



12

Between Street and Shelter: Seclusion, Exclusion, and the Neutralization of Poverty

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Introduction: Polarization at Rock Bottom

At the lower rungs of the class ladder, there is perhaps no greater social, spatial, and symbolic distinction than that between the housed and the houseless. Not only are the homeless assumed to violate the social contract bonded by work, but they simultaneously represent the “constituent outside” of propertied citizenship (Roy 2003). Yet, since eighteenth-century Europe, where the vast spreading network of prisons, hospitals, and workhouses functioned to combat newfound mendicancy and idleness, further degrees of discernment of deservingness and associated forms of confinement and exclusion have been meted out to those without recourse to private property. In the US today, and a growing number of cities in both the global north and south, an increasing central axis of socio-spatial division among the poorest of the poor is that between the street and the shelter.

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According to the US government's most recent homeless census in 2017, nearly 554,000 people were experiencing homelessness on a single night. About 65 per cent were staying inside at emergency shelters, transitional housing programmes, or safe havens, and 35 per cent were outside in unsheltered locations (HUD 2017). But what determines who gets in and who stays out? While recent scholarship has spent an immense amount of energy debating whether shelters function as medicalized, punitive, accommodative, profitable, or ambivalent institutions (see Deverteuil et al. 2009) and the degree to which policing those on the streets is revanchist or therapeutic (see Stuart 2015), little attention has been paid to the ground-level logics and practices that propel or repel a person into one space or another. Furthermore, the scholars that do provide compelling ethnographic analysis of the regulation of the street (Duneier 1999; Bourgois and Schonberg 2009; Gowan 2010) or the shelter (Desjarlais 1997; Lyon-Callo 2008; Von Mahs 2013) lack first-hand research on the other side of the street/shelter divide. This amputates a broader analysis of the regulation of homelessness that might explain how the state sorts out the "down and out."

Spanning Wacquant's oeuvre is the analytic impulse to integrate both institutions such as the prison and ghetto (2008), and modes of poverty policy, namely "prisonfare" and "workfare" (2009), into unified frames of analysis. This chapter adopts this strategy to examine the dynamic relationship between the street and shelter and reimagines them as operating as part and parcel of a single socio-spatial complex managing the unhoused. Applying this unified lens to a range of ethnographic observations between shelter inmates, homeless campers, social workers, police officers, city managers, and activists in the city of San Francisco, the chapter puts forward two interconnected theses. The first is that the development, design, and distribution of shelters are increasingly shaped by the crisis in street homelessness, its policing, and politics. The chapter then argues that who ends up on the street in the first place and the criminalization weighted against them are increasingly shaped by the shelters' expansion, specialization, and politics. Together, these processes form a mutually constitutive process of homeless seclusion and exclusion (Herring 2014) aimed at neutralizing the homeless condition—

depoliticizing and invisibilizing the social problem through the illusion of policy success.

Towards a Relational Theory of Governing Homelessness: Struggles over Social Seclusion in the Bureaucratic Field

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a new regime of accumulation and new modes of social regulation were in the making in the US and other advanced liberal democracies. Uneven recovery from the deep recession of the 1970s; the slide into a new recession in 1981; massive deindustrialization that had begun in the early 1960s; the steady erosion of union rights and benefits; catastrophic decreases in affordable housing; the defunding of public housing—all combined to produce a massive wave of new homelessness (Wolch and Dear 1993). As Wacquant characterized these trends and specified their outcomes from the previous Fordist era as a new regime of “advanced marginality” fuelled by the fragmentation of wage labour and the diffusion of territorial stigmatization, the urbanist Peter Marcuse outlined in parallel fashion the distinctive aspects of “advanced homelessness” (1988, 1996). Thirty years later, the characteristics and patterns Marcuse identified persist.

First, homelessness is no longer a temporary or transitional phenomenon, but a robust feature of the metropolis, spanning booms and busts. Second, the composition of the homeless has changed drastically—where minority group members were a minority of the homeless in the early 1970s, they have since become the large majority in many cities, as have the proportion of homeless families composed of women and children. African Americans are heavily overrepresented in the homeless population, representing about 40 per cent of the sheltered homeless population but 27 per cent of the poverty population and only 13 per cent of the general population (HUD 2017). In San Francisco, 39 per cent of the homeless population is African American compared to 5 per cent of the general population (ASR 2017).

With this rise in “advanced homelessness,” the US state responded in two ways. First, the federal and local governments invested billions into opening and operating emergency shelters across the country. Between 1984 and 1988, over 3500 new homeless shelters opened and they continued to multiply throughout the 1990s as the federal government’s housing budget was halved from \$77.3 to \$30.9 billion over this same period (Goetz 2013). Simultaneously, cities began passing anti-homeless ordinances such as bans on camping, sleeping, sitting, and feeding the poor—effectively criminalizing homelessness (Ortiz et al. 2015). While there have been significant developments in promoting permanent supportive housing and increased resistance to criminalization, shelters continue to open across the country and anti-homeless ordinances have increased more over the past five years than any earlier period in US history (NLCHP 2016). In sum, the criminalized street and temporary shelter remain the primary institutions through which the unhoused are managed in the US metropolis.

