5-2019

"Before its Smell Became Me:" Motel Residency and the Politics of Belonging

Abigail T. Westberry Ms.
Bates College, awestber@bates.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scarab.bates.edu/honorstheses

"Before its Smell Became Me:" Motel Residency and the Politics of

Belonging

An Honors Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Sociology

Bates College

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of Bachelor of Arts

By

Abigail T. Westberry

Lewiston, Maine

March 20, 2019

<u>Acknowledgements</u>

Table of Contents

Abstract

Millions of Americans currently face profound housing insecurity. As a result of America's inadequate housing system, many of these individuals are confined to locations of invisibility, like couches, cars, tents, shelters, or the streets. This thesis analyzes the use of motels as an increasingly prevalent form of housing for low-income and marginalized communities. For the purpose of this study, motel residents are individuals who have resided in a motel for over thirty days, therefore meeting qualifications of homelessness. I thus ask two questions: does motel residency reinforce socioeconomic insecurity? How do motel residents navigate their housing circumstances? Through thirty-one qualitative interviews with motel residents and service providers, my data revealed two conclusions. Firstly, motel residency reinforces housing instability and social inequality by proliferating insecurity at physical, interpersonal, and institutional levels. Secondly, motel residents cultivate powerful internal community networks and deploy innovative housing strategies in order to survive their residential circumstances. Motels thus represent unique dualities of the housing crisis. To better assist this population, governments should expand public housing resources and transportation infrastructure to include motel residents. To reduce motel residents' barriers to social services, governments should modify definitions of homelessness or tenancy.

KEY WORDS: Belonging, Housing Instability, Motel Residency, Service Provision, Social Inequality.

Introduction

"What do you regard as home?" I asked. Sam leaned back in his chair, pondering the ceiling as a cigarette in his hand spiraled whispers of smoke into the air. Eventually, Sam responded simply: "Home is where you are."

To the eye, Sam seemed like everyone else: he had a stable job, was deeply in love with his girlfriend, and possessed immeasurable devotion towards his eight children. Like many, Sam's life of hard work had weathered his face, so he rarely expressed the intensity of love he felt for his family. But occasionally, when describing his girlfriend's immense kindness or his children's wildness when they were together under the same roof, Sam could not contain his smiles and spider webs of wrinkles would crack his otherwise stoic facade. However, Sam also lived in a motel. At first glance, one would not have guessed that Sam was approaching a full year of living in Valleyview motel. At first glance, one would not have guessed that Sam's housing circumstance meant that he had to wake up at 4am each day in order to walk the three miles from Valleyview to his workplace, or that he had not eaten a proper meal in months because his motel room lacked cooking facilities, or that his family could not stay with him because he felt like Valleyview was too riddled with drugs and crime.

Sam's claim that home is simply a title assigned by proximity represents his attempt to assert belonging to a place. Like Sam, dozens of individuals reside in long-term motels throughout the Lewiston/Auburn area in Maine. In lonely motels, forgotten on the sides of busy roads, these individuals attempt to forge a home for themselves and resist compounding social marginalization, which otherwise seek to alienate these communities. Over the past few decades, affordable housing has become increasingly inaccessible to most low-income communities. As rental prices rise, rental quality decreases, inner cities gentrify, and public housing funding is

slashed, low-income individuals often struggle to afford a place representing home (Desmond, 2016; Carliner, 2013; Lucy 2010). In response to this, many individuals have sought out non-traditional residential locations, like cars, tents, couches, shelters, abandoned buildings, or motels (Dum, 2016; Desmond, Perkins, 2015). Not only do these housing circumstances subject individuals to physical risks but they also place individuals in positions of profound insecurity and social isolation, where these communities struggle to obtain the meaningful recognition all people deserve (Amster, 2008). This thesis therefore endeavors to recognize and understand the alienation of housing unstable communities, by giving voice to individuals like Sam, confined to the outskirts of society in low-income motels.

My research was thus motivated by two questions: Does motel residency reinforce socio-economic insecurity? How do motel residents navigate their housing circumstances? Importantly, this research does not seek to place the deficiencies of motel residency in comparison to other forms of homelessness or establish facts and figures regarding the number of individuals residing in motels. Rather, it seeks to understand why individuals seek out motels, how motel residency affects individuals' future socio-economic stability, and what meaningful policies could better help these communities. Even through Sam's simple story, it is clear that motel residency meaningfully affects individuals' lived outcomes. However, Sam's story also demonstrates that motel residents are not passive recipients of social marginalization, and instead claim their belonging to wider social communities through a variety of innovative strategies.

In order to answer these questions, this thesis will progress through five sections. Firstly, it will begin by exploring pre-existing literature regarding America's current housing circumstances, with a particular focus on factors driving the housing crisis and this context's effect on vulnerable communities. Secondly, it will outline this thesis' community-based

7

research methodology, and the manner that these philosophies shaped my qualitative interviews with thirty-one community members. Thirdly, it will focus on the voices of motel residents, in order to establish how motel residency impacts individuals at the physical, interpersonal, and institutional levels. Fourthly, it will focus on the perspectives of service providers, in order to elaborate on how motel residents relate to processes of social assistance and the policies that governments could implement to better help this community. Finally, it will conclude by revisiting the stories of motel residents and placing these narratives in relation to the thesis' overarching arguments.

This thesis thus has important implications for future researchers and policy makers. Despite insecure housing being a central experience in many Americans' lives, little research has meaningfully captured the experiences of these communities and generated responses to better recognize their humanity. By narrowing this research's focus to one community struggling with unstable housing and social alienation, this thesis seeks to create generalizable recommendations that also address the needs of other individuals pushed to the outskirts of society because of their housing conditions.

Literature Review

In the 2018 film The Florida Project, Disney World's helicopters symbolize motel residents' social positioning. The film follows a collection of six year olds, lead by a young, plucky girl called Moonee, as they grow up in The Magic Castle: a fluorescent purple, long-term motel forgotten in the shadow of Disney World. Helicopters, shepherding Disney World's rich customers to and from their amusement park getaways, are a constant presence in Moonee and her family's lives. As Moonee and her mother eat a meal of waffles donated by a local diner, Disney's helicopter lands in the background. As Moonee and her mother are removed from their motel room because they cannot pay rent, the reflection of Disney's helicopter skirts across their former room's window. As Moonee is questioned by Child Protective Services about her mother's capacity to parent, Disney's helicopter drowns out her voice (Baker, Bergoch, Tsou, 2018).

The Florida Project's recurrent symbol of Disney World's helicopters is not accidental. Instead, it is designed to illuminate Moonee and The Magic Castle community's invisibility. Despite the helicopter's physical proximity to The Magic Castle, Disney's customers rarely interact with the motel's residents. Instead, like the helicopter's brief reflection on Moonee's window, Disney's customers quickly skirt around the lives of those invisible communities confined to low-income motel rooms. Like Moonee and her family, millions of Americans currently experience profound housing insecurity. This thesis defines socioeconomic insecurity as objective and subjective experiences of instability or social marginalization. Objective socioeconomic insecurity refers to an individual's inability to maintain stability in employment, housing, food, healthcare, and other areas affecting a person's capital accumulation or social status. A common experience of objective socio-economic insecurity is when an individual loses employment, which then directly affects their ability to afford rent, food, healthcare, and other

necessities. Subjective insecurity refers to an individual's perception of risks or fear that they

will lose employment, material capital, and social ties (Mau, Mewes, Schöneck, 2012). A

common experience of subjective insecurity is when an individual feels as though they are likely

to lose their job or housing, causing this anxiety to bleed into other areas of their life like

relationships with friends and family. Importantly, subjective and objective insecurity are often

dependent on one another, so as a person experiences objective insecurity, their subjective

insecurity is likely to increase also. This is why the two differing experiences are encompassed

under definitions of socioeconomic insecurity (Stephens, 2004).

By drawing on concepts of socio-economic instability, this literature review seeks to

outline contexts of housing instability and motel residents' marginalization. Currently, in

response to unaffordable and inadequate housing markets that compound socio-economic

instability, many people make similar choices to the Magic Castle's residents and use motels as a

form of permanent residency. To clarify circumstances of motel residency, this literature review

will cover three topics. Firstly, I will explore America's affordable housing crisis and place this

thesis within broader debates between structural and individual attributions of housing

instability. Secondly, I will analyze the forms of inadequate housing generated by the housing

crisis, and clearly address this system's implications through frameworks of social stigma and

alienation. Finally, I will focus on motels, working to define the role they play in the housing

crisis and the social issues they exacerbate.

I. The Housing Crisis:

Motel residency is fundamentally located within the context of America's housing crisis. Since

2008, the housing crisis has vastly influenced American society and it continues to shadow

vulnerable communities who struggle to find safe, stable, and adequate housing in the face of increasingly rising costs (Lucy, 2010). Thus, my thesis is grounded in the context of America's housing crisis. In order to analyze this, I will begin by establishing the nature of the affordable housing crisis before reviewing the field's identified causes of this issue.

When formulating responses to poverty and societal inequalities, many policy makers have failed to "fully appreciate how deeply housing is implicated in the creation of poverty" (Desmond, 2016). Over the past few decades, housing has become rapidly less and less affordable for the majority of Americans. Since 2000, median rent has increased over 70% and the cost of utilities has increased by 50% (Carliner, 2013). Therefore, Americans have to invest more and more of their income into maintaining stable housing. For example, almost 40% of low-income individuals spend over 30% of their income on housing (Mast, pg. 185, 2014). This far exceeds the federal standards for family expenses, which state that families should not have to expend more than 30% of their income on housing (Anderson, 2017).

Nationwide statistics reflect how vulnerable communities are more subject to the injustices of America's housing crisis. In some cities, more than an eighth of all renters experienced forced moves over a two-year period (Desmond, Wrinkler, Ferriss, pg. 314, 2013). Families, individuals from minority groups, people with mental or physical illnesses, or simply renters crippled by poverty, are the most likely communities to undergo forced moves (Desmond, 2016). For example, in 2017 57,971 families experienced periods of homelessness. Non-white families are disproportionately represented in these figures, as almost 45% of all homeless families are from communities of color (HUD, 2018). Quite simply, structural issues in America's housing system depower all renters, but particularly those from already marginalized backgrounds who are often subject to greater discrimination based on their identities.

Scholars have identified three primary factors causing the housing crisis: scarce supplies of housing, underfunded or insufficient welfare programs, and discriminatory social or institutional practices. The latter two issues are grounded by a fundamentally inadequate supply of affordable and safe housing. Quite simply, demand for affordable housing far exceeds the supply of units. This is especially pertinent to low-income communities. A recent study of affordable housing in Chicago found that low-income households have under a 20% chance of securing an affordable rental property without government assistance (Gunderson, 2017). While this percentage is already very low, it also fails to account for the nature of the properties that qualify as affordable. For many low-income individuals, the only affordable options that they could potentially access are unsafe or unsanitary. These conditions can include things like houses that are not up to code, contain asbestos or lead, lack proper insulations, etc. (Desmond, Kimbro, 2015). Often these issues are compounded even further as families will regularly have to share single-family homes with multiple families or extended family members in order to split the rent.

Governmental policies play a central role in supplies of affordable housing. For example, a primary example of a policy that was designed to make housing more affordable but actually had the opposite effect is rent control. Many governments, like those in New York City, Boston, San Francisco, etc., responded to out of control rental prices by imposing rent controls. Rent controls is a policy designed to limit the amount landlords can charge for their properties. The exact rate where rent is capped is determined at the discretion of local governments (Autor et al, 2014). Therefore, rent controls were supposed to increase access to homes for individuals who cannot afford market rates. However, due to limited housing supplies landlords were essentially able to ignore rent controls or simply stop investing enough money into the maintenance and security of low-income rental properties. Thus, rent control has historically lead to worse

housing options for vulnerable communities, which is why most cities have abandoned these programs (Metcalfe, 2018). Numerous other governmental policies have further undermined efforts to make housing more accessible to low income communities. For example, restrictive zoning and anti-density laws often risk exacerbating inadequate housing supplies. When enacting these policies, governments will refuse permits for residential housing facilities in urban areas, thus decreasing the supply available for everyone but especially communities with insufficient funds to afford limited housing options. Governments' push to decrease urban residential housing regularly causes greater economic and racial segregation in urban areas representing the hubs of employment and economic activity (Rothwell, Massey, pg. 1140, 2010).

Besides zoning and anti-density laws, there are a variety of other government policies that shape the affordable housing crisis. The two most important government programs designed to assist people with housing are federal income tax breaks for homeowners and low-income rental assistance. With regards to the former, the government incentivizes homeownership by providing tax breaks to individuals who own homes. These policies have, rather justly, been characterized as programs that benefit the rich and middle-class (Olsen et al, 2015). Unfortunately, there is disparity in the way that the US funds housing programs. In 2015, the Mortgage Interest Deduction (MDI), a key policy that protects homeowners through allowing them to deduct mortgage expenses and property taxes from their taxable income, received just over $100 billion in federal funding. This is double the amount that was devoted towards Section 8 housing, which provides low-income renters with affordable units or vouchers in order to subsidize private rental units. In 2016, this program only received $29.9 billion in federal funding (Woo, Salviati, pg. 2, 2017). Importantly, eligibility for the MDI requires that individuals possess enough wealth or have the economic record in order to qualify for a

mortgage and purchase a home. Access to these resources is fundamentally shaped by structural and social inequalities, primarily because home ownership is marked by bias. For example, people of color are less likely to own homes than white individuals because these communities more commonly have lower paying jobs and little accumulated wealth. Moreover, the federal government has historically inhibited communities of color's accumulation of wealth through restricting their housing options via policies like redlining (Rothstein, 2017). Therefore, paths to homeownership, and the benefits of programs like the MDI, disproportionately exclude certain populations (Kuebler, 2013). One could argue that programs like the MDI justly receive more funding than Section 8 housing because they serve a significantly larger chunk of the US population. However, this doesn't account for the levels of need within each community. Quite simply, when Section 8 housing is used to protect individuals from having to live on the streets, in shelters, or in other dangerous housing circumstances, it requires more robust funding that surpasses the MDI's benefits to communities with greater security.

Current and future federal budgets will likely struggle to address housing issues relating to marginalized and vulnerable communities. In 2018, the presidential administration attempted to eliminate funding for a variety of initiatives designed to create or rehabilitate affordable, low-income housing like the Community Development Block Grant, HOME Investment Partnership Program, Choice Neighborhoods, Self-Help Ownership Program, and Section 4 Capacity Building for Community Development and Affordable Housing (United States Federal Government, 2017). While the budget that was eventually passed through Congress did provide these programs with some funding, their overall fiscal support was dramatically diminished. These programs sought to establish community structures whereby low-income individuals had access to safe and affordable housing. Furthermore, the federal government greatly decreased

funding for public housing initiatives. The Public Housing Capital Fund and the Public Housing

Operating Fund represent the primary financial supports for public housing. In the 2019 budget,

the PHCF's budget decreased from 1.9 billion to 628 million, and the PHOF's budget decreased

from 4.4 billion to 3.279 billion (Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2017;

Department of Housing & Urban Development, 2018). When these developmental and housing

projects are underfunded or eliminated, the poorest members of American society have fewer

and worse structures to assist them in creating and maintaining a home.

Despite a lack of funding, financially insecure Americans continue to rely on a number of

federal and state housing programs. These programs have either subsidized the construction of

units designed for low-income households or offered housing vouchers (like food stamps, but for

housing) to low-income households. The first subsidized housing construction projects were

founded after the Great Depression, for the purpose of providing "a decent home and suitable

living environment for every American family" (Pardee, Wright, 2011). This meant that the

government manages rental units, or pays private companies to manage these units, at a rate far

below the market average. This is designed to make housing more accessible for all Americans.

However, these programs are inaccessible on two fronts. Firstly, individuals with criminal

backgrounds are often ineligible for public housing units. This excludes a number of individuals

and their non-felon family members, from accessing affordable rental units. Secondly, public

housing projects are dramatically underfunded. Given the huge demands for affordable, low-

income housing, public housing systems are often overwhelmed by communities' demands and

unable to provide appropriate standards of living to all in need (Pardee, Wright, 2011).

Rental vouchers also fall victim to the same problem as public housing: underfunding.

Rental vouchers are supposed to subsidize a portion of an individual's rent, so that they can pay

more reasonable amounts relative to their income. Typically, governments seek to subsidize rent

so that low-income individuals do not have to devote over 30% of their income towards housing.

While this program has potential to grant low-income individuals greater mobility and choice in

the rental market, it also has a number of problems. Most notably, vouchers are notoriously

difficult to obtain and limited in quantity due to government underfunding. However, vouchers

can also have a more pernicious underbelly, as many voucher recipients actually end up spending

more on rent than unassisted renters (Desmond, Perkins, pg. 147, 2015). This paradox is caused

by landlord abuses, whereby they may charge more for voucher recipients because of the extra

resources the government provides these individuals.

