online discourse tends to be uniquely harsh, in the United States any type of face-to-face political deliberation between non-experts is generally considered impolite or unkind, especially by white people. In the country at large, but particularly in many rural areas, we (people in the U.S.) need to learn how to do intense conflict about political issues such as class inequality, homelessness, racism, or policing while staying engaged in the conversation and working towards the end goal.

I have been a part of a political membership organization teaching its membership how to do this and it is hard! This skill (and the training to use it) needs to extend beyond leftist political organizations into basic civic education at all levels of our education system and taken up by local community groups salient in rural areas such as churches, 4H, scouting, etc.

I identified specific gender differences in labor performed to sustain day to day life within lives deemed disposable. Disposable care practices differ from familial or labor based care practices. They specifically do the life-giving work to offset abandonment from the state. I identified disposable care at work, but more research needs to be done to more robustly understand the phenomenon; the motivations, durability, and specific gendered relations of disposable care within a larger sample will likely generate valuable information that can be harnessed to help people survive abandonment. Researchers need to expand on the ways that gender-based violence is part of differential disposabilities. I argued that the system of homelessness and the Prison Industrial Complex manages misogyny's excess, but that management takes other forms. This research, while difficult to grapple with, lays the groundwork for public intellectuals and educators to clarify the stakes of everyday "casual" misogyny and harsh treatment towards children. Misogyny, and its precursor gendered ordering, accrue to form a person's beliefs and influence what they feel are available actions. By reducing sexism, de-naturalizing violence against women and girls, reducing the hyper-sexualization of children, and giving boys and men diverse outlets to manage a full range of human emotions, the violence and risk that characterize differential disposabilities can be reduced. This is in addition to feminist projects already at work to strengthen the autonomy and agency of women, girls, and feminine people. While I gave a brief overview of ACEs, I think if ACEs research is successfully implemented into public health policy to reduce adverse childhood experiences, most of which

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are rooted in inequalities such as poverty, racism, and misogyny, this research will go a long way in reducing individual harm. Projects towards these goals are, in their way, projects to reduce the social-severing that misogyny produces that exacerbates housing inequality.

Individual Interventions

There are some very technical ways that a reader could consider taking action that would intervene into some of the ways people are made inadequately housed, or reduce the burden of inadequate housing. Participation in any collective project to end economic inequality or build a collective safety net that actually provides life-giving resources would have the most impact on ending inadequate housing. Seeing the fruits of these projects will likely take a long time. Showing up is the first step of the work. There are a variety of concrete policy targets that will minimize the number of people experiencing long term housing insecurity. One those targets is ban-the-box campaigns or other campaigns that reduce the intense exclusion of criminals and former felons from housing, employment, and public participation. If you're an employer, you might explicitly make it a goal to employ a person with a felony or other known criminal history if they're otherwise eligible for the job. One of the most effective programs in providing low-income people with stable housing in the long term is the Section 8 Housing Voucher Program. If you are bothered by homelessness and inadequate housing, and you own a property that you rent out, renting via Section 8 is one of the most direct ways you can literally house an at-risk-of-homelessness person without upending the economic and political system of housing in this country. The landlord makes the same rent you were going to charge, and a portion of it is paid to you directly from the government. This is not a perfect program—as Cathy evidenced, the program can feel invasive to both renters and homeowners. However, the waiting lists for people to receive housing vouchers are years long in most areas because not enough rental property

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owners rent out to Section 8 eligible people. If you're an urban-raised and urban-dwelling person you could break the one-way street of urban-rural information exchanges by getting familiar with the diverse experiences and concerns of rural life in this and other countries. The online news site Dailyyonder.com is a great place to start. Doing so is likely to de-program the stereotypes many urbanites have about the rural U.S. and expose city-dwellers to priorities of different regions. Intervening into misogyny and gendered-ordering has many concrete sites for interventions that any person can execute in day-to-day life. If you're a parent or child care educator, you can educate yourself to parent children of all genders in ways that do not reproduce misogyny and violence. As a starting point you might look at hooks (2000), Kirkham (2013) or Ott (2011).

Future Research

These are just a few concrete ideas. A whole collection of books could be written about strategies to end housing insecurity in the U.S., create economic equality, reconfigure the public cultural form, and end regional biases. I encourage you to do so; or to start organizing with other people to act towards those goals. In my next phase of work, I am planning a new research project on the politics of care. I will consider the body of work on the politics of care in relation to economically disinvested rural communities. Despite (or perhaps because of) the pessimism that trails in the wake of the production of theories such as rural exceptionalism and dual abandonment, I will conduct new research on collective projects at work in rural economically disinvested communities in the U.S. I am hopeful that I will find examples of political projects and care practices in disinvested rural communities that seek to and perhaps actually do rectify structural inequalities. I will put these findings in conversations with work of the politics of care, hopeful that I can identify a rural politics of care that can fill the gap dual abandonment exposes.

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