However, the relationship between the expansion of criminalization on the street and provision of shelter is difficult to interpret, largely because researchers have tended to aim their analytic lens at one institution or another, resulting in a divided and siloed scholarship of two distinctive and opposing interpretations of homeless management today. On the one hand, those studying public space and the streets have asserted the dominance of a *punitive* and *exclusionary* approach towards homelessness marked by the surge of anti-homeless laws and associated practices of banishment (Beckett and Herbert 2009) that have become defining features of the “carceral” (Davis 2006), “revanchist” (Smith 1996), and “post-justice” (Mitchell 2003) city.

On the other hand, those studying shelters have challenged these characterizations spotlighting the rise of homeless services as a “counterweight to the current understandings of homelessness that narrowly focus on anti-homeless ordinances and expulsion from public spaces” (DeVerteuil 2006: 118). Instead, shelters are portrayed as an *accommodative* and a *seclusionary* approach to homelessness. They are variably rendered as sites of medicalization (Lyon-Callo 2008; Mathieu 1993), warehousing (Hopper 2003: 85) where homeless people are to be monitored at best and abandoned at worst (Desjarlais 1997; Gounis 1992), industries

providing enrichment for their managers (Willse 2015), and “accommodating social welfare responses” of charity (Cloke et al. 2011). However, it is unclear how or if shelter expansion and its criteria is being shaped by the punitive policies of the street. At the same time, there is little consideration of how or if shelters serve to mitigate or promulgate such repression (for an exception, see Stuart 2016).

To address this disjointed literature and contribute to this volume’s aim to critically engage Wacquant’s work, this chapter combines his disparate concepts of “socio-spatial seclusion” and “bureaucratic field” (Bourdieu 1994). Wacquant insists that “we construe the state, not as a monolithic and coordinated ensemble, but as a splintered space of forces vying over the definition and distribution of public goods” (2010a: 200). This chapter asserts that bureaucratic struggles do not simply occur in an abstract social and symbolic space, but within and over a divided physical urban and regulatory space composed of distinct and overlapping neighbourhoods, police precincts, transportation authorities, business improvement districts, and electoral districts.

To spatialize the conception of the bureaucratic field, I turn to another recent, though lesser-known, work by Wacquant on “designing urban seclusion” (2010b). In this article, Wacquant defines social seclusion as the process through which “particular social categories and activities are corralled, hemmed in, and isolated in a reserved and restricted quadrant of physical and social space” (2010b: 166). Wacquant draws out a two-dimensional analytic grid depicting degrees of high and low social hierarchy and selective and forced isolation, to distinguish numerous modalities of seclusion. In the article, he notes that “on both sides of the Atlantic, it turns out that the grand designer of urban marginality, by omission or commission, is the state” (2010b: 174), but does not further elaborate how struggles within a contested bureaucratic field might shape the seclusion and exclusion of marginal populations.

This chapter fuses these conceptual tools welded by Wacquant to analyse the interlocking of prison and ghetto to understand the management of the homeless, a dishonoured category conspicuously absent in his analysis of advanced marginality. It also follows his call to “relink shifts in penal and social policy, instead of isolating shifts in criminal justice from correlative changes on the various policy fronts that interface with the

same dispossessed populations” (2010a: 241). However, in contrast to Wacquant’s rendering of the more global hydraulic downshift of welfare provision and upsurge in penal control in the US, this chapter highlights how a conjoined increase of penal and welfare provision is spatially deployed through exclusion and seclusion, and institutionally controlled through shelter and the street, to neutralize poverty.

A Double-Edged Ethnography in San Francisco

To probe the dynamic interactions between street and shelter, I draw on a two-year *ethnography of the bureaucratic field* of homeless management in the city of San Francisco, and an *enactive ethnography* of homeless survival. While Wacquant and others have operationalized the concept of the bureaucratic field through various empirical methods, this study is among the first to anchor it in an explicit ethnographic one (for exceptions, see Dubois 2016; Flint 2018). What is missing from Wacquant’s and many others’ analyses of the bureaucratic field are actual people: city officials, agency managers, advocates, residents, and the marginalized actively struggling over recognition and resources. Although Wacquant maps out the macro-outcomes and shifting dynamics between the penal and welfare hands of the state, the actual struggles themselves are not systematically addressed.

This chapter provides a methodological antidote drawing from my larger ethnography *within* the field of homeless management in San Francisco between 2014 and 2017 that encompassed agencies and organizations involved in regulating homelessness along two internecine struggles: vertical struggles between politicians, agency managers, and street-level bureaucrats and horizontal struggles between various city agencies, community organizations, business associations, non-profit providers, and politicians (Wacquant 2010a, b). These included observations from ride-alongs with police officers enforcing anti-homeless laws, public health workers on street outreach, and sanitation workers on street sweeps; sitting in office hours with shelter social workers; and working in city hall at the Mayor’s Office of Homelessness. It also draws on observations from community associations, including two years serving as a key

organizer in the city's homeless advocacy group and participating in over 100 public forums such as community police meetings, homeowner and merchant association meetings, and hearings at city hall.