       Statistics reflect how inaccessible these programs are to everyday Americans. In total,

these programs have never offered subsidies to more than 30% of low-income renters and 67%

of all poor, renting families thus receive no assistance from the federal government (Carrillo,

Green, Malpezzi, Forthcoming; Desmond, Perkins, pg. 138, 2015). Furthermore, almost 35% of

individuals who receive low-income rental assistance continue to be cost burdened by rent

(Williamson, pg. 791, 2011). This indicates that, despite the government's commitment to

provide "decent and safe rental housing for eligible low-income families, the elderly, and

persons with disabilities" (HUD, 2017), programs to achieve these ends are often subject to

much funding neglect. Thus, Section 8 programs struggle to address the inequalities and

injustices they are designed to combat, leaving poorer Americans with even fewer resources to

escape cycles of insecurity. In response to public programs' lack of robust support, funding for

affordable housing has often come from the private market. For example, over the past few

years, the majority of affordable housing units were constructed through the Low-Income

Housing Tax Credit program, which allocates tax credits to developers of affordable housing

units (Desai, 2008). While the LIHTC has been successful, private housing markets have often been critiqued for not providing particularly marginalized populations (like felons, families, individuals with disabilities) with adequate support and public housing programs thus must also play a powerful role in helping these communities.

The final factor exacerbating the housing crisis is discrimination against vulnerable communities. This discrimination can be broken up into three categories: identity based, family based, and record based. With regards to the former, non-white communities often find themselves barred from accessing housing assistance programs or affordable rental properties. This is largely caused by biases within American society, which characterize people of color as less desirable tenants or community members. For example, the shift of federal housing programs' beneficiaries from working class white families to communities of color mirrored decreasing political capital for these services. This is because new and more diverse recipients of public housing were portrayed as undeserving of public aid via stereotypes of laziness or immorality (Goetz, 2013). Many private markets reflect these dynamics, whereby low-income communities, individuals with mental illnesses, or people of color are often blocked from accessing affordable housing because of bias. Again, this illuminates the disproportionate power that landlords are granted by inadequate supplies of rental units. So, when landlords have greater latitude to pick and choose their tenants, they also have greater latitude to defer to their own biases (Rosen, pg. 321, 2014). Thus, inequalities embedded in tenants' racial, gender, religious, etc., identities can impact marginalized communities' access to affordable housing.

The second key form of discrimination is family based. Families are more likely to be evicted than other renters (Raymond et al, 2016). This is largely due to landlords' common characterizations of families with children as greater risks regarding non-payment or property

17

damage (Desmond, 2016). Family exclusion is particularly prominent against single mothers, as these individuals find themselves subject to compounding inequalities and biases regarding their identities. Families also disproportionately experience more legal actions and displacements than other renters. For example, households with children are three times more likely than adult households to receive evictions (Desmond, Wrinkler, Ferriss, 2013). These regular relocations exacerbate existing difficulties for families, as they often must relocate to other forms of substandard housing. This can entail residency in overcrowded apartments, properties that are not up to code, couch surfing, residency in camps, or homelessness (Desmond, Kimbro, 2015).

The final area of housing discrimination levies itself against individuals with criminal or eviction records. The majority of federal and state housing assistance programs ban people with a criminal record from accessing public resources. Evictions records, despite only being civil actions, also greatly inhibit access to private and public rental properties (Friedman, pg. 146, 2015). For example, as eviction records have become more accessible online, a number of businesses have been established in order to record tenants' evictions, levels of debt, court filings, or credit scores. Both private landlords and public authorities then use these "score reports" in order to dismiss applicants for rental properties or federal programs (Bresica, 2009; Thatcher, 2008). This marks individuals as "bad tenants" for the rest of their lives and hurts all members of their family dependent on them. This is especially pertinent for families with children, as children are blocked from necessary housing resources based on their parents' records.

Thus, after reviewing the factors causing the housing crisis, it is clear that structural inequalities and institutional injustices are the major causes of housing instability. While individual factors, like addiction or debt, may exacerbate these structural issues, they must be

located within an unequal context whereby certain individuals and certain communities are deprived of necessary resources needed to secure stable and affordable housing.

II. Inadequate Housing:

Due to the housing crisis, many American find themselves increasingly subject to fundamentally inadequate forms of housing or homelessness. Therefore, it is important to clarify what inadequate housing actually looks like and its implications for people forced to accept these standards.

In the fallout from evictions, court actions, endless searches for affordable and stable houses, or unstable employment options, millions of Americans have been forced to accept substandard living arrangements in order to get by (Desmond & Perkins, 2015). These circumstances can be best described as forms of homelessness. At its most basic level, homelessness is the product of a number of unfortunate circumstances, which leads an individual to lack a fixed and safe nighttime residence (O'Flaherty, pg. 3, 2004). I define homelessness via the standard established by the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Act. This policy dramatically expanded definitions of homelessness in order to accommodate individuals struggling with housing instability and include certain forms of residency under homelessness' umbrella. The inclusion of a variety of locations into the definition of "homelessness," has important implications for housing unstable individuals as it means that they could more easily access resources and services devoted towards homeless communities (Ausikaitis et al, 2015). The full act defines homelessness as when:

"An individual lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including: Sharing housing due to loss of housing or economic hardship; Living

19

in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative

adequate housing; Living in emergency or transitional housing; Abandoned in

hospitals; Awaiting foster care; Having a primary nighttime residence that is a

public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, regular sleeping

accommodations; Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings,

substandard housing, bus or train stations; Migratory students meeting the

descriptions above" (McKinney-Vento Act, 2018).

However, many scholars disagree with legal and policy definitions of homelessness.

Instead, they have constructed broader definitions through identifying three primary forms of

homelessness: temporary or transitional where an individual is between stable situations;

episodic where an individual cycles in and out of homelessness over short periods; and chronic

where an individual lacks any nighttime residence (Lee, Tyler, Wright, 2010). However, this

body of literature fails to define what a "stable" residence actually entails. By this model's

definition, individuals living in motels, campers, or trailers would fail to fit into any category of

homelessness because they are relatively stable. Therefore, it is unclear whether a family living

in a tent for two years would count as homeless. Quite simply, it is not easy to split homelessness

and non-homelessness along a clear binary (Entner Wright et al, 1998).

This trifecta-model of homelessness is starkly different from older methods of

homelessness classification. For example, in the 1970s, single men living in motels were

considered to be homeless (Garrett, Bahr, 1974). This is because homelessness was considered

less so as a lack of physical housing, but rather as a disaffiliation from society. Disaffiliation

implies that individuals are barred from interacting with society like any other citizen. Current

homeless populations reflect dynamics of disaffiliation quite clearly. For example, homeless

populations sometimes seek out sustaining habitats, where they reside within the city's limit but are removed from the public eye. Thus, homeless populations locate themselves within positions of isolation or "niches" where they can survive without persecution. This removal from public spaces is a physical representation of homeless communities' marginalization, as these individuals experience decreased life chances and opportunities as they struggle to secure recognition (Duneier, Carter, 1999). Locations of marginalization can include everything from a friend's couch, to an abandoned building, to a car, or to a motel. Often, due to the structural inequalities within America's housing system, society's most vulnerable individuals end up in these locations, with little to no support (Dum, 2016; Willse, 2015). Thus, this thesis adds to McKinney-Vento's definition of homelessness, to also conceptualize homelessness as a process of societal disaffiliation, where homeless individuals are characterized by their removal from social structures in conjunction with their physical housing status.

Definitions of disaffiliation are particularly valuable because they recognize the implications of homelessness that extend beyond physical insecurity. In the past, dominant narratives in the literature have characterized that the housing crisis' biggest issue is rental affordability not rental conditions (Schwartz, 2010). However, this body of literature fails to understand how housing conditions vastly influence individuals' life chances, including their physical and emotional health. With regards to homelessness' physical implications, the harms of inadequate housing are great. Many researchers have documented how individuals struggling without safe and secure housing must constantly make series of impossible decisions or tradeoffs between their health, privacy, education, employment, family, etc. ((Newman, Holupka, pg. 2092, 2016; Ehrenreich, 2011). For example, homeless individuals often must share rooms with multiple people in order to split rent. This lack of space means that people do not have any

privacy, and are also more vulnerable to things like interpersonal violence, illness and disease, or

exposure to illegal activities like drug use (Dum, 2016). Therefore, it is unsurprising that

homeless and housing insecure communities are far more likely to suffer from acute and chronic

health problems, mental illnesses, and premature mortality (Perry, 2015; Henwood et al., 2013).

The physical effects of housing instability also disproportionately impact children.

Crowding can particularly affect children's well being because minors are especially vulnerable

to the effects of insufficient space and require more room than adults to move and exercise

(Salani et al, 2012). Much research has documented how homeless or housing insecure children

are more likely to be absent from class, achieve low test scores, have learning disabilities or

behavioral disorders, and be held back in grades (Gaylord, 2018; Rafferty, Shinn, Weitzmann,

2004). All of these contexts greatly impact children's futures. Good grades and attendance at

school influence children's opportunities to get a job or progress onto college. Homeless children

are therefore denied the foundations of stability and support necessary for them to access the full

benefits of school. Instead, research points to child homelessness as a key determinant for future

homelessness and poverty. This means that homeless children are far more likely than their peers

to experience cycles of homelessness and poverty in the future (Tyler, 2006).

Homelessness also detrimentally affects individuals' emotional health. The physical

harms of insecurity obviously feed into people's emotional health. However, housing insecurity

creates unique and independent emotional burdens. Most prominently, housing insecurity

deprives people of homes. Home is an incredibly important and generative location for human

beings. Not only is it "a refuge from the grind of work, the pressure of school, and the menace of

the streets," but is also is where "civic life begins" (Desmond, 2016). This is because home

allows people to plant their roots and invest themselves into their communities. Quite simply, if

you commit to stay in one location for an extended period, you have incentives to maintain or improve its standard of living and develop relationships with the people around you. This community stability positively affects both individuals and communal physical/psychological health because neighbors can rely on each other for support (Oishi, 2010).

However without support or incentives to invest back into transient communities, homelessness and housing instability rob individuals of these community benefits (Desmond, 2016). This not only compounds existing community inequalities, but it also degrades individuals' sense of self and self-worth (US Conference of Mayors, 2013). To be clear, this illuminates how housing instability and homelessness are violent processes. They remove individuals from public systems and deprive them of the resources necessary to reenter. Importantly, the inability of housing insecure populations to obtain resources often arises from these socially violent contexts of societal alienation and political invisibility. As communities of color and other marginalized groups more often struggle with housing instability, the harms of these residencies must further be interpreted through lenses of race, gender, class, and ability.

Inadequate housing and homelessness further present two major barriers to creating the political capital necessary for social change. Firstly, these forms of inadequate housing are hidden from the public gaze (Amster, 2008). Due to both their location as transient places and non-traditional residencies, forms of inadequate housing are located outside the public sphere and in positions that the public is actively told to avoid. For example, many state and local governments have recently enacted laws banning public panhandling or sleeping in public in order to remove homeless individuals from the public sphere (Clifford, Piston, 2017). This is important, because society depowers communities by locking them out of the public eye.

Without public recognition of these issues, marginalized communities struggle to obtain support and power necessary for reforms (Purdie-Vaughns, Eibach, 2008).

Secondly, in transient spaces, like motels, it can be difficult to build political movements. Social change requires individuals to build connections, networks, and coalitions within communities in order to lay the foundations for advocacy (Clemens, 2016). Quite simply, change rarely takes place when only one individual is advocating for it. When collections of people can coalesce together to push for change, then they can force people in power to listen. Without community bonds to ground advocacy and belief, vulnerable individuals can often fall victim to societal narratives which blame them for their positions. Simply, it is easier for individuals to internalize harmful societal narratives about themselves when they do not have any support networks to rebuke those claims (Whitzman, 2006).

The impacts of this are twofold. Firstly, it reinforces and replicates motel residents' disenfranchisement from general society. Cycles of wider political ignorance regarding transient communities' needs often make vulnerable individuals feel alienated from society and the mechanisms of change. For example, when individuals cannot access the basic structures necessary for change, like a collectivity, they are less likely to even pursue that change in the first place. Belief in the possibility for change is a foundational part of advocacy. This feeds into Goffman's theories of stigma and estrangement, where individuals who feel like their lived reality is separate from common narratives within society, divorce themselves from political processes and systems of power (Goffman, 1963).

Secondly, when communities cannot access political power, they are unable to create policies protecting themselves. Many theorists point out the counterintuitive system whereby policies and narratives regarding poverty are constructed by "outsiders" who have never

experienced poverty, instead of individuals who live within those contexts everyday (Stewart et al, 2007). These unequal power dynamics in policy-making processes can have immense harms. For example, elite control over discourses of poverty, or housing mobility and welfare policy decisions, have historically hampered the efficacy of social welfare policies. This can be clearly seen in the manner through which some welfare programs, like public housing or housing vouchers, are shaped by elite assumptions about poverty and the people struggling with these contexts. Incomplete information prevents programs from being as successful as possible (Tursi, 2011). This illuminates the fact that "poverty is (re)produced through discourse practices, most of which are enacted by groups with direct access to social, cultural, and political power" (Lorenzo-Dus, 2012). When poorer individuals cannot access effective programs, their poverty more likely becomes self-replicating. For example, many studies have found that poor communities are overwhelmingly likely to either remain poor or become even poorer (Bowles et al, 2011). Long-term motel residents live this reality every day. Therefore, it is imperative to ensure that their voices and experiences are recognized within the public discourse.

III. Motels:

Motels are: "A hotel particularly designed for car travellers; usually suitable for short-stay travellers, with reduced amenities and public rooms" (Motel, 2012). Unlike hotels, motels are typically marked by lower room rates and fewer extra amenities. In past times, most motels were designed for road travellers, and thus many are located on the outskirts of urban centers. However, as chain hotels have greatly increased in prevalence, smaller motels have struggled to maintain their appeal (Jackle, Sculle, Rogers, 1996). Now, only expensive motels will provide free breakfasts, conference rooms, gyms, swimming pools, or Wi-Fi. However, most motels will

ensure that clients have access to electricity, heat, televisions, sleeping, and bathroom facilities. Importantly, motels servicing long-term populations are typically lower quality, independent of larger chains, and unable to provide extra amenities. This is because long-term populations cannot afford the extra costs that amenities would entail for their rent (Dum, 2016). At a deeper level, motels are also marked by their transience. Due to their proximity to the road and accessibility without identification or background checks, anyone can book a room in a motel on the spot. The rooms themselves will often mirror elements of home: there will be a TV on the wall, a blanket on the bed, a few chairs, maybe a table. Motels thus present an echo of domesticity and homeliness. But this reflection can never fully embody concepts of home. The home that people can access within motels is meant to be limited and transient, people are supposed to leave (Treadwell, 2005).

For the purpose of this study, I define motel residents as individuals who have lived in motels for more than 30 days. This is in line with definitions of homelessness encompassed by the McKinney Vento Homelessness Assistance Act (Maine DHHS, 2018). Research on motels and their residents is limited. This is largely due to the invisibility of motel communities in comparison to other homeless populations. For example, homeless communities who live on the streets are far easier to study because their lives, social processes, and marginality are visible to the public (Lee, Tyler, Wright, 2010). Motel residents will often live in motels located on the outskirts of cities, behind the closed doors of a room. This removes their marginality from the public gaze and discourse. However, a limited body of research has addressed the particular context of long-term motel residency.

There have been two major studies about issues of motel residency. In a 2017 study, Guittar sought to identify barriers that motel residents faced in accessing food security. This

study found that motel residents frequently struggle to access healthy food and cooking facilities. Because of motels' locations on the outskirts of towns and the high percentage of motel residents without transportation, residents are often rely on nearby gas stations rather than grocery stores to obtain food. Pre-prepared food is also easier for motel residents because it does not require storage or cooking. Unfortunately, this type of food is also lower in the nutrients that people need to stay healthy, which can compound motel residents' existing health problems (Guittar, 2017).

Secondly, in a 2016 ethnographic study of motel residency, Dum explored how motel residents interact with wider social forces causing their housing circumstances. This study addressed a number of marginalized communities, like addicts or people with mental illnesses, but particularly focused on sex offenders, as motels can be the first location where these individuals are placed after release. This is because motels do not require a large rental deposit or background checks. Therefore, sex offenders will often seek out motels as their only options for housing because their histories make them ineligible for most public and private programs. In his study, Dum identified the unique context of social exclusion that arises within residential motels and argued that motel communities formulate internal identities of inclusion in response to this isolation (Dum, 2016). This thesis builds heavily upon Dum's work in order to expand understandings of motel residents' experiences with socioeconomic insecurity, through elaborating on the context of motel residency in the Lewiston/Auburn area, and broadens the scope of analysis in order to include service providers' perspectives. Through this, I hope to better identify how motel residents fall between gaps of social services and how policy makers can best help these communities.

Chapter 2: Methods

My qualitative research methodology draws on two approaches to data collection: relational ethnography and community based research. These elements mutually reinforced each other in order to clarify this thesis' location of analysis as well as the relationships between motel residents and myself. Thus, in this section I will explain each approach's definition and the function they served throughout the course of this thesis. The details of how I integrated these principles into my methodology will follow.

Relational ethnography is an approach that "incorporates… at least two types of actors or agencies occupying different positions within the social sphere and bound together in a relationship of mutual dependence or struggle" (Desmond, pg. 554, 2014). This approach therefore changes the thesis' location of analysis. Many studies that do not deploy relational ethnographic approaches, define their sample via particular identities, physical locations, or socioeconomic statuses. This is sometimes problematic because it may not capture the diversity of individuals or systems implicated in particular social environments. Alternatively, relational theories of ethnography locate their focus on the networks and fields, which individuals of many identities interact with. This is valuable because it indicates how these social arenas impact and change people representing a variety of different backgrounds. Many other researchers have utilized relational ethnographic models in order to obtain data that reflects the diversity of circumstances, identities, and events that can shape a phenomenon. Importantly, these studies focus on systems not groups or categories, including subjects such as poverty, democratic participation, and personhood (Desmond, 2016; Mische, 2008; Smith, 2011).