These observations from above are paired with an *enactive ethnography from below* (Wacquant 2015). Wacquant introduces the method of enactive ethnography as a “brand of immersive fieldwork based on performing the phenomenon, (as) a fruitful path toward capturing the cognitive, conative, and cathectic schemata (habitus) that generate the practices and underlie the cosmos under investigation” (2015: 1). Over the course of a year, nine full months were spent immersed living on the streets, in the shelters, and daily/weekly “welfare hotels” alongside those experiencing homelessness.¹ I also followed those entering into, living within, and being evicted from homeless housing programmes and specialized shelters, like those highlighted in this chapter that I could not ethically reside in. This entailed spending nights sleeping out on sidewalks, parks, beneath underpasses, and among hundreds of other men in shelters; spending days acquiring the means of survival through charity, informal work, begging, and the illicit economy; and experiencing the lines and people processing to access shelter, meals, benefits, jails, and courts firsthand with a variety of homeless individuals. The method not only revealed an embodied practical knowledge and social competency impossible to gain under traditional participant observation, but also brokered a trust and sense of solidarity between myself and research subjects.

Together, these approaches offer a uniquely relational approach (Desmond 2014) to gauging the connection between street and shelter, to which the houseless are compelled or repelled to reside in and the relation between the poor and those governing them. The approach also bridges and relates the new “performative” scholarship that seeks to explain the varied experiences of homelessness “from within” (Cloke et al. 2011; Lancione 2014) with those focused on explaining broader structures of state, market, and community institutions governing the poor.

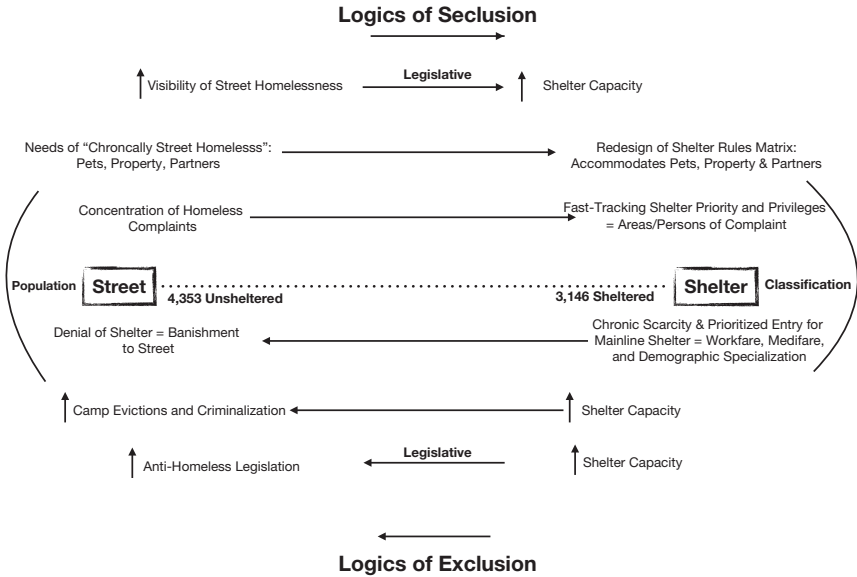
¹I took every step to ensure I did not take a shelter bed from someone who wanted one. While shelters were at full capacity nearly all the time, during the first week of each month there were often free beds due to welfare payouts; during the winter months with shelter expansion, one-night beds also became regularly available. Over two years I was able to reside 96 nights in shelter and several more waiting.

How the Street Shapes the Shelter

In March of 2015, San Francisco Mayor Edward Lee cut the ribbon of the city's "Navigation Centre," its first new homeless shelter to open in over a decade. Flanked by officials from the Departments of Public Works, Police, Animal Services, Public Health, and Human Services, the mayor announced to the gathered crowd: "We are providing hope and opportunity for people by removing the barriers that keep them on the streets and from accessing critical services and housing that will help turn their lives around" (March 5, 2015). One year later, in reaction to growing resident complaints and media uproar over what appeared to be an unprecedented growth of tents on sidewalks and a marked increase in 911 calls for "homeless complaints," city supervisors passed a declaration of a "homeless state of emergency" and "shelter crisis" requesting the immediate development of five new shelters.

San Francisco is by no means alone in declaring a shelter emergency in response to a crisis of street homelessness to fast-track shelter planning, loosen the public purse, and mobilize philanthropic sympathies. Between 2015 and 2017, nearly a dozen other west coast municipalities did the same, including other Bay Area cities like Berkeley, Oakland, and San Jose, but also Los Angeles, Santa Cruz, San Diego, Portland, Honolulu, Seattle, and Eugene, among others (NAEH 2016). After a decade of shelter ambivalence in the US, which saw the passage and then subsequent failure of the more than 200 local "10-year plans to end homelessness" with their concerted shift towards permanent supportive housing (Sparks 2017a), cities are now experiencing a resurgence of shelters following distinctively new logics and practices of homeless seclusion and exclusion with a much tighter relationship to street homelessness.

First is a new spatial logic and practice of shelter development spurred directly by the informal settlement patterns on the street. This is apparent in the move away from mega-shelters in service-dependent ghettos towards boutique-shelters assigned to "hot-spots" of street encampments. While there is almost always citywide consensus for more shelter, there is also always local opposition to their location. Exposure to drug use and drug dealing, increased crime, public health hazards from



discarded needles, and fears of depressed property values were ever-present concerns of opening shelters among local residents and merchants at community meetings I attended, as is well documented in the literature (Takahashi and Dear 1997). In the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, San Francisco, like many US cities, had progressively concentrated emergency shelters and related human services into what Wolch and Dear (1993) famously called a “service-dependent ghetto,” within its Tenderloin and 5th street Districts, where land was cheap and political opposition less organized. The navigation centres, however, break with this spatial arrangement. Instead, four of the five new shelters are sited within the quickly gentrifying areas of the city’s Dogpatch, Mission, Market Street, and North Beach neighbourhoods that host a disproportionate amount of homeless encampments.

Legitimizing these shelter developments, and overcoming the NIMBYism, hinged on the severity of sidewalk encampments in these areas and the promise by officials that new shelters would result in their disappearance. As the director of the Mayor’s Office of Homelessness put it at a contentious community meeting (May 10, 2016):

Your neighbourhood has been ground-zero of homeless encampments and has suffered a disproportionate burden of the homeless crisis. We've heard your complaints and understand you're fed up with the encampments, the needles, and the faeces. The Navigation Centre is designed to address those concerns, by removing encampments and bringing people indoors where they can get the services they need.

By promoting the shelter as a formalized solution to the informal encampments on the street, the official made clear that receiving a new shelter was akin to being prioritized for a new public utility rather than a dumpsite for a citywide negative externality. Across these meetings, the question of deservingness of the new clients or rehabilitative functions of the new shelter rarely surfaced outside the formal presentation by welfare bureaucrats. More prominent was the attention to the shelters' architectural design and fresh aesthetic, their limited footprint in hosting only 75–150 people, and assurances of their temporariness; to be utilized for two to three years before future, alternative forms of development on the site would get underway.

Yet no issue was so prominent during the questions and answers than garnering promises that the new shelters would reduce the blight of street encampments. Whenever any of the classic concerns over opening a new shelter were raised, officials turned back to the status quo of the street. In response to a neighbour's concern that a new shelter might increase crime, a police commander, one of the strongest proponents of the new shelters, responded (January 15, 2015):

Look, right now I've got my officers responding to over 5,000 homeless complaints each month. Most of these calls are just for people camping, sleeping, and blocking sidewalks. We are duty-bound to respond to those calls, but they get in the way of us working on real crime. No, we can't promise there will be zero crime around the navigation centre, but compared to the situation on the streets now, having twenty four-hour security and a place for people inside, off the streets, and out of your way, sounds a lot better.

Here we see how the problems of the street direct and legitimate the location of shelter. Similar lines of argument were made by officials of the

Department of Public Works, charged with street cleaning, and the Department of Public Health, who stressed their view that shelters would not only mitigate health and sanitary complaints but also reduce the \$20.5 million spent on policing homelessness and \$8.5 million spent on camp clearances each year (BLA 2016). In this way the pressure of the penal and sanitary hands of the state was critical in expanding this meagre patch on the welfare safety net.

The second way the street is increasingly influencing the shelter is apparent in how the design and distribution of shelter is now aimed first and foremost at moving the “chronically street homeless” indoors. Whereas traditional city shelters prioritized those willing and able to participate in workfare and rehabilitation and take in large numbers of people who have never spent a day on the street, the new shelters hold inverse logics of deservingness and inclusion. Beds are instead strictly reserved for those living on the streets and the shelters are designed specifically to accommodate them. The new navigation centres not only relinquished or softened the punitive sticks of workfare, medicalization, long waits, and authoritarian rules required in the city’s other shelters, but also built in a host of assistive incentives. Breaking with the centuries’ long practices to *exclude* the stigmatized urban poor, the new shelter’s architectural and social design are aimed to bring in and *seclude* this population.

City officials stressed the new shelter’s acceptance of the “the three P’s”—property, partners, and pets—in contrast to other city shelters where people were limited to bringing in only a backpack, segregated by gender, and restricted from bringing in animals. While these were certainly key barriers that deterred many on the streets from entering shelter, there were arguably more important ones. Take for instance Randol, who at 46 years of age had spent ten years circulating between the streets and shelters and did not have a pet, partner, or much property. Randol eventually entered one of the navigation centres; however, when I first met him in the city’s Bayview neighbourhood while I was camping and recycling (collecting glass bottles and plastics on the street for money), he swore he’d never return to the shelter (March 13, 2015):

I don’t know why I stayed so long there in the first place. I was just scared of the street. I’d never been homeless. After a hospital stay once, I lost my

bed because I'd been gone for three days. I was so pissed I stayed out and only then realized how stupid I'd been to stay there so long. Bunked beds, 100 people in a room, everyone getting into fights. Staff treats you like a piece of shit. Food just as bad as prison, only smaller portions. With the curfew there'd be no way I could recycle like now. If I wanted to visit a friend or lady more than once a month I'd lose my bed. It seemed like no one would get housing, and those who did, you had no clue why. Life is way better out here.