The relational ethnographic approach is therefore vital for my study because motel residency involves much more than the individual characteristics of motel residents, their lived housing circumstances, or their economic status. Instead, motel residency is more fully explained

through the networks and social fields that drive people to seek out motels. While I did not

conduct in-depth ethnographic research through living in a motel or shelter, I drew from

elements of relational ethnography in order to centralize the social contexts within which motel

residents reside. Thus, because this relational research model seeks to recognize the diversity of

factors that cause and compound motel residency, it is an effective method to analyze the reality

of these housing circumstances.

While the relational ethnographic approach helped me to clarify the theories behind this

study, the community based research approach (CBR) guided me to ask community-generated

questions and subsequently conduct research in a socially just manner. CBR was motivated by

the potential for academia to recognize multiple different locations of expertise in the knowledge

generation process, include local community partners, and educate students in becoming capable

and civically engaged members of society. Therefore, it emphasizes three key principles with

regards to research and academia: "collaboration (with community partners); validation of

multiple sources of knowledge and methods of discovery and dissemination; and the goals of

social change and social action to achieve social justice" (Strand et al, pg. 8, 2003). Importantly,

this form of research attempts to reduce academia's stranglehold over information through

legitimizing the lived experiences and expertise of people outside of the academy. These

methodologies are especially important for sociology as they engage the day-to-day experiences

and beliefs influencing individual behavior. Therefore, it is impossible for sociologists to

holistically analyze and address individuals' lived social realities without research that is

democratically constructed to the greatest extent possible.

This was especially important for my area of research. My topic focuses on individuals

who have been traditionally removed from the public eye through compounding systems of

marginalization: long-term motel residents. But even more so, my research focuses on motel

residents' innovative strategies and tools that they developed in response to their housing

circumstances. Therefore, this research was guided by these individuals' lived experiences and

thus attempts to legitimize the expertise of motel residents and local service providers. Without

engaging in CBR practices, any system of alternative research design would have obscured the

unique forms of knowledge that are generated within these particular spaces of marginalization.

In order to ensure that I meaningfully included the voices of motel residents or service providers

in this thesis, I sought these communities' guidance throughout its entire process. For example, I

cooperated with a collection of local service providers and town officials in order to generate my

research question and ground it in felt community needs.

Perhaps the most important element of both approaches is that they centralize

intersectionality as a fundamental part of all research. Intersectionality calls attention to the ways

through which identities and social positions intersect with each other and systems of power.

Thus, it recognizes the diversity of identities that an individual may hold and the ways that

power is exercised along divisions of race, gender, class, etc. (Cho, Crenshaw, McCall, 2013).

An intersectional approach to research must therefore attempt to recognize as many experiences

as possible within a social environment. It must seek to validate every voice, from the most

powerful to the most marginalized. In order to do this, I interviewed people from a variety of

different backgrounds and statuses. While my sample was driven by participant availability and

feasibility, I managed to obtain interviews with a number of different individuals. With regards

to motel residents, my sample had individuals representing different gender, racial, family, class,

and health statuses. Further, with regards to service providers, I interviewed community

members specializing in numerous areas implicated with homelessness. For example, I talked to

local government officials, homelessness shelters, legal aides, homelessness organizations, prison reentry programs, and food pantries. Through these sources, I sought to validate the variety of social locations that motel residency occupy and the multitude of organizational actors with whom motel residents interact.

I. Motel Residents' & Service Providers' Interviews

In order to research this topic, I conducted thirty-one loosely structured, qualitative interviews with a number of different community members. This included sixteen motel residents and fifteen local service providers. Therefore, my data attempts to analyze motel residency from different social locations and vantage points. Importantly, qualitative data collection is motivated by an "orientation towards social context, to the interconnectedness between social phenomena rather than to their discrete features" (Chambliss, Schutt, 2016). So, qualitative data focuses on individual experiences and the meanings that people give to their realities. Again, democratic epistemology and relational ethnography are central components of successful qualitative interviews, because they ensure that hidden meanings can be exposed through interactive and conversational processes. Therefore, my interviewing methodology is best characterized as a form of intensive interviewing, which is a "method that involves open-ended, relatively unstructured questioning in which the interviewer seeks in-depth information on the interviewee's feelings, experiences, and perceptions" (Chambliss, Schutt, 2016).

With regards to the twelve interviews that I conducted with motel residents, I followed an established structure to find and interview participants. In order to locate each participant, I utilized snowball and convenience sampling methods. Snowball sampling is particularly valuable for marginalized or hard to access populations, as it utilizes internal community relationships and

networks in order to identify the most appropriate participants (Elliot, Fairweather, Olsen, Pampaka, 2016). In this study, I initially used local service providers' networks in order to identify motel residents who had sought help from them in the past. After that initial phase, I asked participants to point out other motel residents who they thought would be willing to participate. As I interviewed providers from a number of organizations, this meant that my sample represented people facing different lived circumstances, such as homelessness, food insecurity, prison reentry, domestic violence, addiction, etc. In total, twelve of my participants were obtained via this method. These interviews were mostly conducted within the motel environment. The majority of interviews were conducted in the participant's room or another private location. Interviewing in the motel environment was eye opening and valuable as I was able to see the actual lived circumstances of motel residency.

My methodology also utilized convenience sampling in order to find participants. To do this, I volunteered at two local programs that provide free meals to homeless or food insecure individuals. I asked for these organizations' consent before conducting any interviews. At the beginning of meals, I introduced my research on motel residency and myself. I then would sit at the back of the room and wait for people to come and talk with me. Through this method, I hoped to give participants the agency to choose whether or not they wanted to participate. In total, dozens of individuals came to talk to me about other forms of local homelessness, such as living in cars, on couches, in camps, or on the streets. While these conversations provided me with invaluable perspectives to frame Lewiston/Auburn's context of homelessness, I focused much of my attention on the four individuals who were motel residents. Our interviews were conducted in a quiet area at the back of the room. This sampling method also allowed me to gather observational data about how local homeless communities interact with each other and

service providers. Through this, I sought to actualize some principles of relational ethnography and CBR by identifying the lived experiences of motel residents at multiple different social locations.

An important limitation of convenience and snowball sampling is that they can fail to be representative of entire communities. Convenience samples are driven by the easiness of accessing participants. This means that visible or dominant communities are more likely to be represented within the study. For marginalized populations like motel residents, this can mean that particular subsets of the community may not have their voices heard within the study, which skews analyses of this issues' true context (Etikan, 2017). However, motel residents' unique position of marginalization and invisibility necessitated that I deployed convenience-sampling techniques. As there is very little data on motel residency and large barriers to uncovering this data (i.e. motel resident distrust of researchers, motel managers' desire to minimize knowledge of motel residency, motel residents' transience), I was forced to use convenience sampling. However, through interviewing at a variety of different locations and with a diverse set of local service providers, I attempted to recognize people from many different backgrounds. Thus, while my sample may not reflect local demographics fully, it does encompass a broad range of communities and lived identities. With regards my participants' backgrounds: nine identified as white; ten identified as male; nine lived alone whereas seven lived with one or more family members; thirteen had previously experienced homelessness; seven identified as drug (of former) addicts; seven disclosed that they had criminal records. Therefore, this sample sought to obtain a broad range of lived experiences in motels, making it fairly generalizable to motel residency in Lewiston/Auburn and other smaller cities. However, given the different demographics and paths to motel residency in big cities, like New York or Boston, this sample would only encompass a

subset of the communities likely represented in those larger contexts.

At the beginning of each interview, I introduced myself, the individual accompanying me, and reviewed the purpose of the study with all participants. Most interviews, excluding the four held at the meal programs, were conducted with myself and another individual. For five interviews, this person was a volunteer Bates student who assisted me in managing the recording device. This individual's only participation in the interview was to sign the confidentiality agreement. In my seven interviews with individuals undergoing re-entry processes, I conducted interviews with an employee for a prisoner reentry NGO who was working with these individuals. His presence was valuable because his pre-existing relationship with the interviewees meant that they appeared more comfortable speaking to me. After introductions, I stated that this confidential research was for my senior sociology thesis at Bates College and that I hoped to use it to provide policy makers with recommendations about motel residency. I then read through the interview agreement and asked each interviewee to sign as a confirmation of informed consent.

Over the course of the interview, each participant was asked questions grouped under five broad categories: individual demographics, paths to motel residency, their experiences in motels, their reasons for remaining in motels permanently, and resources or services that could better assist them. These questions were therefore designed to cover a comprehensive analysis of motel life, as they focused on the timeline of an individual's experience within motels as well as their perspectives into the future. Most of the questions included follow-ups or probes regarding particular themes or concepts that necessitated elaboration. This was particularly pronounced in relation to concepts of "home," which were not a prevalent part of my research until numerous participants discussed them independently of my questioning. All interviews lasted between

thirty minutes and two hours. To conclude, I gave each participant a $15 grocery store voucher, in order to compensate them for their time, as well as a debriefing form, which contained my contact details in case participants had further questions. The interview schedule, questions, and informed consent materials are included in Appendix A.

The second community that I interviewed was local service providers. In total, I interviewed fifteen service providers, who worked in a variety of different fields. For example, I talked with motel managers, employees at homelessness, domestic violence, prison reentry, food security organizations, and government officials. As with motel residents' interviews, I utilized convenience and snowball sampling in order to obtain participants. Initially, I collected a complete list of local organizations that addressed homelessness, such as shelters, food pantries, or free meal programs, and reached out to them. When contacting these organizations, I introduced my research and clearly stated that it was motivated towards producing policy recommendations designed to help motel residents. At the conclusion of our interviews, I asked each interviewee if they knew of other willing participants. Given the expansive variety of service providers that I interviewed, this population is fairly generalizable to the context of service provision in Lewiston/Auburn and other similar cities.

The majority of these interviews took place at the organization's office or program center. Before beginning, I again reviewed the purpose of my research and interview agreement. I emphasized that these organizations would not receive any confidential information from motel residents. This population's questions were grouped under four broad topics: their organization's purpose, interactions with homeless populations, interactions with motel residents, and policy recommendations. While most respondents devoted the majority of their time to the first two questions, many had particular memories of individuals who had lived in motels. Often these

stories were scattered and incomplete, which encapsulates the intransient nature of motel residents and the manner this interacts with the provision of services. Therefore, these responses necessitated follow-ups or probes in order to fully analyze how motel residents had interacted with these organizations. Most interviews lasted between one and two hours.

With both populations, I often struggled to keep my participants on topic. Service providers were especially passionate about their organization and often requested that I address topics distant from my initial question. Motel residents also frequently went off topic. They regularly would ask me about my life and my perspectives on issues. In some cases, they would make fun of me for attending a liberal college like Bates. One resident even gave me the nickname of "snowflake," which he used for the entirety of the interview and all further communications. For service providers and motel residents, I found that these off-topic conversations were valuable because they helped to form a relationship between the participant and myself. Further, I also felt like motel residents wanted someone to talk to and I enjoyed the conversations because they created more reciprocity between the two of us. Therefore, these off-topic conversations were in line with community based research approaches as they sought to create more equal exchanges between the researcher and participants (Strand et al, 2002).

At the conclusion of each interview, I typed up my field notes and observations in order to document my observations regarding interactions with participants. These notes emphasized the interviewees' facial gestures or tone of voice in order to better encompass their opinions. Importantly, I also recorded notes on the motel environment and how residents were living in it. After typing up my notes, I transcribed the recordings of each interview. I included everything from the interviews in my transcriptions, including participant pauses, non-verbal expressions like sighs or huffs, and laughs. In the instances where individuals did not consent to be recorded,

I took detailed notes and then transcribed these. All of my notes and interviews were transcribed within a two-day period of interviews. Thus my transcriptions and notes attempted to document as much content from each interview as possible.

II. Ethics

Ethics were central to my research methodology. As the study addressed deeply personal topics, discussions on criminal behavior, and relationships between motel residents and their landlords (motel managers), it was especially important that I obtained IRB approval before interviewing any participants. This allowed me to clearly set up structures and interview processes to protect my participants' rights and identities. However, when applying theory to practice, there are three main ethical risks that are created by qualitative interviews: voluntary participation, subject well being, and identity disclosure/confidentiality (Chambliss, Schutt, 2016). In order to ensure that these things were protected, I went over the interview agreement with each participant and obtained written consent beforehand. At all points throughout the interview, individuals had the ability to end it or revoke their consent to be recorded. Each participant was left with my contact details, a copy of the interview agreement, a debriefing form, which contained more information about the project, and a small gift voucher for the local grocery store. Further, all identifying characteristics were removed from transcripts or written materials. Therefore, each interview was conducted in line with ethical principles and my IRB requirements.

Ethical considerations of confidentiality also played a prominent role in my data analysis and writing processes. Theories behind qualitative sociological methods are marked by debate between the most just mechanisms through which researchers can represent their participants. On the one hand, some theorists suggest expressing the characters of participants in the purest form.

These theorists argue that it is an injustice, particularly towards marginalized communities, for researchers to modify or alter the testimonies of their participants as, by doing so, they can change the true meanings or sentiments underlying said data (Wilson, Hodgeson, 2012). However, other scholars emphasize the risks associated with interviewing subjects, especially when they are from communities that could be harmed by the implications of a study. As vulnerable, poor, or socially marginalized communities typically have fewer of the accumulated economic, legal, or social resources necessary to survive crises, researchers must consider how their data could cause negative outcomes. For example, in a study about illegal immigration, any identifying participant information would make it far easier for the state to find and punish members of this community (Knight, Roosa, Umaña-Taylor, 2009). Due to the vulnerabilities of motel residents, information from their interviews could expose them to legal punishment or motel management abuses.

In order to protect motel residents, I maintained their confidentiality in three primary ways. Firstly, all participants were identified via pseudonyms. These names were randomly chose and assigned to each participant. Secondly, while I interviewed at a total of three motels and two homelessness service centers, I aggregated all of these locations into one, which I chose to call Valleyview. This reduced the ability of both motel managers to identify if their tenants were represented in my data and local service providers to monitor or punish particular communities. While Valleyview encompasses three different motels, all three motels possessed very similar characteristics: they were all one-story buildings with about thirty units, a central office, and a similar clientele. Therefore, the aggregation of three motels into Valleyview does not diminish its accuracy. Finally, I excluded certain narratives from particular individuals based on the illegality of said actions. For example, if an individual on probation told me that they had

used drugs, I did not tie this behavior to their character. This is designed to protect legally vulnerable communities from being exposed to further sanctions.

III. Reflexivity

As with all research, I must clarify the particular lens through which I conducted this study. Reflexivity refers to the process whereby researchers reflect on the ways that their own identities and interests influence the manner through which they interpret and construct information (Griffin, 2017). Certainly, while I was conducting interviews with motel residents, I found myself judging their lived circumstances in relation to my own. For example, I found it difficult to understand how motel residents could characterize a motel as their home due to my upbringing within an actual house. In some instances, I found myself dismissing residents' assertions about the benefits of motels because of my own opinions of what counts as a proper home. In order to diminish my control over the voices and experiences of motel residents, I made sure to ask numerous clarifications, follow up questions, and probes throughout interviews. To do this, I used neutral follow-ups and probes, such as "what do you think?", or "hmm". These questions allowed the participants to fill unbiased silences themselves. By attempting to be as specific as possible with my questioning, I sought to ensure that motel residents were able to voice their own opinions and beliefs. When analyzing the data, I explored it in a holistic manner in order to find patterns within each participant's experiences. By finding patterns and verifying them through numerous points of evidence, I attempted to remove biases that I possessed towards particular one-time topics of interest. Quite simply, qualitative interviews' subjectivity is valuable because it forces the researcher to "listen to people as they describe how they

understand the worlds in which they live and work" (Rubin, Rubin, 1995). I sought to recognize this during both the data collection and analysis portion of this study.

But even more so, I found that my basic purpose for this study influenced the types of questions that I asked and ways that I interpreted them. This research locates itself within the broader body of literature on poverty, inequality, and housing that is motivated towards social change (Desmond, 2018). Thus, this research's purpose is not just to fulfill my graduation requirements, but also to identify the realities of motel residency and create recommendations for how to better the lived circumstances of all individuals confined to motels. If this research were merely for the realm of academia, then it would risk continuing to impart the same violence of invisibility upon motel residents.

Data Analysis Preface

For years, I drove past Valleyview and never even noticed it. On my daily commute, I would drive down Valleyview's highway consciously avoiding the pedestrians, laden with shopping bags and backpacks, without considering where they were going or where they came from. It was easy not to look and not to see these communities.

Valleyview is located next to a major road in the Lewiston/Auburn area. From first glance, its neglected infrastructure and lonely parking lot blend into all the neighboring buildings. Valleyview may have once appeared appealing to everyday people, but after years of having travellers pass it by, Valleyview noticeably shows signs of degradation. Valleyview stands as a squat, one story complex in the loose shape of a U. Two rows of units are directly parallel to each other, and a third row lies perpendicular to both. All buildings are colored rusty brown, which was once likely red paint but has faded over time. Across the pot-holed parking lot, a car wreck and large dumpster frame a small, brown house where Valleyview's manager lives.