While there were some evenings I spent on the street and even in the welfare hotels when I would have preferred the shelters, there were far more nights in the shelter I would have gladly preferred camping on the street. One day over lunch at city hall when I was working in the Mayor's Office of Homelessness, I shared this sentiment with the agency's director and mastermind behind the new shelters, describing my own experiences with violence, abuse, sickness, and discomfort in the shelters. He agreed, "Oh completely. I'm sure I'd camp outside rather than stay in some of the shelters" (June 17, 2016). However, most limitations Randol mentioned were lifted at the new navigation centres. Residents could come and go as they pleased, slept in more spacious dorms with fewer people, were guaranteed a bed in perpetuity without requirement, were given better food, and served by a higher-paid professional staff. Other perks included free laundry, Wi-Fi, 24-hour showers, and a private storage unit.

A year and a half after first meeting Randol, I found him in the navigation centre and asked what made him come inside. He began, "This place isn't a prison. They actually want to help. Plus, people here get housing." Indeed, street homelessness is not only increasingly steering shelter policy, but homeless housing programmes as well. As the new shelters were being used to clean up the streets, the city's homeless housing pipeline that had previously been spread out across some 1400 shelter users was redirected to those in the navigation centre to continually free up the beds necessary to bring in those from targeted camps. This infuriated those staying in the traditional shelters, who could no longer access housing, and the social workers trying to place them. This reprioritization of the classifications and qualifying criteria in the perennial regulation of housing access was critical to the *perceived* success of the new navigation centres. Reporting unprecedented numbers of housing placements from

a single site made it seem as if the mayor's revamped and newly branded shelter was far more effective than previous approaches.

In reaction to the relaxed regulations and promise of housing, those on the streets wanted in. While most people I met sleeping outside had no interest in entering the mainline shelter system, it was extremely rare to come across someone who was not looking to enter the navigation centres. As a researcher and advocate at the time of my street ethnography, one of the first and most common questions I was asked by people living on the street was if I knew how to get into the new shelters. Official policy claimed that they were targeting the most vulnerable people who had spent the longest time on the street (Dodge 2015). However, the practice of distribution was driven less by the measure of misery of homeless individuals than by the complaints of the housed—whether from 911 calls, lobbying by merchants and homeowners, district supervisors, or even the mayor who would have a special interest in seeing particular parks or blocks cleared.

While public health workers successfully advocate for certain people to get navigation centre beds, they were only allowed to refer those within the district boundaries that housed the new shelters. Both police officers and public health workers with whom I spent time on outreach would point to those they'd refer to as "perfect candidates for the navigation centres" all the time, but who would be disqualified simply for being in the wrong neighbourhood. One day, walking back to the outreach van after checking in with a woman who had been on the street for seven years about her meds for paranoid schizophrenia, the public health worker told me in dismay:

It's just frustrating. Today I got a guy into the Nav centre who had been on the streets only for a year and doesn't have any of those woman's health problems. Why? Just because he's part of a camp that's getting a lot of complaints and the district supervisor wants to clean it up.

While shelters have always played a part in the socio-spatial regulation of marginality, the hyper-focused spatial targeting of the new navigation centres serves both the market goals of clearing streets, and political goals of proving a visibly measurable impact in removing homeless people from them.

The most spectacular example of the street refashioning the uses of shelter was the case of the “Pier 80” shelter. During the January lead-up to the Bay Area’s hosting of the US National Football League’s Super Bowl, several blocks of the city’s downtown were cordoned off to make way for “Superbowl City”: a multi-week waterfront festival. The area’s homeless were promptly evicted from this prime location and many relocated under a highway underpass on the ironically named Division Street. One evening when I was bedded down on the waterfront, I was woken by a police officer who explicitly suggested I move there. To dismantle the camp that had captured international headlines and stained the city’s image, the mayor converted a new shelter—originally designed to offer a safe harbour to any of the city’s homeless trying to escape the impending winter rains of El Nino—into an exclusive reservation available only to those staked out on Division Street, an increasingly common tactic used to “resolve” tent cities in municipalities across the country (see Herring 2015). Restricting the new shelters to only those on Division Street pleased police and sanitation officials, officers, and frontline workers, who had demanded the mayor provide a plan to turn down the heat that an eviction would inevitably place on them by the homeless and their advocates. However, it frustrated public health workers and those sleeping out in other areas. As one outreach worker assigned to Division Street to offer people shelter just days before the eviction asked me (February 23, 2016):

Tell me Chris? Who’s running this show? Whose tool are we? Are we being used by the police? Or is this Muhammad (the director of public works) using the health department to sweep up his mess? I’m not bringing inside the cases that need the most attention. It’s like I’m part of the Mayor’s personal clean-up squad.