During the day, Valleyview felt like a profoundly unfriendly place. All of the windows' curtains were tightly pulled shut. Trash and cigarette butts were scattered across the ground. Of the people outside of their rooms, most religiously avoided all eye contact and forms of acknowledgement. Even throughout my short time there, Valleyview appeared to be an immensely isolating and alienating place. It was not until I started talking to Valleyview's residents that I realized their experiences contested my opinion. Many of them spoke about the relationships they had built with their neighbors, the ways through which they relied on other motel residents for emotional, economic, or physical support, and the strategies that they used to make their rooms feel more like home. My experiences started to recognize the truth of these narratives: in one room, I found a wall filled with pictures of the resident's loved ones; before an

interview, I saw my participant give his neighbor money for a taxi into town; at the conclusion of another interview, my participant invited me over for dinner with his neighbors.

My data from Valleyview thus appeared contradictory. On the one hand, motel residents live in dehumanizing and insecure conditions. But on the other hand, motel residents often highlighted motel life's benefits, like the meaningful ties that they formed with others in this community, relationships that helped them survive their housing circumstances. To best understand this discrepancy, I used NVIVO to code all of my interview transcripts. My initial codes reveal two primary themes: the benefits and negatives of motel life. I then divided each code up into subcategories of specific things that motel residents found beneficial or negative about their housing circumstances. As there were fewer identified benefits to motel residency, this theme required only one chapter. However, participants identified a number of negatives, which I grouped into three separate levels of insecurity: Physical, Interpersonal, and Institutional. Importantly, I chose to place negatives in the categories that participants most associated these issues with. For example, while the lack of transportation to motels is a result of institutional failures to assist motel residents, motel residents themselves were more likely to reference the lack of transportation with regards to its effect on their personal health. Thus, I grouped these sub themes into the categories motel resident most associated them with.

The following chapters are driven by the questions: Does motel residency reinforce housing instability? What strategies do motel residents utilize to survive their housing circumstances? To answer this, I first outline three primary levels of insecurity faced by motel residents: Physical, Interpersonal, and Institutional. I will conclude by exploring the strategies that motel residents used in order to survive their lived circumstances. All information is based upon my interview data, field notes, and experiences while interviewing at Valleyview.

Chapter 3: Physical Insecurity

"When you have to walk from Valleyview, you gotta live with all the connotations that come along with that. Because, when people see you walking down the street with full trash bags, they think something of you."
- Unnamed Valleyview Resident

Ryan's most notable characteristic was a long line of stitches, stretching from his left ear to the bottom of his jaw. An ugly mottling of bruises colored the entire left side of his face, creeping beneath the collar of his shirt. Despite assuring me that he was not in pain, Ryan spent much of our time together with a haggard, tired, and pained look on his face. It was not until the end of our interview that he revealed how he had received said injuries. With an air of almost embarrassed resignation he stated that: "I was riding my bike to the grocery store about a week ago, and I was going through this intersection and a driver didn't even notice me so I just, like swerved out of his way because I was going to get hit and I slammed my face into the stop sign next to the road. It was rugged, real rugged." Ryan described coming back to his senses on the ground below the stop sign, to feel pain all throughout the left side of his body. He did not notice the blood streaming down his face until it began seeping into his clothes. Not one person stopped to help.

Like many other poor individuals, Ryan "didn't have a choice but to keep on going. All those people driving by and not one stopped to help me. I just had to pick up my bike and ride it down to the hospital." Because of his precarious employment status, Ryan knew that if he missed any days of work he would likely lose his job. So, he refused the hospital's attempts to check him for a concussion or broken ribs. "As long as I don't know about it, I can keep working" was his reasoning. As Ryan's job was only part time, he did not have health insurance. Thus, he could not afford to stay in the hospital overnight and the tiny bottle of painkillers and gauze that he was given upon exiting the hospital were likely the only medicine he would use. Without

insurance, Ryan faced an unpleasant and degrading reality where he would have to clean his wounds, suffer potentially broken ribs without enough painkillers, and remove his stitches all by himself. It was not until he got back to his motel room after hours in the emergency room, that he realized he had never made it to the grocery store. His cupboards were empty of food. So, he took a few extra painkillers, hoping they would help him sleep and diminish the knot of hunger in his stomach.

Ryan's experience was profoundly shaped by his motel residency. Because of their housing circumstances, motel residents are subject to immense physical insecurity. For the purpose of this paper, I draw from literature on food insecurity to define physical insecurity. This body of scholarship defines food insecurity as: "the condition where people lack access (including physical, social and economic access) to sufficient, safe and nutritious food necessary to lead active and healthy lives" (Death, 2016). However, as motel residents are subject to intersecting points of physical marginalization, I expand this definition to recognize insecurity beyond just that of food, including the lack of access to employment opportunities, transportation, local stores, clean and safe homes, or household appliances. Thus, this definition recognizes that, like food, access to all of these necessities is required in order for a person to live a healthy and secure life.

Motel residents identified three primary forms of physical marginalization within their lives: transportation, food, and living conditions. For each participant, these issues were felt on an almost daily basis and participants regularly acknowledged this. Throughout our interviews, my participants were quickest to identify the difficulties that they faced physically. This is likely because those physical barriers to security are more obvious when one must grapple with them every single day. Quite simply, it is easier for an individual to recognize the importance of public

transportation when they must bike three miles into work each day, than it is to recognize that

complex political systems, which often fail to enfranchise marginalized communities, are the

root cause of inadequate public transportation. Thus, while motel residents characterized these

forms of insecurity as impacting their physical health and safety, they also implicitly recognized

that this marginalization violated and degraded their very sense of self. Over the course of this

chapter, I will explore each form of physical marginalization (transportation, food, and living

conditions) from the perspective of motel residents, before examining how this causes alienation

from society and self.

I. Transportation

Ryan was not the only person biking from Valleyview every morning. As a resident of the

Lewiston/Auburn area, I would often see individuals walking or biking along one of the areas'

largest motorways. Laden with backpacks, grocery bags, or sometimes even shopping carts,

these individuals would hug the roadside in order to avoid traffic racing past at sixty miles an

hour. "I'm only afraid of the roads when it's dark," one Valleyview resident told me, "because

then no one can see me when they're driving by." Too often, in the early mornings or late nights,

Valleyview's residents would find themselves suddenly illuminated by a car's headlights as it

narrowly sped past.

Motels that house long-term residents pose unique barriers towards transportation.

Historically, motels were distinguished from hotels due to their accessibility for road travelers

(Treadwell, 2005). Throughout the 1940s and 50s, as more and more families obtained vehicles,

the road trip became a staple of the American experience. Over these long journeys, many

individuals sought to avoid busy and expensive downtowns where hotels had traditionally been

located. Thus, motels were created as cheaper versions of hotels, which diminish distinctions between the road and one's place of rest (Jackle, Sculle, Rogers, 1996). This meant that motels were typically built in non-residential areas, along motorways, and far away from urban hubs. For most, personal experience is enough to reflect this context, as cheap motels litter every major motorway. Characteristically run down motels and their flickering signs depicting "motel" with a variety of missing letters, are fixtures of American society. However, as people speed past these locations, it is easy to forget how motels are premised upon the possession of a vehicle.

Out of the sixteen Valleyview residents who I interviewed, twelve lacked a personal and consistent mode of transportation. On a good day, these individuals relied on informal social networks in order to carpool to town. On a bad day, these individuals were forced to walk the three-mile trek down a motorway in order to reach the same place. One resident clarified this context's impossibility, describing how: "every morning I leave my room at about 4am. I have to get to work by 6am, and it takes me that long to bike there. When I finish work at 6pm, I don't get home until 8 or so. By then, I'm just too exhausted to do anything. Sometimes I don't even eat dinner because I'm too tired to sleep." In order to remain employed, this Valleyview resident had to bike over four hours and work essentially sixteen hours every single day. Valleyview is not unique in this instance, and past research into motel residency has similarly revealed crippling and inadequate transportation options for motel residents (Dum, 2016).

Transportation is a requirement for security. Without access to transportation, in the form of a personal vehicle or public options, individuals face greater barriers to securing stable employment or accessing community social networks. For example, if someone lacks stable transportation, they have a diminished ability to go into town to visit friends or families, attend community events like free dinners and church, or go to local centers like the library and parks.

This profoundly alienates individuals from not only economic opportunities, but also social recognition. Recent research has identified the prevalence of Transit Deserts in many low-income communities. Transit Deserts are areas requiring the use of a vehicle, but also lacking all forms of public transportation. Thus, they represent geographic vulnerabilities, where individuals must rely on personal transportation to access employment, educational, health, recreational, etc., opportunities (Allen, 2018). As poor individuals are more likely to lack a personal vehicle or rely on public transit, Transit Deserts reinforce systems of poverty and inequality through the deprivation of opportunities. As always, this impacts poor individuals and communities of color to a disproportionate extent, as they are more likely to live in areas lacking robust public transit (Kramer, 2018; Pathak, Wyczalkowski, Huang, 2017; Sanchez, 2008).

Residents at Valleyview clearly felt the ramifications of inadequate transportation options. For the twelve residents who lacked cars, transportation was a point of constant exhaustion. Walking six miles to and from work each day was a massive drain on their physical health. Of those twelve residents without cars, all but one stated that their long commute to and from work caused them to sacrifice important processes of self care, like eating breakfast or dinner, showering, cleaning up their room, or interacting with their family and friends. While this context is draining in the summer, it becomes actively dangerous in the winter. In describing his daily trip into Lewiston, Ryan stopped midway to shake his head and merely state: "I have no idea what I'm gonna do in the winter. (The trip) is hard enough without all the ice and snow and cold…. I just don't know what I'm gonna do, I don't know if I'll be able to keep my job."

Ryan's words demonstrate how inadequate transportation impacts motel residents' mental health. For many residents, their inability to move freely and easily into work engendered a profound sense of alienation, isolation, and loneliness. Across my interviews, residents

47

identified three different instances where their transportation issues made them feel most marginalized. Firstly, just under half of all residents felt like they were missing out on important community events or opportunities because they lacked transportation. One woman described how she "could work if I had a car, but I just can't go through walking all that way into town so… I stay here all day." Thus, instead of being able to interact with people, experience new contexts, and make an income, this individual was confined to her lonely motel room every single day because she lacked transportation. Of the residents who described this experience, almost all characterized this isolation as negatively impacting both their mental and physical health.

Secondly, six residents were concerned that their lack of transportation made them an undue burden on their family and friends. Many motel residents use informal friendship and family networks in order to access transportation (Dum, 2016). Often this comes in the form of carpooling with a friend or calling up a relative for a ride. One resident, who was reliant on his sister to drive him everywhere, felt a deep sense of guilt about doing this, stating that "I just really hate the fact that I can't support myself. I hate it. Right now I'm such a burden on my family... It's hard." When this individual revealed his fear, he was noticeably upset. His face was red and he could not make eye contact. I suspect this was because he felt ashamed of himself. With the six individuals who described feeling like they were burdening their family, shame appeared to be a recurring factor. Five of the six blamed themselves for their own lack of transportation. Three residents placed themselves in their families' shoes and marveled at how these support networks could tolerate their continued transportation needs. One resident even stated that he thought it would be best if he just stopped communicating with his family in order to prevent himself from causing them undue stress. Thus, though motel residents sometimes

48

possessed networks that they could rely upon for transportation, often their continued needs

made them feel deeply insecure about using these relationships in order to survive. Therefore,

they were more likely to isolate themselves even further.

Finally, the walk into town itself reinforces residents' isolation from society. One resident

described how throughout the long walk down the motorway, he could "feel everyone's eyes on

me, feel them all judging me." This resident could not afford any backpack, so collected all his

work tools into a large black trash bag and carried it along the motorway each morning. In his

experience, this meant that he had to "to live with all the connotations that come along with that.

Because, when people see you walking down the street with full trash bags, they think something

of you." Thus, as he walked into work every day, he could feel drivers assigning him identities

and characteristics based on his appearance. Even if passerbys did not follow this process, he still

felt as if they did and internalized these stigmas until he could not meaningfully distinguish

himself from the way he considered others to perceive him. After I asked him how these stares

impacted him, he paused, thought for a moment, and then said with great sadness: "When

everyone sees you as a homeless, poor, unclean piece of trash, then you might as well just accept

that's what you are."

As drivers, it is easy to stare at people when you are behind the wheel of a car. There is

an anonymity that comes from your speed of travel or the glass separation you and the outside

world. I would often stare at people walking along the motorway between Valleyview and the

downtown, wondering where they were going or pitying them for their large backpacks and

grocery bags and inadequate clothing. But, like many others, I never considered how violative

and degrading that stare is towards its subject. The lack of accessible transportation for motel

residents is careless. It is careless in the absurdity that no bus line connects this motorway to the

downtown. But even more so, it is careless that every single day dozens of individuals must walk along a busy and dangerous motorway, or repeatedly call in favors to get a ride, or carpool in vehicles unfit for the road. Motels thus cause a unique form of alienation because of inadequate transportation. Importantly, this alienation is felt at the physical level, as motel residents must walk miles into town, and at the mental level, as motel resident feel more and more isolated or stigmatized because of their distance from a community.

II. Food

When I asked Steve about food security, he answer was resounding: "Food comes last, if I gotta pay a bill or if I don't have time to walk to the stores, then I'm not gonna get no food. It's that simple, food can't be one of my priorities." With a dismissive wave of his hand, Steve revealed that he had not eaten a proper meal in a few weeks, surviving off of cereal or white bread. Littering the space besides his dresser, I could see a graveyard of hostess cake wrappings, gas station plastic bags, candy bars, or pizza boxes. Despite his messiness, Steve was a very imposing figure. He loomed above me at well over six feet tall. He had a deep voice and a big booming laugh that could not be contained by any walls, but particularly Valleyview's. Steve was also a self-professed "idiot", especially when it came to money. As a younger man, Steve had accumulated a substantial amount of credit card debt with his former wife. After they divorced, Steve was tasked with not only paying off most of the debt, but also funding weekly child support payments for his two children. Thus, Steve had a lot of debts that needed to be paid. In order to do this, and still keep a roof over his head, Steve sacrificed everything that he did not consider necessary. Too often, the first thing to be sacrificed was food.

Motel residents are subject to extreme food insecurity. Perhaps the most dangerous context exacerbating food insecurity is food deserts. Food deserts are geographic areas lacking access to supermarkets or other food stores, and are a primary result of unjust systems that only facilitate certain communities' ability to obtain healthy foods (Cummins, Macintyre, 2002). Thus, individuals are forced to get their food from local convenience stores and gas stations or buy food in bulk from distant supermarkets. Importantly, these foods are higher in fats, sugars, and unhealthy carbohydrates, while also lower in necessary vitamins and minerals. Therefore, communities within food deserts are more likely to suffer from chronic health issues, higher rates of hospitalization, mental illnesses, behavioral issues, and lower general productivity (Walker, Keane, Burke, 2010; Hendrickson, Smith, Eikenberry, 2006; Cummins, Macintyre, 2002). Like other food insecure communities, motel residents face a number of difficulties in accessing healthy foods. However, compounding factors within the motel environment mean that residents experience uniquely marginalizing food inaccessibility. Residents identified two main barriers to food security throughout our interviews: access to food and facilities to cook food.

With regards to the former, motel residents could not access safe and healthy food, not even within their own rooms. On the first day of his residency at Valleyview, Steve went to the bathroom to pour himself a glass of water, only to discover that "the water smelled like shit and… it even had this slight tinge to it." Steve immediately called Valleyview's manager and was moved to another room, where the water seemed slightly less dirty. Just under two thirds of all participants had suspicions about Valleyview's water. One individual told me that they thought old pipes were leaking rust into the water. Another suggested that the pipes had been clogged with something. Someone even believed that the sewage had seeped into the water supply and was tainting all their water with waste. Steve was lucky that he was able to move to

51

another room. But he, like all of Valleyview's other residents, had to rely on their bathroom water supply in order to wash dishes, wash themselves, cook, and drink. As the vast majority of Valleyview's residents are poor, disempowered, and unable to access housing anywhere outside of the motel, it is unlikely that the water's cleanliness will ever be remedied.

Since Valleyview is located along a major highway, the nearest store is a gas station just over a mile up the road. The nearest supermarket is three miles down the highway into town. If Valleyview residents wanted to purchase clean water or food, they would have to make the trip to one of these locations. Because twelve residents lacked any form of transportation, the motel's physical isolation was felt especially deeply. One of these individuals described his dilemmas in getting groceries: "There isn't any close grocery store and walking is impossible because of the road. If you walk, you can't buy enough for more than a day because then you have to carry it all back. So I couldn't buy a gallon of milk or anything... I can't afford that and I can't afford to spend that much time on groceries." Another resident, who had two younger children, described how it was easier for them to just go to the local gas station and buy some pizza, chicken wings, or hot dogs. So, every few days her family would make the walk up to the gas station, and come back laden with junk food, soda, and candy. Almost half of all my participants directly stated that they often relied on the local gas station for meals. Even with the people who did not admit that they regularly visited the gas station, I would see signs of potential dishonesty like gas store bags in their trash or fast food boxes in their rooms. Diets that are high in these sorts of foods are more likely to cause health conditions like obesity or diabetes (Franck, Grandi, Eisenberg, 2013). However, few Valleyview residents had choices outside the gas station. At the end of a long day of work or when the motorway was only illuminated by cars' headlights or when someone is struggling with health issues, a mile is a lot more possible than three.