Shelters are a contested resource increasingly targeted at removing homeless bodies from the street—appeasing residents and businesses seeking encampment removals, agencies looking to accomplish their own organizational goals (whether it be street cleaning, crime fighting, or health provision), and politicians looking to reduce visible poverty within their districts. They even help win elections. After the first year of the new navigation centre, Mayor Lee touted his shelter’s success throughout his

re-election campaign, which had become a national model. In its first two years the new shelters hosted over 30 US city officials and are now being replicated in at least 12 cities.

The expansion of some 500 new shelter beds over four years with significantly more humane and comfortable conditions than the city's existing shelters was a welcome development in the eyes of most of the people experiencing homelessness, as well as most advocates, and social workers. This was because existing city shelters and the streets where the other 6500 homeless of the city reside each night are relatively more oppressive. While the mayor proudly showed off his Potemkin villages happily hosting a few hundred of the city's homeless to visiting officials, they were left in the dark as to the state of the thousands left to languish on its streets and broader shelter system. Unfortunately, the shelter resurgence left the broader conditions of the city's homeless unchanged and contributes to the general tendency of public policy to *invisibilize the urban poor* (Wacquant 2009) either by dispersing them (as with the demolition and de-concentration of public housing) or by secluding them in reserved spaces (as with ghettoization and incarceration).

How the Shelter Shapes the Street

Shelters have long worked to exclude large groups of unhoused people to the street. As we saw with Randol in the previous section, many people avoid the shelter to preserve a sense of autonomy and/or community that the rule-ridden shelter erodes (Snow and Anderson 1993; Sparks 2017b), pursue a self-sufficient living in the informal economy that the shelter restricts (Duneier 1999; Gowan 2010), avoid the stress, violence, and sickness of the shelters exacerbated through congregative living (Hopper 2003), or to tend to deleterious addictions that are criminalized (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009). Yet, the question of sorting out the "down and out" is not simply one of individual preference within institutional constraints. Largely neglected in ethnographies of homelessness is the fact that access to shelter is critically shaped by a politics, policy, and practice of scarcity that both limits its formal access and in turn determines the population left out on the street. To gain a guaranteed shelter bed in San Francisco,

one must be referred by the Department of Public Health for a special medical condition, or participate in the city's workfare programme, that requires six hours of work a week, such as street cleaning, or a quota of job searches. However, if you hold a job, are on disability, are not a citizen, or fail to meet a number of other conditions, you cannot qualify. In that case there is a four- to six-week wait for a 90-day bed, after which the person must wait again or one can try to access one-night bed. A one-night bed is never guaranteed and requires a four- to ten-hour wait in line depending on the day. During these waits I was sexually harassed, robbed, verbally abused, and threatened with violence and observed the same on nearly a daily basis. Several nights I ended up sleeping in a chair along with 75 others waiting for a bed that never materialized, and other nights I slept under the shelter's awning, in line, even after the wait had ended.

In hearing over a hundred stories of how homeless people first decided to spend the night unsheltered on the streets of San Francisco, the punishment and deterrence of waiting wrought by the system's chronic scarcity was among the most prominent. Jonathan, who I met camping just 50 yards from the city's largest shelter, along with about two dozen others, told me what I'd come to find was a familiar tale (October 22, 2014):

If you'd asked me whether I'd ever consider sleeping on the streets before becoming homeless I'd call you crazy. But it was like night after night, after waiting hours, I'd end up inside there in an uncomfortable chair. If you'd fall out of the chair because you were sleeping you'd be yelled at by staff. The lights were left on all night. I was like Jonathan—are you stupid?!

Despite the popular belief that those on the street are there by free choice, most US cities have shelters at full capacity each night with restrictive criteria (Conference of Mayors 2016). Just as people stop calling the police because they know there aren't enough resources (Lipsky 2010: 33), people stop trying for shelter beds when they know the waits are impossible. While making homeless people wait works to form compliant "patients of the state," as Auyero (2012) recognized in his ethnography in Buenos Aires' welfare offices, waiting also works as a state strategy of deterrence and exclusion. Many on the streets simply refused to wait and instead settled with the harsh reality of the streets.

While the exclusions of the existing shelter forced certain groups onto the street, the criteria for entrance to the new shelters reshaped the geography and regulation of homelessness on the streets. During the opening week of the city's first navigation centre in the Mission neighbourhood, I was camping with a small group in the neighbouring South of Market neighbourhood. Rumours quickly spread that a new shelter with priority access to housing was taking folks in, but to get in you had to be picked up in the Mission neighbourhood. One morning when we were awoken by police asking us to move, I asked, "So how are we supposed to get into this new shelter?" Whether the officer wanted us out of his district or was just explaining why he couldn't offer us shelter, he confirmed that "Right now the only folks HOT [the public health department's Homeless Outreach Team] are taking in are those camping out between 16th and 24th Streets," the area in the heart of the Mission neighbourhood. When we got to the new area, we realized others had the same idea. Later, when I started going on ride-alongs with street-level bureaucrats, I witnessed police officers, sanitation workers, and Department of Public Health workers giving "hot tips" of the planned areas of outreach to those they felt deserved a spot in the new shelter, superseding official rules to prioritize what they saw as the moral missions of their vocation (Lipsky 2010) either through prioritizing medical needs as public health workers or rewarding those who followed police orders, or to simply shift their most burdensome cases to other agencies and districts (Seim 2017).