Food accessibility is a common issue within many low-income communities. However, motel residents' accessibility to healthy food is further limited by facilities within motel rooms. Motels are not designed for cooking. This is why most motel rooms are not installed with stovetops, kitchen sinks, or full fridges. At Valleyview, the majority of rooms were stocked very sparsely, with a bathroom sink, a mini-fridge, and a microwave. However, the quality of these appliances was often suspect. For example, when Ryan first tried cooking a bowl of mac'n'cheese in his microwave, he swears that it immediately caught on fire. He laughed at this story and revealed how "it was the only time I was thankful for my broken fire detector." However, outside of this moment of laughter, Ryan was bitter about his microwave. Even though management replaced his initial one, he still struggled to make meaningful food in a microwave. On most days, Ryan survived off of "mostly microwavable food and snacks… I didn't get to eat any real food so I was eating a lot of snacks or PB and J sandwiches. But that was alright, I'm tough." Another resident echoed Ryan's circumstances, describing how he "would make these quick little ditty meals out of my microwave. Usually I think that I eat pretty healthy, but those quick meals don't have life to them, they're so processed and you can't really have anything else." These were both men who biked over three miles into work each morning, worked almost ten hour days, and then repeated their three mile bike back to Valleyview. Microwaveable food not only lacks necessary nutrients to remain healthy, it also is not nearly substantial enough to accommodate these men's lifestyles.

However, processed microwaveable food is often the only option for Valleyview's residents. Not only is it easier to carry back to the motel, it also does not require a fridge. Steve's fridge represented a deep point of frustration in his life as he "only had one of those mini-fridges, it was really more like a cooler and I couldn't fit anything in it. It didn't keep anything cold." So,

he could not keep any fresh produce, dairy, or meat in his room. Because of the lack of access to supermarkets, inability to store perishable food properly, and limited cooking facilities, it is easier for the majority of motel residents to simply consume food that is processed enough to not require cooking or proper storage. Of the sixteen Valleyview residents who I interviewed, thirteen described experiencing similar issues of food security specifically because of the barriers they faced in accessing and preparing healthy food. Ten stated that the majority of their meals were cheap, processed food, like cereal, PB and J sandwiches, or pre-prepared meals such as mac'n'cheese and ramen noodles.

Motel residents thus face profound food insecurity because of their housing circumstances. As they are forced to rely on cheap, processed food that is laden with unhealthy sugars, fats, and carbohydrates, motel residents are under greater risk of developing serious health issues (Walker, Keane, Burke, 2010; Hendrickson, Smith, Eikenberry, 2006; Cummins, Macintyre, 2002). But even more so, motel residents are barred from accessing one of the tenets of a home: a warm, healthy, safe meal. For many people, there is little more comforting than returning home after a long day of work to a hot meal, or being able to cook one's favorite dish whenever, or simply having a full dinner with one's loved ones. Motel residents cannot experience that. The only hot meals are those from a microwave. Favorite dishes become Kraft mac'n'cheese or off-brand Capt'n Crunch cereal. A shared meal takes place sprawled across a bed, with grease and food staining the bedspread. In describing how he survived his food insecurity, Steve was simple: "You just have to get ready for the nothingness." As food is a fundamental necessity for a healthy life, communities cannot be left to tolerate nothingness.

III. Living Conditions

Mary's greatest goal was to escape Valleyview. As the only caregiver for her elderly and sick mother, Mary struggled with motel life. She was convinced that there was not enough space in the room, that the lack of light was making her mother too sleepy, that the smell of the room was exacerbating her mother's respiratory issues. Most importantly, Mary was worried that, while she was at work all day and her mother was left alone in their tiny and dark motel room, Valleyview would compound her mother's mental illnesses. Over our interview, while Mary's mother was watching TV, she spoke to me in hushed tones about her mother insomnia, self-diagnosed depression, and perpetual forgetfulness. "This place isn't good for my mother," she revealed, "it'll just (make) things worse." Like most other motel residents, Mary was working her way up the list for a housing voucher. Unlike other motel residents, Mary was tenacious in her pursuit of said benefit, as she regularly visited the local housing authority demanding to know how her application was progressing. For Mary, there was a limited amount of time that her mother could last at Valleyview, and that was primarily due to its conditions.

Motels understandably present a number of difficulties for permanent residents because they are not designed for long-term stays. Instead, their primary purpose was to house short-term travellers while they stopped for a break in their journey (Jackle, Sculle, Rogers, 1996). Thus, motel rooms not only lack the kitchen and cleaning facilities that we discussed above, they also lack necessary space for an individual to live comfortably. Mary worried about her mother's mental health so much, because her mom merely sat in the motel room all day thinking to herself. Other residents who had experiences with addiction in the past struggled with the immense boredom of a motel room, describing how "it was difficult, living at the motel really takes a toll on you. You just spend so much time not working, not doing anything. And when

people sit around with nothing to do, they can fall back into old bad habits." For this individual, he feared that one day he would accept an invite over to a neighbor's room or go visit the local drug dealer, where it would be far easier for him to slip back into past habits of addiction.

Around a third of all Valleyview residents felt deeply confined within their motel rooms. Ryan even compared it to a prison, stating that: "It's a cramped, small space, you don't have any counters or fridges. It felt almost like a prison, except without the barbed wire fences." Because of this confinement, a number of them experienced negative physical and mental ramifications. For example, two residents described how they "would spend all day doing a lot of sitting down." They attributed this sedentary context to causing weight gain, poor sleeping habits, and over-eating. Three other residents feared that their boredom would drive drug usage or illegal activity. One elderly individual was convinced that their family refused to visit because there were not enough chairs in the motel room. Thus the lack of space inherent to motel rooms greatly impacted residents' physical, mental, and emotional health.

However, there were other issues with Valleyview's living conditions that, while they were not inherent to a motel, are inherent to poverty. Valleyview's motel rooms were dilapidated at best. Every resident is assigned a room of fairly similar sizing, however rooms that are paid on a weekly basis are slightly higher quality than those paid for monthly. From the first day at the Valleyview, motel residents were faced with conditions not fit for habitation. One resident recalled how: "When I got there, the toilets hadn't been cleaned, and I had to sweep my way through cobwebs, the lighting was poor, and the smell was just terrible, it was even worse in the monthly rooms because people smoke in (there)." This individual was so repulsed by the conditions of his room, that he spent over $20 on his own cleaning supplies. For a low-income individual $20 can be the difference between eating for a day or not. Half of my other

participants similarly stated that their rooms were unclean and dirty when they first arrived. During one interview, my participant pointed to a large, dark stain that had spread from the bathroom door well into his bedroom. When he first arrived in his room, the toilet had leaked scummy water all throughout his room, permanently staining the floor and leaving a distinctly unpleasant smell.

At Valleyview, there is only one cleaner who prepares rooms for new arrivals. As long-term residents occupy many of Valleyview's rooms, some of who are drug addicts, the task of cleaning out rooms is huge and unpleasant. One resident told me how "when those rooms get lived in, they're just… ughhh… you know, it's enough to send people crying out the door." However, it was common gossip amongst Valleyview's residents that the cleaner was herself a drug addict with serious health problems, and therefore she could not manage the large job of cleaning rooms. Thus, most residents were assigned rooms that still felt lived in by others. Common issues that they reported were: suspected bed bugs, stained bed sheets, unclean toilets, rotting food in the fridge, leaking pipes, and the continued smell of smoke or garbage. For many of Valleyview's residents, Valleyview represented their reentry into society from incarceration or the first place they had been able to afford after a stint of homelessness. There are few worse ways to welcome these individuals back into our community than by placing them in deeply unclean facilities.

Cleanliness continued to be an issue at Valleyview even after the first few days. Often when I visited, there were trash bags or loose garbage outside the room doors. Especially during winter, many people would smoke inside their rooms, thus allowing the smell of smoke to seep into their bedspreads, curtains, and clothes. Valleyview had thin walls and they were not nearly robust enough to contain the smell to each room. Instead, the smell of smoke, garbage, and

general neglect permeated almost every room. These conditions were not suitable for habitation, and one resident further described how in his room "the toilet didn't work, the shower was ice cold and the water pressure was pretty weak, the water out of the tap wasn't clean. It had a bad smell and color to it… the motel is just pretty run down you know?" In this context, just under half of all residents stated that they did not even see the point in trying to keep their rooms clean. When the water was unclean, and the toilets did not work, and every sheet was stained with the legacies of past residents, and a neighbor's smoking habit made your room smell like an ashtray, resistance to the determined creep of uncleanliness felt futile to many residents. One resident described this dilemma by questioning: "what's the point? It's never gonna be clean, what's the point in trying to make it?"

Mary was unique in her determination to maintain a safe, healthy, and clean room for herself and her mother. She was always concerned about its cleanliness, and regularly swept the floors, washed the sheets, and cleaned the toilet. She had even invested in a set of scented candles, and as we sat in her room to conduct our interviews, the smell of vanilla laced the stale air. Mary's concern with cleanliness largely stemmed from her desire to reduce the possibility that Valleyview would exacerbate her mother's illnesses. This fear was not without merit. Conditions of housing instability and uncleanliness are more likely to cause health issues such as respiratory illnesses, obesity, mental illnesses, and excessive stress (Butler, 2018; Fenelon et al, 2017; Desmond, 2016). As always, these health costs are disproportionately experienced by vulnerable communities, such as elderly individuals, people with mental illnesses, or communities that subject to preexisting health conditions (Cornwell, 2014). The Lewiston/Auburn area itself has witnessed a number of issues within motels due to their conditions. For example, a few years ago, the police were called to a local motel room, where

they found that a baby had died of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome after residing in a single motel room with their four other family members.

Thus, Valleyview's conditions not only make pre-existing health issues worse, they also expose motel residents to increased health risks. This confines motel residents to more regimented and inescapable positions of inequality, where they struggle to work, interact with others outside of the motel community, or accumulate any wealth in the face of medical bills. Thus, motel residents often have no choice but to continue living in the same conditions that make them profoundly unwell. Like Mary, many of Valleyview's residents follow news of their public housing statuses religiously. Hoping, that they can escape before the motel robs them of their most basic right to health.

IV. Conclusion

Physical security is a necessary condition for a safe and stable life. With the foundation of physical security, individuals can seek out better employment opportunities, focus more on their individual health, invest more time into their education, family members, and friends, or simply access a place of rest at the day's close. Motel residents cannot access this security for three primary reasons: inadequate transportation, barriers to healthy food, and unsafe living conditions within motels. These three issues build upon each other and compound existing marginalization within the motel community. Most noticeably, this results in motel residents struggling with health issues to even greater extents.

However, this context of physical marginalization also crystallizes other issues of social alienation. When motel residents are forced to walk miles down a busy motorway, consistently eat junk food, or reside within unsafe and unsanitary conditions, this represents a profound

assault on the self. As a society, we categorize individuals based on the manner through which they are presented and attach particular identities to said categories. For marginalized communities, these identities are often laden with stigmas that characterize them as inferior or wrong (Goffman, 1986). For many, motel residents' physical conditions present them as low-lifes, white trash, or addicts unworthy of support. But even more so, even if individuals do not categorize motel residents based upon the stereotypes of their identities, motel residents believe that they do. Many residents expressed the inescapable and pervasive fear that they would become part of Valleyview. That despite all of their efforts they would come to represent all of the poverty, and neglect, and isolation representative of motel living. When Ryan was describing his biking accident, he was not most upset about the accident, or the injury, or his broken bike. What upset him most was that no one stopped to help him. At the corner of a busy intersection, not one person stopped to help a man struggling to get to his feet as blood streamed down his face. No one cared enough to help a motel resident, and Ryan knew that they did not.

Chapter 4: Interpersonal Insecurity

"I just couldn't, I couldn't put up with him and I didn't want to wait until anger moved in."
- David, Valleyview Resident

Juan looked very alone throughout our interview. At only nineteen years old, Juan was currently living in a shelter for homeless youth from the Lewiston/Auburn area. He described his life as epitomizing "cycles of homelessness," where week-by-week his parents had attempted to maintain a roof over their three children's heads. Periodically they would oscillate between sleeping on a friend's couch, renting the only apartments that would take them (often ones marked by neglect), staying in shelters, or even sleeping on the streets. His family also spent over two months at Valleyview when Juan was still a child. This lifestyle had clearly left a lasting impact on Juan's personality, outlook on life, and relationship to his family. During our interview he stated: "staying at Valleyview made me like...more jaded. Because of the people who stayed there and the way that management treated my family, I had to grow up real, real fast… I spent like the entire day in my unit with my family and it just kinda made us hate each other sometimes. So I always felt like I was growing up all on my own." Ironically, the physical closeness of Juan's family in their Valleyview unit exacerbated the distancing of each family member from the others. When Juan spoke to me, he had not contacted his family in over three months and was struggling to save money to afford an apartment of his own. Thus, Juan's childhood and legacy of housing instability fed into the fracturing of his family's relationships.

Almost all individuals require families, partners, and friends in order to live happy and healthy lives. Stable, healthy, and loving family relationships have been attributed to everything from decreased childhood behavioral issues, to increased family and generational wealth, to fewer psychological adjustment problems, like substance abuse or depression (Sabey et al, 2018; Groh et al, 2014; Elmelech, 2008). At a more personal level, family relationships and friendships

are locations where we can feel loved, unconditionally welcome, and supported (Sroufe, 2005).

Thus, this chapter explores the ways through which motel residency both degrades and generates

relationships between people. I encompass this through the concept of interpersonal insecurity,

which I define as the deterioration of positive social support networks. Social support is a

prominent sociological theory that explores processes of social interactions or exchanges

between individuals and the communities in which they are embedded, such as their

neighborhoods, friend groups, and families. These interactions are defined by their types, i.e.

emotional or instrumental, and their functions or purposes, i.e. emotional support or community

(Kent de Grey et al, 2018; Lincoln 2007; Gottlieb, 1985). Thus, this chapter explores how

individuals' social relationships are affected by motel residency and the implications this has on

their own wellbeing. To do this, I analyze two key relationships that featured prominently in the

lives of motel residents: relationships with significant others (i.e. spouses, family members, and

friends) and motel management.

I. Family Fragmentation

Mary, who I described in past chapters, possesses an almost infinite amount of patience and

empathy. Her devotion to her mother was indicative of this. Mary would spend hours every day

ensuring that her mother was happy and healthy, this included not only thoroughly cleaning the

room but also cleaning her mother, monitoring her mother's medical needs, and making sure that

her mother always had someone to talk to. Over the course of our interview, Mary's mother

noticeably struggled to remember which topics we had already covered, and like many elderly

individuals, her conversation cycled back through examples we had discussed only minutes

before. Each time she repeated her words, Mary would shoot me an apologetic smile and

thoughtfully respond to her mother as if she were stating something entirely new. I suspect that during the quiet moments of the day, Mary would sit and listen to her mother's old stories over and over again, lovingly providing her mother with guaranteed attention.

There was only one time in which Mary's patience seemed to crack. When describing her social life, Mary emphasized how she struggled to "find time for me or my friends." Thus, while other women Mary's age had families, spouses, or friends to enjoy a night out with, Mary was forced to return to her little motel unit every day in order to be with her mother. For Mary, this seemed to generate a profound sense of isolation and sadness, not necessarily because she did not want to care for her mother, but rather because of the life deprived from her by these circumstances. The size of Valleyview's units and their lack of privacy are main factors exacerbating experiences analogous to Mary's. Of the sixteen individuals who I interviewed, seven resided with at least one other individual. Two participants lived with children, and from my time at Valleyview I am certain that several other families faced similar circumstances.

For many residents, sharing their motel unit with others was a common cause of immense stress, especially upon their relationships with significant others. Throughout my interviews, residents named three main issues precipitating stress and conflict: the lack of space, cleanliness or hygiene, and external stressors (fear for personal safety, feelings of insecurity, etc.). With regards to the former, the vast majority of Valleyview's residents complained that the lack of space in their rooms generated a significant amount of interpersonal stress. On average, Valleyview's rooms were about 175-200 square feet, not including the bathroom. It is almost impossible to imagine how a couple or a family could fit not only all their possessions, but also their entire lives into this small space. Often when I entered resident's rooms, their belongings were piled up on the tables, chest of drawers, seats, and floors. One room had rows of storage

containers stacked along the length of a wall. These looming piles of belongings made the units feel even more claustrophobic and in the clutter of the rooms, I often found myself perched on a participant's bed throughout our interview. The units' sizes forced this level of proximity.

Thus, Valleyview's residents typically lacked any place that was meaningfully their own. One resident described how "I would get back after working all day and my roommate would be watching TV or playing video games until, like two or three in the morning... and all I wanted to do was sleep." Another resident told me about how, as an introvert, he never had any space to regenerate after the day at work, stating that: "I'll get back from working and I'll just be so exhausted with people… but then I have to sit there and talk with my roommate. So I end up feeling even more tired." A number of scholars have identified the benefits of personal space as locations where individuals can regenerate from days of heavy social interaction, reflect on their thoughts or feelings, and simply relax (Dossey, 2016; Kahnweiler, 2013). Because of Valleyview's tiny units, residents found that they could not access these benefits, and instead felt like they were constantly subject to scrutiny from their roommates.

Valleyview's compactness also meant that it was incredibly easy for rooms to fall into disarray and become dirty. One participant, a small and soft-spoken man called David, described how his two sons had spent extended periods of time living in with him over the five years he had resided at Valleyview. David made sure to clarify that he loved both of his sons deeply, but revealed that he had recently kicked one son out of their room. When I questioned him as to why, he described how "I couldn't. I had to ask him to leave… I had to get on him to take the garbage out. I had to get on him to do this and that and then when he leaves it takes me, it takes me a while to get everything cleaned up again...but he wouldn't cover things in the microwave, he would spill things and he wouldn't wipe it up and I was like I can't do this." Understandably,

64

David found his son's lack of cleanliness exhausting and struggled especially because there was nowhere in his room that was not subject to this neglect. For David, his son's failure to clean their room generated feelings of deep resentment. At one point in our interview, he held out his open hand, stating: "He has his hand like this all the time but very rarely is it like this (closes hand). Yeah he's a taker take, take, take, take, take, take, take." A number of other residents echoed David's experience, describing how family disputes that would typically be small and insignificant like not cleaning dirty dishes, spilling things on the carpet, or leaving out unclean clothes, would descend into extended interpersonal conflicts. Four other participants specifically described how they had fought with roommates over cleanliness, and emphasized how these conflicts were heightened by the inability of either party to cool down independently.

Behavior internal to Valleyview's rooms was also compounded by external stressors that affected how residents interacted with each other. Often, these stressors regarded issues with work, probation, other family members, making rent, mental or physical health, etc. For example, one resident who had recently been released from prison, described how his roommate (who had also just been released) returned to their room carrying a dosage of suboxone. This resident described the double bind he found himself in: "And I'm, one the one hand, I'm like, dude you cannot have that here until you confirmed it with probation. And then I'm also like, I can't tell anyone about this because then I might be violating my own probation." Therefore, he found himself risking exposure to drugs and potential probation violations in order to hide his roommate's behavior from their probation officer. Other residents talked about how family member and roommates would be quicker to anger after a long day at work or a bad experience with motel management or a difficult court date.

In the majority of instances, the interpersonal stressors generated by motel residency did not meaningfully change roommates' relationships. However, in some instances the accumulation of stressors appeared to directly lead to family fragmentation and breakdown. For example, David found himself forced to remove his son from their unit because of the excessive burdens he was imposing upon their relationship. In describing his choice to kick his son out, David stated: "I just couldn't, I couldn't put up with him and I didn't want to wait until anger moved in." Therefore, David's choice was either to ensure that his son had a safe space to stay while potentially beginning to resent him, or to force his son to find his own form of housing out of the hope that distance would decrease those feelings of resentment. At our interview, David reported that he was in regular contact with his son, however he felt deeply guilty about forcing him out of Valleyview. According to David, this guilt "made me feel like I didn't even want him to come back here" because his son's presence simultaneously reminded him of the disrespect he directed towards David and David's revocation of his parental role.

In some instances, interpersonal conflicts within rooms progressed far beyond the fragmentation experienced by David and his son. A number of local service providers described how Valleyview had deep problems with domestic violence. For example, one local police officer explained how the majority of their calls from Valleyview reported violence within units. Other residents corroborated the prevalence of violence. In one instance, a resident described how "sometimes you'll hear couples yelling at each other and as long as it doesn't go outside, management doesn't usually call the police." Past research has found that domestic violence, both against children and intimate partners, is compounded by stress (Taylor et al, 2009). Quite simply, in some cases, individuals who are exposed to excessive stress are unable to moderate their actions in safe manners. A number of characteristics unique to motels are likely to

exacerbate these conflicts, such as the confined spaces, inability to distance oneself from others, greater social isolation, and requirements to make regular rental payments. Thus, the responsibility for breakdowns of familial, romantic, or friendly relationships must be partly attributed to the context of motel living.

II. Dependencies on Motel Management

Family conflicts and insecurities regularly forced motel residents into contact with motel management. For example, when units were too loud, or there was room damage, or disputes between different units, motel management was called. Management structure at Valleyview is analogous to many other landlord businesses: one non-local owns the building (as well as two other nearby motels) and employs a number of staff in order to oversee the business. Over the course of this study, Valleyview owner refused to contact me. However, motel residents had very little contact with the owner and instead typically referred to other staff. Valleyview's two main employees who interacted with residents were Sandra and Joan.

Joan was responsible for cleaning rooms and preparing them for new residents. While I never spoke to Joan, her character was the subject of much discussion throughout Valleyview's residents. On two separate occasions, I saw Joan shuffling along the pathway in front of the units. Joan visibly displayed the impacts of a life marked by deprivation. She was heavily overweight and collected SSDI due to chronic back pain, she noticeably struggled with her job and a number of motel residents reported that their rooms had unclean sheets, dirty toilets, mold, spider webs, holes in the walls, dirty carpets, and even fingernails scattered across the floor. However, Joan had little power in the administrative functions of Valleyview. Instead, that was Sandra's responsibility. When I first spoke to Sandra, she had only been working at Valleyview

for around three months. Despite having worked at the motel for such a short period of time and being a fairly young, single woman, Sandra exerted much authority over Valleyview's residents as she was responsible for not only collecting and recording rent, but also removing residents from their rooms for lack of payment or alerting the police to issues of illegality. Unlike the other residents, and Joan, Sandra lived in a small house attached to the end of a unit. Despite its fading brown paint, overgrown gardens, and general sense of neglect, Sandra's house felt like a home. Over the course of the day, residents would knock on Sandra's door in order to pay rent, attempt to negotiate extensions on their rental payments, or report issues with their rooms.

Sandra therefore acted as a gatekeeper for Valleyview's residents. If she recorded that residents were paying their rent and following motel rules, then those residents were allowed to retain their units. If she recorded that residents were not paying rent or were causing issues at the motel, then those residents were likely to be removed from their units. This dynamic is compounded by the unique legal gray space encompassing motel residents. Maine itself has fairly strong protections for tenants. For example, all units must fulfill an "Implied warranty of habitability," which ensures that the unit is safe and fit to live in, has clean water, heat, no bed bugs, etc. Further, when removing a tenant from their unit, landlords must follow strict eviction procedures, where they are required to provide adequate notice of the rental agreement's termination to their tenants and obtain a court order before unit removals. All of these legal processes further seek to maintain staunch protections for tenants against landlords' retaliation or discrimination.

However, motel residents are not guaranteed any of these protections because of their unique housing circumstances. Like other tenants, motel residents should be guaranteed rights because they reside for a long-term basis at Valleyview and pay weekly or monthly rent.

However, Maine law specifically excludes motels as locations that fall under the protections outlined above. This is because motels are designed to serve people on a short-term basis. For example, under Maine law, Sandra is classified as an Innkeeper, which means: "a person who keeps an inn, hotel or motel to provide lodging to travelers and others for compensation and who maintains the sleeping accommodations. An innkeeper is not a landlord pursuant to the landlord and tenant laws as provided in Title 14" (ME.REV.STAT.ANN. Municipalities and Counties. §3801. 1989). Further, according to a statewide legal assistance organization that I interviewed, an individual is "not a tenant if (they) live in a motel or hotel. So the owner can put (them) out on short notice and without going to court." Therefore, the legal grey area surrounding motel residency grants motel management immense power to remove a resident with very little difficulty.

But motel management's authority is not only facilitated by motel residents' lack of legal tenancy status, instead Maine law outlines a number of powers that motels possess in order to regulate their customers. For example, motel management can refuse or deny accommodations and eject customers based on: lack of payment, exceeding limits on room occupants, disturbing other guests, using drug, or otherwise violating any rule of motel. If customers fail to follow management demands "the owner or manager may use a reasonable degree of force against that person to remove that person from the premises (and) may request a law enforcement officer to remove that person from the premises" (ME.REV.STAT.ANN. Municipalities and Counties. §3838. 2013). Therefore, due to their innkeeper's or lodging house licenses, motel management have the ability to remove residents from their units, which are often the only homes they may possess, at the drop of a hat.

Despite not requiring official rental agreements, every motel resident who I interviewed had informal agreements with Sandra regarding rent and behavior. Valleyview had two different options for rent: weekly and monthly. Weekly units are designed for short-term stays and typically met a fairly standard quality. Individuals who stayed in weekly units reported that they were cleaner, had bigger beds and newer carpets, bedding, or curtains. Because of this, they were also more expensive at $200 a week. Monthly units, on the other hand, are designed for long-term residents who have no other options besides Valleyview. Thus, they are usually a far lower quality than weekly rooms, and a number of residents reported that they were dirtier, had unclean bedding and carpets, no heat and AC, sink water that tasted strange, or toilets that did not work. However, monthly units are also far cheaper at only $600 a month. Thirteen of my interviewees lived in monthly rooms. The other three interviewees lived in weekly units. Each resident who paid weekly stated that they would prefer to move into a monthly unit but lacked the upfront $600 to pay for the entire month. For example, one resident stated: "the weekly rooms are waaaay better, cleaner and safer and everything and I really need to save that extra $200 a month… (but) right now, I don't have anything in my bank account, and there's no way, no way, that I'd be able to save up enough to give (Sandra) $600 on the first day of the month." Outside of payment, every motel resident agreed to follow Valleyview's policies, which are construed so broadly that almost any behavior could qualify as a justification for removal.

Thus, motel residents face compounding insecurities in their relationships to management. Not only are they entirely dependent on motel management to retain their housing, but they also have no legal standing or rights to protect them from management abuse. This reflects greater dynamics of the housing crisis, where landlords levy their disproportionate power over tenants in order to charge increased rents or prevent tenant resistance (Metcalfe, 2013;

Rosen, 2014). Importantly, motel residency differs from other forms of housing because of the lack of legal protections, like tenancy rights, eviction procedures, or locations of recourse such as the courts. Residents at Valleyview identified two primary vulnerabilities that these circumstances exposed them to: unjust removal and unjust management demands. With regards to the former, seven residents recalled having disputes with motel managers. These issues were typically located around issues of rent payment and unit conditions. For example, one resident explained how "I was having a lotta trouble making ends meet and I missed my payment like once. Next thing I know the manager, she's all up in my space telling me that I gotta pay of get out... All my stuff is in that room, I don't have anywhere else to go… So I got some cash from a friend to pay her the next day." Another resident described how management dealt with non-compliant residents: "You know if there's real trouble, the police are called. It's not necessarily people, people get high they get into heated arguments they're drinking ahhh, there's no damage no injury. You call the police and they lay the warning down if it happens again you're out and it's good that way." Thus, the specter of removal hung over almost every action between motel residents and management.

For all residents that I interviewed, these disputes with management did not result in removal from Valleyview. However, the threat of removal often coerced residents into accepting substandard unit conditions or unjust landlord demands. As a family of five in a small unit, Juan's family regularly found themselves subject to mistreatment from motel management. Juan recalled one day where "the manager just came slamming on our door and she was saying that us kids were making too much noise and that we couldn't play in the parking lot outside because (someone) might like, hit us or anything." According to Juan, management's policing of their lives and parenting occurred regularly, and even resulted in one particular staff member

71

threatening to kick them out of their unit and call social services in order to place the children in state custody. Thus Juan's family lived in a near constant state of fear that motel management would one day call the police in order to remove them from their unit, the only safe place they had. Juan described how this situation made his parents punish himself and his siblings to a greater extent, making sure that they "didn't make noise or go play outside so that people would get mad." So, while children outside of Valleyview are encouraged to enjoy and explore and develop in the outside world, Juan and his siblings found themselves caged in a dark, cramped, and dirty motel unit. Beyond Juan's family, four other residents described circumstances where management had failed to repair broken facilities, refund rental payments, or provide room resources (like microwaves or bedding). In each of these instances, residents felt like they could not call out management's failings because they feared this would result in retaliation.

Both the threat of removal and actual removal of motel residents due to management demands left these individuals in profoundly insecure circumstances. A number of scholars have described how many vulnerable families face immense instability, where in what feels like the blink of an eye they can lose their housing or employment or wealth or sobriety (Desmond, 2016; Whitzman, 2006). However, motel residents find themselves uniquely subject to these changes because of their lack of legal protections, dependency on motel management, and general social marginalization. Thus, instead of being guaranteed the security of safe and stable housing, too many motel residents find themselves like Juan's family: silenced and isolated in the confines of a single room.

III. Conclusion

Family and community stability are incredibly important social resources. Much research has been devoted towards measuring the effects of a safe, stable home life and the results have resoundingly affirmed that the continuity of healthy relationships greatly affects individual wellbeing. Scholars have found that people with stable familial relationships are less likely to suffer from serious physical and mental health issues, engage in substance abuse, or struggle with behavioral issues (Sabey et al, 2018; Groh et al, 2014; Salini et al, 2012; Elmelech, 2008; Rafferty, 2004). Further, familial relationships and friendships can better help individuals weather points of crisis or stress. Family members can help individuals pay for rent or food, transport them to work when their car has broken down, provide them with advice about major life decisions, or simply be there to listen at the end of a bad day. This indicates the almost unquantifiable power of familial relationships. Fundamentally, they can provide individuals with locations of guaranteed belonging, where, regardless of one's wealth, employment status, health, marital status, education level, they should have a community within which they are always welcome. This is often why many individuals refer not necessarily to a specific location that represents home, but rather a community of loved ones. Housing instability strips people of the security of a home (Desmond, 2016). Motel residency's compounding inadequacies further strip people not only of the security of a home, but also the security of the relationships making home meaningful.

Motel residency thus subjects individuals to profound interpersonal insecurity. For this chapter, I defined interpersonal insecurity as the deterioration of positive social support networks, such as relationships between family members, intimate partners, friends, or communities (Kent de Grey et al, 2018; Lincoln 2007; Gottlieb, 1985). Throughout my

interviews, motel residents elaborated on two relationships that were implicated in the fragmentation of their social support networks: relationships with significant others and relationships with motel management. The deterioration of positive relationships with significant others provided motel residents with fewer resources to survive intersecting insecurities in their lives and actively added to their levels of anxiety. These insecurities were further compounded by unequal power dynamics between motel residents and management, which meant that residents could be removed at any point or coerced into accepting unjust management demands.

For Juan, his time at Valleyview robbed him of a childhood. While other children were able to play outside, develop individually in their own space, or enjoy the security of a permanent home, Juan was forced to live in a constant state of fear that his meager home in Valleyview would be taken from him. Juan summarized this poignantly, stating: "We would spend a lot of time in our room (because of management threats)… It was dark and not too too clean, but at least I was there with my family." Thus, in their darkened, dirtied motel room, Juan, his two siblings, and his parents sought to make themselves a home out of the comfort of one another. Burdened by management's threat of removal and the stresses of their lack of space, that tenuous feeling of home was always a moment away from non-existence.

Chapter 5: Institutional Insecurity

"I just know I have to get out of here. I can't live here with the crime and the isolation and the smell.... I just know I have to get out of here before its smell becomes me."
- Jimmy, Valleyview Resident

I first met Jimmy in the backrooms of a local church. Amongst the darkened room, and old, stained carpets, and 1970's decor, Jimmy noticeably did not fit in. Jimmy not only possessed a certain gravitas in the way he commanded a room's attention, but also an openness that fostered complex debates between all parties in the room. As a successful businessman, (former) active member of local governance, and college-degree holder, Jimmy had much to say regarding the issues that he saw within his community. What one would not have guessed about Jimmy, is that he is a registered sex offender and had spent the past three months living at Valleyview after he was released from a local prison. When he was incarcerated, Jimmy assumed that, upon being released, "most of (his) difficulties would be proving that he wasn't a bad person, that (he) wasn't a few lines written on the court's paperwork." But the world outside of prison surprised Jimmy. He found that people perceived him in the same manner as I did: an eloquent, but ordinary member of our community.

Instead, Jimmy found that the hardest parts of adjusting back to normal society were the "nagging experiences about day to day issues." Life at Valleyview was a key component of this. Upon describing his unit, Jimmy noticeably shuddered and struggled to fully encompass his experience into words. So, he told me about his faith and difficulties in finding a community where he could worship because of his record. Our meeting in a church was sadly ironic, because Jimmy had been excluded from multiple places of worship after revealing his record. He described this exclusion through stating: "it's one thing to say that you're welcome and it's another thing to put so many barriers up so you can't be in that space… And when I go into a place and everyone else has free reign of it, but I'm stuck in this little tiny box, that causes me to

feel unwelcome when all I really want is just a family to worship with. Even though the door says, "welcome," I don't feel welcome." To Jimmy, his residency at Valleyview was analogous. When people found out that he lived in a motel, he felt they "made assumptions about who I am and judged me as less intelligent or more dangerous… or less desirable than everyone else." His status in a motel thus created the same barriers to community inclusion as his criminal record.

The third form of instability in motel communities locates itself with institutional dynamics. By institutional instability, I explore the barriers that motel residents face in accessing security via social services, like public housing or institutional enfranchisement, like voting. Out of the three forms of insecurity, institutional dynamics are perhaps the most important because these locations are sites of social change and power. Thus, motel residents can only obtain more power via institutional security. When talking with motel residents and local service providers, they identified three primary barriers to institutional enfranchisement: exposure to crime, placelessness, and inaccessible social services.