Even when the Pier 80 shelter opened—which lacked the extra amenities and housing options of the navigation centres, but did have the relaxed rules matrix of guaranteed beds, no curfew, unlimited nights out, and the ability to bring pets, partners, and property—people migrated to Tent City on Division Street to gain entrance. From a set of 24 interviews at Pier 80 with homeless residents, I found that over a quarter had not been camping at Division Street, but simply hung around the site during outreach days in order to get a guaranteed bed. While this may be considered "gaming the system," most on the streets felt that the system was gaming them. As Lydia, who had been waiting for a shelter bed at the city's traditional shelters before coming down to Division to get into the Pier 80 shelter, explained (March 8, 2016),

I've been in shelter on-and-off for 2 years, why the fuck should some crack-head who just hit the street last week get a bed in a better spot? I'll tell you why. Because the city doesn't give a shit about helping us, they just want to clean the street.

While the development of new premium shelter was widely popular in concept among those on the streets, its distribution in practice angered those left out. Rather than increasing the unsheltered's trust in the local state, the new shelters further denigrated their opinion of governmental competency and justice, fuelled lateral denigration between homeless people, and fractured social ties among the poorest of the poor (see Powell and Robinson, Chap. 8, this volume).

The negative perspectives of the new shelters among the homeless were further accentuated by the uptick in repression on the streets that followed their opening. As some were pulled into the districts with prioritized shelter, many were quickly pushed out by increased police crackdowns and sanitation sweeps. This occurred both from top-down initiatives in city hall, and from bottom-up efforts by residents and merchants. From above, a new "camp resolution team" was assembled by the mayor's office in parallel with the new shelters to disperse encampments and prevent re-encampment in a particular spot. With new shelters, coordinated efforts to disperse camps in their areas increased. As outrage from the homeless and advocates grew, city leaders would use the new shelters to legitimize this repression. For instance, days before the eviction of the Division Street Tent City, the mayor's director of homelessness repeatedly told the media, "We're offering everyone out here beds in Pier 80, however, if they don't want to go, they're going to have to leave" (February 24, 2016). He failed to mention that the shelter had been at full capacity every night since opening, and that its capacity was not nearly enough to shelter all those in the camp.

More significant though was the shelters' role in increasing policing of the streets from below. Most scholars have explained the criminalization of homelessness as a top-down, command-and-control policing "campaign," engineered and directed by police chiefs or captains seeking arrest and citation quotas (Mitchell 2003; Smith 1996), or the outcome of officer discretion (Bittner 1967; Stuart 2016). However, the primary driver

of homeless policing in San Francisco and most US cities are 311 non-emergency and 911 calls made by residents and businesses that activate the police. Most officers and captains felt such policing was a waste of time. A frequent refrain by one lieutenant, echoed by most officers, was, “We can’t arrest ourselves out of this crisis. Homelessness should not be a policing issue.” In fact, many of the officers were outspokenly opposed to the eviction of Tent City. While officials had hoped 311 and 911 homeless complaints would fall after the opening of new shelters, they instead increased. Police dispatches increased over 20 per cent and complaints through the city’s customer service 311 centre for homeless concerns (that most often result in encampment removals by the sanitation department) increased nearly nine times over (Herring [forthcoming](#)).

This increase of calls probably had more to do with increased development, gentrification, and technological changes to the 311 system. However the publicization of new shelters, the mobilization of the citizenry in reporting street homelessness, and official rhetoric likely led residents to believe that their calls might now connect the homeless to services, or that, because shelter was now assumed available, those still on the streets were resisting and should be punished. Even when the calls of complaints did not result in a citation and arrest, the move-along orders perpetuated a *pervasive penalty* (Herring et al. 2019). The enforcement of anti-homeless laws is pervasive in both the frequency of police contact and the lingering impact of the loss of property, sleep deprivation, increased exposure to violence, and oppressive mental and emotional stress that perpetuate people’s poverty.

Increased shelter not only provoked a punitive upsurge in anti-homeless policing but also proved critical in the passage of a new anti-homeless law in 2016. Just months after the passing of a bill green-lighting five new shelters that was spearheaded by the city’s progressive city supervisors, the city’s more conservative set of supervisors began a ballot initiative campaign banning tents on sidewalks. As the bill’s primary sponsor explained at a public forum on homelessness, “I strongly believe that it is not compassionate to allow human beings to live on our city streets. We’re investing a lot more money in services now and we need to encourage people to utilize them and be clear that camping is unacceptable” (April 27, 2016). Portraying the tent ban as a necessary tool to move the

“service-resistant” into the newly established shelters became a key trope of the successful campaign that added yet another anti-homeless law to the city’s other 23 on the books.