I. Exposure to crime

At Valleyview, Jimmy was constantly exposed to crime. As a sex offender on probation, Jimmy lived in perpetual fear that because of his proximity to instances of criminality, he would be implicated in a crime and sent back to prison, thus entirely disenfranchised from society. Crime is a regular occurrence at many low-income motels. On several occasions when I visited Valleyview, I would smell pot. The motel had a prominently broken wall, which had been smashed during a drunken fight between two residents. Interviewees regularly reported that their neighbors were heavy drug users or dealers. Previous literature has found that transient spaces, like abandoned buildings, parking lots, street sidewalks, or parks, facilitate crime because they

are harder to regulate and monitor (Spizman, 2013). Motels thus represent a convenient location for criminal activity: they are cheap, they are often located near major motorways, they are private as soon as one closes the door, and they are transient as individuals can leave whenever they choose. Even more importantly, low-income motels are filled with people from marginalized or persecuted backgrounds who are unlikely to seek help from the police. These dynamics promote the transition of many low-income motels from safe residencies to sites of drug use, domestic violence, and prostitution.

Local service providers in the Lewiston/Auburn area will regularly identify motels as hubs of criminal activity. In one instance, a local provider explained to me how "from time to time, (they) had gotten the impression that some of the big time drug dealers from Massachusetts have chose to stay at Valleyview." She later explained how threatened she felt while trying to help these communities. How the anonymity of a plate less car or the hostile glares from motel residents or the rows of curtained windows, made her fear for her safety within these locations. The image of drug dealers swooping off highways into conveniently placed motels is similarly scary for any local. But it's even more frightening for the people who have that criminality located next door. This provider stopped servicing Valleyview because she was afraid. While this fear is justified, her ability to avoid confronting and addressing such feelings indicates the privileges of housing secure populations to turn away or hide from these issues.

Jimmy had no choice but to remain within Valleyview, despite his similar fears of violence from drug related activity. But Jimmy's fear also extended beyond just personal safety. As part of Jimmy's probation conditions, he had to stay away from all criminal activity, refrain from drug use, and follow strict rules regarding where he went. If he violated any of these conditions, he could immediately be sent back to jail. While sex offenders are subject to far more

restrictive probation conditions than most other criminals, due to the nature and social stigma of their crime, all recent felons' behavior is deeply constrained by rules imposed via the criminal justice system (Dum, 2016; Richard 2016). Thus, if a felon fails to fulfill their probation conditions, commits any crime, or is perceived to be in violation of these rules in any way, they risk further jail time. Almost half of the motel residents who I interviewed, and many more who I heard about, were recently released felons subject to probation conditions. These conditions make it highly risky for these individuals to even be in the proximity of crime.

Jimmy was clearly aware of how dangerous it was for him to be near criminal activity, stating: "The last thing I want is drugs or prostitution or cops in my space. One of the biggest things you learn in prison is how to not be in the wrong place at the wrong time. You become really good at avoiding trouble and being at Valleyview puts me in close proximity to trouble." Thus, Jimmy always had to be aware not only of his participation in criminal activity, but also his closeness to it. So, if police officers were ever called to Valleyview, Jimmy feared that they would view him as complicit of any crime and therefore in violation of his probation conditions. When many other motel residents have similar fears, it is easy to understand why they were hesitant to contact the police in emergencies. These fears of institutional authorities too often succeed in silencing motel residents' calls for help.

Unlike Jimmy, a number of motel residents actually partook in criminal activities. One such resident was Sarah, a woman in her late twenties who lived with her boyfriend and mother in a single unit at Valleyview. Sarah had cycled in and out of residency at Valleyview for a period of four years and this life was profoundly shaped by her addiction to opiates. Like many other opiate addicts, Sarah was introduced to her addiction via prescription medication in response to chronic back pains (Green, 2017). As stresses in her life mounted, Sarah started

relying on opiates to make these stresses go away. This was not a sustainable life, and Sarah was eventually fired from her job, isolated from her family, and evicted from her apartment. At the recommendations of some of her friends who were also addicts or dealers, Sarah first sought out Valleyview in order to avoid homelessness. According to her: "All my other junkie friends used to come here when they got kicked out from somewhere. They (the motel) never looked at my eviction record and it was easy to go to the other units to when I needed something." Based on the context of our conversation, I assume that by "something," Sarah was referencing drugs.

Sarah's cycle with addict mirrors her cycle of housing. For periods of a few months, she'd cut herself off from opiates, get a job, and try to move somewhere more stable. But in her own words: "As soon as I started getting somewhere, I'd just feel so over…. so overwhelmed all the time... Like all the time. I'd just want help from them (drugs) again and then the minute I did, I'd lose it all again." So, for the next few months Sarah would find herself using drugs regularly, struggling to find work, and living at Valleyview when she had enough money for rent. While Jimmy was not at risk of using drugs, Sarah's proximity to drug trafficking and consumption made it far more likely that she would engage in such activity. When I interviewed Sarah, her boyfriend, and her mother, they all claimed that they had not even touched drugs since checking in at Valleyview two months previously. But, their behavior seemed to indicate otherwise. Sarah's boyfriend appeared crippled with lethargy, and he struggled to string together sentences when speaking with me. Sarah's mother had sores and marks on her arms that are characteristic of drug use. The room was touched by neglect, as trash littered the ground, dirty dishes teetered in the sink, and dark water stains sunk into the shadows of the wall.

Other residents at Valleyview confirmed my suspicions about the ease of drug use. Jimmy identified the "solicitations" he received from fellow motel residents, and complained

about how they would "test the waters" by "asking if I needed anything while they waved little baggies of white powder at me" saying "heeeeey, you want these drugs, you want this sex, you wanna come over to this room?" Another long-term resident, Bob, recalled when a big time drug dealer had operated out of the Valleyview, stating: "everybody knew him" and he "was saddened when (he) saw certain people gravitate towards those communities" because he was their friend, knew they had families waiting for them back in their own unit, or was familiar with their addiction struggles. Bob even suspected that Sarah and her family were regulars of a dealer down the row, commenting on how he would often see them knocking on one room's door throughout the day.

Criminality within motels thus represents a foundational component of institutional insecurity. For Jimmy, his exposure to crime in motels placed him at risk of violating his probation conditions and thus returning to prison. For Sarah, extensive drug related activity in motels compounded the difficulties she faced in remaining sober. According to many drug rehab programs, isolation from drug use is a requirement for recovery (Rezneick, 2012). Sarah's access to drugs was a constant temptation and it was easy enough for her to walk the line of motel doors after a difficult day, unhappy experience, or even period of boredom. In both instances, exposure to crime endangered Jimmy and Sarah's access to social enfranchisement; as it could cause imprisonment, housing loss, job loss, or physical and mental disability. These potentialities limit the ability of people like Jimmy and Sarah to operate within political systems and advocate for social change.

II. Placelessness

Motels are uniquely placeless places. Historically, they have served as symbolic locations of transition or transience because they simultaneously represent both the liberation of travel as well as the constraints of homelessness (Treadwell, 2005). Thus, for the traveller, motels can be meaningfully divorced from the stresses, requirements, and business of day-to-day life. However, this removal from society foundationally shapes an individual's social location when it becomes permanent. Bob had been lost in the placelessness of Valleyview for over seven years. Out of all my interview participants, Bob was by far the longest permanent motel resident. His motel life began in 2011, after Bob finalized a messy divorce and moved to the Lewiston/Auburn area in order to be closer to work. As a low-income individual, Bob struggled to find any form of housing that would be suitable and affordable for him. At the advice of a friend, he rented out a room at Valleyview for a month. At the end of that month, he paid for another, and then another after that, and then another, and so on.

Upon entering Bob's room, it was clear that he had been there for an extended period. Unlike the rooms of other, more so short term residents, Bob's room felt lived in. He had a fully stocked pantry organized in clear plastic boxes on his tabletops. He had family pictures on the walls. He had a large, teetering pile of books, magazines, and paperwork propping open his bathroom door. There was even a flash of color in the form of flowers perched above his TV. Upon closer inspection, I realized said flowers were fake. However, these represented attempts for Bob to make his little unit more of a home. But yet Bob's unit failed to fulfill the role of a home on multiple levels, and the most prominent component that it lacked was an address. Motel clients are typically considered to be transient or visitors, not residents of a city. Therefore, units do not have addresses and fail to qualify as a permanent form of residency (Dum, 2016). This is

especially important because in order to vote or obtain a driver's license all citizens must provide proof of their permanent address within a particular locality, which is a rule often critiqued as discriminatory against homeless or transient populations (Ruth, Matusitz, Simi, 2017).

Bob was unique in his commitment to vote. He proudly recalled his lifelong history of voting, claiming "nothing but death will keep me from it." So, he was not likely to allow the simple absence of a permanent address to keep him from the polls. However, other motel residents did not share Bob's history of political enfranchisement. Out of the sixteen people who I interviewed, only five had voted in the last presidential election. Of those five, three possessed stable residencies at the time of the election and the other two appealed to the local town hall in order to be considered homeless. The remaining eleven motel residents all stated that they had not voted and attributed this to a variety of reasons. Many stated that they did not vote because they did not like any of the candidates or care about who was elected. However, six directly identified their housing circumstances as a key factor preventing them from voting. One resident stated: "yeah, I just didn't have any time to fuck around with that shit. I was gonna go downtown to vote but then they needed a proof of address and stuff. And I'm just like, 'What? I'm living in a motel, I don't do addresses and I'm not gonna deal with this.'"

Even Bob admitted that getting a permanent address in order to vote and obtain his driver's license was difficult. He stated: "Oh, yeah, I had to go to a lot more effort, you know. I went to the town hall and they told me that I needed to go to the post office and they told me that I needed to go to the DMV. All just to get my address right. And eventually they just agreed to put my permanent address as Valleyview, but they didn't make it easy." Like some other residents, Bob suspected that local governments made it so difficult for people in motels to vote because they were too poor or undesirable. These suspicions validate pre-existing findings that

explore how local governments often enact policies excluding vulnerable and "undesirable" populations from public spaces in order to diminish their political power (Amster, 2008). Out of all social behaviors, voting is perhaps one of the most important as it represents the mechanism through which people can secure social rights or change. Even more so, voting is the purest manifestation of the relationship between individuals and institutions governing society. Thus, voting grants individuals the power to change these systems. The exclusion of communities, like motel residents due to their lack of a permanent address, robs them of required institutional stability.

Bob's lack of an address compounded other forms of social alienation in his life. For example, he often complained about how he could not receive mail at Valleyview. This was not a result of the motel's lack of an address, but rather a result of the motel owner's active choice to deny mail delivered to the front office. Bob recalled how the manager "could've left the mail boxes up so I received my mail every single day at no charge...but the manager, the owner doesn't want to accept mail here so now I don't even have a mailing address." Other residents similarly reported that they struggled without a physical place to send their mail to. For example, Jimmy had important legal documents that he was required to receive and manage. However, he could not afford the cost of a post office box. Instead, he brokered a deal with the motel manager to pay more in rent each week if his mail could be delivered to the front office. In total, out of the sixteen people who I interviewed, only seven could receive mail, either at the motel or at the local post office.

However, some motel residents found their lack of an address almost liberating. Bob recently had a health scare and needed surgery. Upon returning to Valleyview, he realized that "you can't forward mail from a motel, so how am I supposed to remember who's mailing me?"

For Bob, this was not exactly negative, and he stated that: "I won't see my doctors' bills for a while, what the heck, I can live with that!" Other residents similarly celebrated their ability to hide from mail that they did not want to think about, like court documents, bills, or social service requirements. While this prevented their short-term stress, it also further compounded their social marginalization and alienation. These stresses did not go away just because they got lost in the mail. If anything, they just got worse over time. One service provider described the difficulties of helping populations who did not have a mailing address, stating that when individuals are applying for social services or public housing they must respond in a timely fashion and: "At the at the end of last year, the state did a big purge of the waitlist… everybody on the waitlist got sent a letter to update their contact information and if we don't hear from you, you're going to be removed from the list. Well because people didn't stay on top of their change of addresses…they were taken off the list."

This placelessness perpetuates a cycle whereby motel residents cannot access the social services required for them to become more stable. Instead, motel residents' housing continually isolates them from institutions like local government, social services, or financial organizations. A physical, mailing address is necessary for these organizations and motel residents struggle to obtain political and social visibility when they cannot advocate for themselves within these spheres. In order to obtain this enfranchisement, they either have to navigate complicated governmental systems or find a way to afford payment for a mailing address. When individuals are struggling to pay for their primary needs, like food, rent, probations requirements, or transportation, a permanent address comes at the bottom of one's priorities (Desmond, 2016). Therefore, as with other homeless populations, motel residents are forced out of public spheres. When institutions, like local governments, have no reason to care about motel residents because

they cannot vote, these communities find themselves locked into systems of marginalization, social alienation, and insecurity.

III. Social Service Inaccessibility

Laura is an expert on all issues of local housing. With her thick Bostonian accent, Laura is proud to state that: "I don't take shit from anyone. Sometimes people see me, and they think that someone in my career isn't, like, educated or smart. And I'm just like, 'really, you wanna talk about recent housing research, because I can talk with you about all that.'" As the leader of a prominent local NGO assisting homeless communities, Laura embodied these characteristics in almost every part of her work. During meeting with other local service providers, Laura would sit at the head of the table and demand their attention. For her, the important question was always: what's next? How do we actually help people in a meaningful way? Anyone who diverted off these questions was promptly put back into their place. Motels had been a thorn in Laura's side since she first started working in the Lewiston/Auburn area. She would often complain about the inaccessibility of motel residents on two different fronts: legally and socially.

With regards to the former, motel residents fall into a legal grey area where they are technically encompassed under definitions of homelessness, but are not eligible for many homelessness programs. So while Maine defines homelessness as when: "An individual lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including...Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate housing…(McKinney-Vento Act, 2018)," many homelessness programs qualify individuals based on their capacity to pay rent. Therefore, as motel residents are paying rent to the motel on a regular basis, they cannot qualify for most homelessness programs. This is especially important for most forms of social assistance

like public housing, because an individual needs to prove that they have no other way to pay for rent in order to qualify for services (Goetz, 2013). Therefore, motel residents are considered to be renters because they are paying rent regularly to the motel manager, even though their living conditions fall far below what has legally been defined as suitable.

Laura herself stated: "people don't realize how many grey areas there are in defining homeless. And I like grey, but a lot of these guys in motels get screwed over because they have too much money and can afford rent every week." Therefore, Laura could not provide motel residents with necessary services, like public housing programs or housing vouchers because they were defined as too economically secure. Motel residents reflected this dynamic throughout our interviews. The majority stated that they had received public housing assistance previously and were currently receiving benefits like food stamps or Mainecare, however they were not in the process of applying for public housing programs. Many residents also struggled to even qualify for public housing because they had criminal or eviction records, which disadvantaged them in accessing services (Bresica, 2009; Thatcher, 2008).

Laura also struggled to access motel residents because of their social isolation. This happened at two levels. Firstly, Laura experienced disinterest or hostility from numerous motel managers or owners. For many years, Laura had extensive contact with most of the local long-term motels and was regularly involved in making sure that motel residents were pursuing more stable forms of housing or were living in safe conditions. However, this stopped after a number of motels were sold and purchased by disinterested owners who only sought to profit from motels and thus "haven't exactly been, like warm and inviting when we have tried to help out those motel guys." This again indicates unequal power dynamics between motel owners and residents, where motel owners or landlords can force residents to accept substandard conditions

and the continuation of said contexts through the threat of eviction (Desmond, 2016; Metcalfe, 2018). Therefore, Laura avoided motels due to management hostility and the desire to protect motel residents from any management retaliation.

But even more so, Laura found that motel residents often became locked into their housing contexts and stopped reaching out to social services. She bemoaned how "a lot of folks, that land in motels...quite a few of them don't intend to say that that's the answer. But it becomes the answer when other things fall through. And part of the reason other things don't come through is that they have a tendency to fall off the grid." Therefore, in Laura's experience, many motel residents remained in motels because it was stable and they did not have any other options. This is not surprising when you consider many motel residents' lived circumstances. Both Jimmy and Bob worked full time jobs. Jimmy had to bike over six miles to and from work every day because he lacked a car. Another motel resident worked two jobs, both days and nights, so that he could save enough money to look for something new. Motel residents live hard lives and often do not have the time or energy to devote their sparse periods of rest to public housing applications. Therefore, many residents remove themselves from these social assistance systems because motels become the easiest option.

Many other service providers echoed Laura's experiences. Out of the fifteen service providers who I interviewed, fourteen recalled assisting motel residents in the past. Often, these stories were disjointed or incomplete because service providers had lost contact with motel residents after they stopped showing up for their programs or moved away. One employee for a local women's center recalled how "a wonderful women who lived in a motel, used to come here all the time to look for other housing choices... But she just stopped after she got a job elsewhere." Another employee at a shelter described how "occasionally someone would mention

that they were in one of the motels, but those people didn't usually stay here long. Usually they would only come for a free meal or something when things were really rough."

Motel residents' inaccessibility to local service providers is incredibly frustrating and perpetuates a system whereby they cannot access programs necessary to make them more socio-economically secure. Applying to public housing or social assistance programs is deeply difficult and can involve a number of procedural complications. Often, local NGOs or service providers guide vulnerable populations through these circumstances and act as their advocates with policy makers or governments. However, motel residents typically fail to benefit from these services because they are both legally defined out of eligibility for many programs and difficult to access. For motel residents, these institutional and social constraints taint their relationships with local providers. Thus, many individuals continue to reside within motels when they become their only option. This creates cycles of socio-economic instability, where motel residents struggle to secure affordable, safe housing contexts that engender social mobility or stability.