Conclusion: Street and Shelter Symbiosis

Wacquant (2001) argues that we must break out of the “crime-and-punishment paradigm” to reckon with the extra-penological function of the criminal justice system to explain the prison explosion of the late twentieth century. Rather than increased crime, he argues that the “recent upsurge in black incarceration results from the crisis of the ghetto as device for caste control and the correlative need for a substitute apparatus for the containment of lower-class African Americans” (Wacquant 2001: 95). Reframing both the “dark ghetto” and prison system as co-evolving institutions, tightly linked in a functional and structural kinship, he traces the emergence of a new government of poverty through which penal and welfare sectors of the state collectively “surveil, train, and neutralize the populations recalcitrant or superfluous to the new economic and racial regime” (Wacquant 2001: 97).

Tracking a similar path, this chapter has elaborated on the symbiotic relationship between street and shelter. On the one hand, it illustrates how the resurgence and reformation of the shelter are shaped by the crisis of the street. One cannot look to the logics and practices of charity and welfare alone to explain the growth and transformation of the shelter, but instead must also consider its extra-welfare function in relation to street homelessness as a political, penal, and sanitary tool. The new shelters are not only concerned with “resocializing the pauper” (Stuart 2016), nor do they express the moral norms of mainstream society through medicalization or workfare (Lyon-Callo 2008; Gowan 2010). Instead, they are aimed specifically at removing homeless bodies from targeted areas of gentrification and appeasing residents and businesses seeking encampment removals. Furthermore, shelters are a contested resource used by agencies looking to accomplish disparate organizational goals beyond welfare and by politicians not only seeking political capital through distinctive programmes to aid the poor but also enacting stern justice and making aesthetic improvements on their district’s streets and parks.

On the other hand, this chapter has demonstrated that both the changes in policies and practices aimed at street homelessness are in large part explained by shelter. The chapter highlights the rhetoric of city officials using penal means towards welfare ends (Stuart 2016: 15), as they stress the need for penalties for those who resist services to remain on the streets, or what scholars have described as “therapeutic policing” (Stuart 2016) and “coercive care” (Katz 1997; Johnsen and Fitzpatrick 2010). However, it has also highlighted how shelters, social services, and outreach workers are increasingly being used as welfare means towards penal ends—to evict homeless people from public space and promote anti-homeless laws. Rather than a “counterweight to the punitive approach” (Deverteuil et al. 2009) shelter and increased welfare provision that include and seclude, they often serve as a handmaiden and lubricant to the punitive practices and politics of cleansing public spaces that dispossess and exclude.

When examining the street and shelter within a contested bureaucratic field, the dynamics of exclusion and seclusion seem less about criminalizing, medicalizing, or socializing the poor as much as *neutralizing poverty*: a process of both *invisibilizing poverty* with ambivalent ambitions of rehabilitation, punishment, or aid (Wacquant 2009: 214) and *depoliticizing poverty* so as to be understood as the outcome of personal failings rather than failures of the state and capitalism (Marcuse 1988). The process of bringing some into shelters and dispersing others across the street is not executed through a co-ordinated monolithic local state, but is a struggle among politicians for popularity, and various agencies shifting the burden of homelessness between one another with the resources each have on hand, whether it be jail or hospital beds, space in the shelter or detox, a police detail, or a street cleanup crew. Bringing some into shelters and dispersing others across the street *also* work in consort to depoliticize the issue of homelessness while creating the illusion of policy success: first, by creating specialized shelters with enhanced amenities to demonstrate a compassionate and successful (albeit narrow) programme of ending homelessness; second, referencing such assistance without reference to its scarcity in order to blame the poor; third, utilizing this blame to justify exclusions from social service provisions in public space to hide the problem; and fourth, denying the extent of the problem in the wake of reduc-

ing welfare rolls by denials of eligibility, or penal invisibilization by pushing marginalized people into marginal places, on the street or into jail.

While this chapter has focused on the interrelationship between secluding and excluding homeless people in the city of San Francisco, the general principles and framework it puts forward may prove broadly applicable. More generally, the chapter's spatialization of Wacquant and Bourdieu's idea of the bureaucratic field should be fruitful for any number of urban scholars utilizing the concept. As the regulation of homelessness presented here makes clear, the stakes of struggles over the bureaucratic field are not simply defined in an abstract social and symbolic space, but within a divided physical urban and regulatory space. Furthermore, the way through which agencies of the state partitioned and reclassified space to enact hot-spot policing and place-targeted shelters was key in "vying over the definition and distribution of public goods" (Wacquant 2010a: 200). More specifically, the logics and practices of seclusion and exclusion are becoming increasingly critical stakes in the management of marginality across the globe as anti-homeless laws and new shelters are spreading not only to deal with advanced homelessness (Arapoglou and Gounis 2017; Fernandez Evangelista 2013; Johnsen and Fitzpatrick 2010), but also refugees (Agier 2011; Picker and Pasquetti 2015), and urban informality more generally (Levenson 2017). As state actors attempt to neutralize these conditions of poverty through invisibilization and depoliticization, it is critical to expose, examine, and politicize the dialectical relationships between care and punishment and the institutions designed to keep the marginalized contained and dispersed out of public sight.

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