IV. Conclusion

Institutional insecurity is perpetuated by motel residency. Not only do motels expose vulnerable communities to dangerous circumstances, but they also push residents to the edge of society. This chapter outlined how motels entrench institutional insecurity through three different mechanisms: exposure to crime, placelessness, and inaccessibility to service providers. Combined, the confluence of these three factors makes it difficult for motel residents to access both the economic and political resources necessary to better their lives. Quite simply, when local politicians or service providers do not feel like they must care about motel residents,

because these communities have no money, are not registered to vote, or are confined to the margins of society, then they are not incentivized to advocate for reforms. This reflects other systems of marginalization, whereby society's most vulnerable populations are pushed out of the public consciousness in order to reduce incentives for reform (Amster, 2008).

Thus, the perpetuation of motel residents' institutional insecurity aligns with theories of poverty that describe it as a form of Capabilities Deprivation. Capabilities Deprivation characterizes poverty not by the restrictions an individual faces in what they possess or feel, but rather in what they can do. Therefore, poverty is considered to be the denial of opportunities (Sen, 2004). In these contexts, poverty becomes a self-perpetuating cycle, whereby poorer individuals are denied opportunities required for social mobility, like better housing, better healthcare, better employment, better education, all because of their socioeconomic status. Motel residency mirrors this system, as residents struggle to access healthy living conditions, environments removed from criminal activity, public housing programs, employment centers, or political power because of their position in motels. In describing his quest to escape Valleyview, Jimmy expressed deep anxiety about whether or not he would be successful. "I just know I have to get out of here. I can't live here with the crime and the isolation and the smell.... I just know I have to get out of here before its smell becomes me." For Jimmy, this fear of confinement followed him around like a bad smell and he worried about nothing more than a future where the smell of his little, dirty, dilapidated motel room became an identity he could not clean away. Institutional stability is required for social enfranchisement, and motel residency fails to deliver on both counts.

Chapter 6: Survival Strategies

"Yeah, I'd recommend Valleyview to the people that have no other place to go… But as a regular person, Valleyview isn't good, they should go somewhere else."
- Mark, Valleyview Resident

The city made Tom feel constantly on edge. Tom was originally from a small, rural area in Northern Maine, where he "could just walk out (his) door and shoot (his) shotgun without anyone hearing." Tom's life in the country had a lasting effect on his perspective, and he would often reminisce about "driving hours to get anywhere" or "going hunting in the woods" or "seeing the country stars." However, after being incarcerated for several years, Tom was told upon release that he would not be able to return to his home until he had completed his probation. Seemingly everything about the city put Tom on edge. Throughout our interview, he would often check nearby windows to make sure that no one was looking in. He hated the sound of cars, and traffic, and people outside his room. He struggled with having to walk everywhere, especially with finding his way through non-descript city intersections and side roads.

Mark, another individual who had recently been released from prison, was experiencing similar anxiety. However, his stress was located in different areas than Tom. Unlike Tom, Mark had grow up in the city and therefore knew all the ins-and-outs of this lifestyle. He thrived on the streets, and had an impressive knowledge of all the town's shortcuts, homelessness services, and job opportunities. At one point in our interview, he described how he "knew this place like the back of my hand, because I've been on the streets since I was a kid." But while Tom struggled outside the safety of his motel room, Mark struggled most within it. Mark had entered into the prison system at a very young age, and thus had never lived alone or supported himself. Therefore, he did not know how to cook himself a meal, or do his laundry, or keep his room clean. According to Mark, he "was lost when I first got out. It was really damn overwhelming."

Fortunately, Mark and Tom met each other shortly after they were both released from prison and sent to Valleyview. As neighbors, the two men quickly began to rely on each other in order to cope with their new lives. Tom taught Mark how to cook or clean, and regularly invited him over to his room in order to make a meal with his microwave or hotplate. Mark advised Tom about hidden shortcuts, which reportedly shaved over twenty minutes off his daily walk to work, and local resources Tom could use when he was struggling to pay for food or find work. Not only did the two come to rely on each one another for practical support, they also seemed to depend on the emotional support each provided to the other. When I first met Mark and Tom, they were huddled together outside of their rooms as Mark's cigarette smoke laced the air. I suspect that Tom had only braved the cold so that Mark would not have had to smoke alone.

Motel residency is not easy and it is not kind. However, motel residents cannot be merely characterized as passive victims of their housing circumstances. Instead, these communities deploy a number of innovative, creative, and compassionate strategies in order to survive their housing circumstances. For the purpose of this chapter, I define survival strategies as actions that seek to increase an individual's social capital. Social capital refers to "networks of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Putnam, pg. 67, 1995). Strong and stable communities are some of the most meaningful manifestations of social capital, as they establish mechanisms through which individuals can rely on and advocate for each other. Valleyview's residents did use their housing circumstances in order to enhance their social capital in a number of ways. Thus, in this chapter, I will firstly explore the communities that arose within motels and how they created systems of resource support and community knowledge. I will then explore Valleyview's social networks of

belonging and friendships. To conclude, I will compare the positives and negatives of motel residency through asking: what are motel residents' current options outside of motels?

I. Community networks within motels

Every single Valleyview resident, who I interviewed, was engaged with the motel community in some manner. All sixteen residents described how they were friends with their neighbors, relied on them for support, or had simply interacted with them on a fairly regular basis. Compared to most other communities, this level of interaction is unusual. However, when you consider Valleyview's condensed and isolated environment, it is unsurprising that neighbors often turned to each other in times of need. Throughout my interviews, motel residents emphasized how they obtained, and benefitted from, Valleyview's community networks in order to secure resources and community knowledge.

With regards to the former, the majority of Valleyview's residents recalled instances where their neighbors had provided them with necessary resources in order to help them survive motel life. Participants identified a number of different things that they had shared with others in the motel, however they primarily grouped these resources into three main categories: transportation, physical items (like food or money), and knowledge. Transportation is perhaps the most important of these resources. As described previously, transportation was a constant struggle and source of anxiety for almost all of my participants. Given Valleyview's isolated nature, residents faced a three-mile commute into town and a three-mile commute from town everyday. As most motels are located on the outskirts of town, transportation is nearly always an issue for those without cars (Treadwell, 2005; Jackle, Sculle, Rogers, 1996). Unfortunately, the majority of my participants lacked a car or other stable form of transportation. In this absence,

residents without vehicles would often rely on those with vehicles. Therefore, out of the twelve residents who lacked transportation, ten described instances where fellow motel residents have given them a lift into town.

For example, Sarah, who lived with her mother and boyfriend, would regularly catch rides into town with her neighbor. Sarah described how her neighbor would "give me lift downtown a couple of days a week…. Sometimes she'll even give me a call when she's about to get groceries in case I want to catch a ride." Sharing rides was also very prevalent amongst the community of formerly incarcerated individuals. Throughout our interview, Jimmy frequently mentioned how "me and a couple of the other guys will ride into probation or work together… It's real easy because we're all going to the same places." These transportation networks between Valleyview's residents demonstrated a meaningful manifestation of social capital. Through cultivating reciprocal systems of communication and cooperation internal to the motel community, some of Valleyview's residents managed to fill the gaps created by a lack of public transportation. Secure transportation better allowed motel residents to obtain necessities, like food, access to medical or employment appointments, and visits to see friends or families. These networks are not unique to Valleyview, and other vulnerable housing populations similarly seek to develop internal support systems in order to compensate for the lack of public assistance (Desmond, 2016; Dum 2016).

The second resource that residents commonly shared was actual physical items, like food or money. One resident, Sam, was well known for his generosity. Before speaking to Sam, I had heard about his immense dedication towards his neighbors. One resident described how "Sam always has extra food. And he's always cool with giving you some when you need it." Another resident recalled when "Sam gave me, like $20, for a taxi into town. I didn't want to take his

money, but I needed to get into town for a doctor's appointment." Therefore, when I finally got the chance to speak to Sam, I was quick to ask him about his kindness. Shooting a shy look at the ground, he immediately diminished the assistance he provided to others, stating "I only give people stuff that they need, and my girlfriend works at McDonalds so she always brings me their leftover food… If they (his neighbors) don't eat it, no one will."

Despite Sam's humbleness, he meaningfully provided many of his neighbors with food and other physical resources when they were in need. In total, four Valleyview residents remembered instances where Sam alone had given them food or money. Outside of Sam, ten of my sixteen participants stated that they had shared food, money, or other physical resources with other motel residents. Perhaps most amusingly, Tom and Mark first met after Tom "stole" the microwave from Mark's room. Tom described how "before I knew that someone was moving into Mark's unit, I got the manager to get me his microwave because mine was broken... As soon as Mark moved in, I went and knocked on his door and told him that he could cook with my microwave whenever he wanted." Thus, when Valleyview's residents were plunged into emergencies, where they lacked food or money, other residents often stepped up to help them out. Towards the end of my interview with Sam, he summed up his intentions eloquently, by stating: "I've been there before, you know without food or cash, so if I can help someone out then I gotta do it."

Finally, motel residents were constantly providing each other with knowledge and advice about their housing circumstances. Twelve of my participants expressed deep anxiety about how to adapt to motel life, while simultaneously navigating a host of other social systems like probation, public housing programs, or employment. In the face of this, motel residents often shared pieces of advice with one another in order to make not only current motel life, but also the

94

pursuit of other forms of housing, easier. Advice relating to immediate, lived realities of motel life is marked by its practicality. For example, at the very beginning of my interview with Bob, he thoroughly described the multitude of gadgets that he used in order to create nutritious meals in the confines of a motel room. When I asked Bob about the quality of his meals, he laughed and said: "You know, I got a steamer, I've got a crockpot, I've got an electric hot plate, I've got a microwave. All you gotta do is get some vegetable, get some meat, and heeeey, I'm here, I've got everything for a meal." Perhaps it was only so he could brag about the quality of his cooking, but Bob regularly would invite other residents over to use his cooking tools or share a meal with him. This sharing allowed other residents to learn how they too could make meals with the bare minimums of a motel room. As health issues are prevalent amongst communities with poor diets, Bob's advice regarding nutritious meal preparation had the potential to meaningfully help residents maintain their health (Walker, Keane, Burke, 2010; Hendrickson, Smith, Eikenberry, 2006; Cummins, Macintyre, 2002). I suspect that many of Valleyview's long-term residents had learnt from people like Bob, as five of the seven people who said they planned to remain permanently in Valleyview possessed the same cooking tools as Bob.

Valleyview's residents also frequently advised each other on how to obtain other forms of housing. This was especially prevalent for individuals who had recently been incarcerated, as many landlords refused to rent to them because of their records. One local service provider told me how "there are only two or three landlords locally who will actually rent to these guys. But they never have enough space, so there's a lot of luck in actually getting a place." However, a number of Valleyview residents maintained connections with these landlords or individuals who had luckily managed to secure an apartment. These networks were invaluable resources, as they were the most common paths through which Valleyview's residents escaped motel life. Many

95

recently incarcerated individuals used references or advice from past motel residents in order to get out of Valleyview. For example, one resident described how: "My buddy, who I was first sharing a room with, called me because there was a free room at his place. And I called his landlord as soon as he hung up, and got the spot." For another resident, his friend actually "put in a real good reference with his landlord for me. So when I applied, the guy already knew who I was and knew that I wasn't gonna cause any issues." This community knowledge meaningfully provided motel residents with resources that helped them obtain more secure and stable forms of housing.

Community networks, like those at Valleyview, which foster relationships of trust and reciprocity between individuals, are invaluable social and political resources. Not only can they provide individuals with resources necessary for survival, like food, transportation, or knowledge, they can also engender further community action. For example, a number of scholars have identified how communities with strong social capital, are more likely to have increased political activity, strengthened local institutions, reduced crime rates, more robust anti-poverty protections, and even reduced interpersonal conflict (Halstead, Deller, 2015; Cox, 2009; Saegert, Thompson, Warren, 2001). While motel residents are often subject to other social marginalization that diminishes enfranchisement, their existing community networks and systems of sharing create more robust foundations for them to survive motel life. Perhaps even more importantly, these relationships usually transcended mere practicality and also provided motel residents with locations of social belonging.

II. Belonging in motels

"A big part of surviving when you're poor is finding your own group of people, a core group of

people who you get around and develop a bond with," were the words of advice Jimmy offered with regards to living in Valleyview. As I stated previously, every single individual who I interviewed stated that they regularly interacted with their neighbors. However, the vast majority of these interactions extended beyond simple neighborly civility. All but three participants reported that they were friends with fellow motel residents. For many, these friendships provide emotional support necessary for them to survive the stresses of their daily lives and difficulties of motel residency.

In mapping the progression of these relationships, many residents described how they had first introduced themselves to their neighbors in order to obtain support for lived issues. For example, (as I stated earlier) Mark and Tom were first introduced because of a missing microwave. Bob first introduced himself to his neighbors when his two sons were living with him and he needed someone to look after them while he was at work. "My neighbors used to watch out for the boys and I'd get phone calls letting me know if things were okay or not okay," he recalled. Other residents developed relationships with their community members simply based on proximity. When Jimmy was first released from prison, he "enjoyed sitting outside and enjoyed the fresh air and having people interact with me, and having people who hadn't been in prison interact with me." Thus, the social confinement, isolation, and vulnerability motel residents experienced at Valleyview also helped foster internal relationships of support. These stable and reciprocal community networks are often necessary foundations to facilitate the individual and physical security necessary for people to make meaningful friendships (Sabey et al, 2018; Groh et al, 2014; Elmelech, 2008).

Friendships between motel residents thus served vital functions within the motel community. At its most basic level, motel residents regularly spent time together in order to relax

and socialize. In total, thirteen of my sixteen participants stated that they had gone to other residents' rooms in order to hang out. These events included things like sharing meals, playing video games, watching the television, or simply sitting together and talking. One resident described how he was "a smoker, so I'll sit outside and see all the people coming back from work. If they want a cigarette, they gotta come talk with me." These friendships were especially important for individuals from particularly isolated and alienated communities. At Valleyview, individuals who had been recently released from prison were by far the most removed from general society. As most members of this community are registered sex offenders, they we not allowed to live in certain areas, could not go to buildings potentially near children, could not work in particular industries, and could not even catch rides into town with strangers (Dum, 2016). Thus, their relationships with people living under similar physical and legal circumstances as themselves acted as vital locations where they could debrief and obtain emotional support.

Jimmy emphasized the importance of this dynamic, when he described how everyday members of this community "would congregate outside one room and just hang out with each other to bellyache about stuff… Being with those guys was a great release of anxiety and finding love from other people. You know, we're not similar in interest or ambition or issues, but we're similar in experience." Jimmy's words indicate how these relationships served a greater function than just simple relaxation. Instead, they formed meaningful locations where Valleyview's residents could feel like they belonged. Living at Valleyview by itself can be an incredibly lonely experience: you are three miles away from town, confined to a dark single room unit, and often unable to develop workplace relationships if you are employed with a temp agency. However, this loneliness is compounded further for sex offenders as they usually cannot live with their families or in their former homes and must instead reside in towns with lenient ordinances. Thus,

98

communities of formerly incarcerated individuals at Valleyview formed friendships, which helped them, survive the stress and uncertainty of their lived realities. One guy stated: "it was really comforting to have that community there, you know, to know that you're accepted, that they're not going to judge you." Another described how he "wouldn't have survived those first few weeks without having all the guys to help me through it."

These friendships between vulnerable members of Valleyview's community represent a vital form of social capital. Not only do they provide individuals with structural resources to survive their housing circumstances, but they also help people find locations of belonging and social support. For almost all people, it is imperative that we can feel loved and unconditionally welcome in some locations of our lives. Simply, it is important for people to have a home, which they can share with those who care about them (Kent de Grey et al, 2018; Lincoln 2007; Sroufe 2005). To some of Valleyview's residents, the relationships that they cultivated in the motel and the strategies they used to create habitable units, made Valleyview almost become a home. In total, six out of my sixteen participants stated that they regarded Valleyview as their home. A further three participants stated that while they did not consider Valleyview to be home, they defined home by people not places. On resident summarized his opinion by stating: "Home is with your family and friends. Sometimes when I'm here, I forget that it isn't home." Upon further questioning, he revealed that he would most often feel like Valleyview was home when he was with his friends. Thus, despite motel residents' isolation and alienation from society, they often cultivated sites and relationships of belonging. These friendships allowed motel residents to find a sense of community and self in a space that would have otherwise been only marked by transience and impermanence.

99

III. What are motel residents' other options?

Valleyview was no one's first choice. When I asked Mark and Tom about who lived at Valleyview, they shot a look at one another and Tom said: "the people who frequent Valleyview are just people down on their luck, who don't really have any other options." Mark nodded, replying "Yeah, I'd recommend Valleyview to the people that have no other place to go… But as a regular person, Valleyview isn't good, they should go somewhere else." Given the fundamental inadequacies of motel residency and the critiques posed in this thesis, we must ask: what are motel residents' other options? Throughout my interviews with Valleyview's residents, the answer is clear: Valleyview is this community's best option. In total, fourteen of my sixteen participants stated that while they would prefer not to live in Valleyview, all of their other options were more expensive, dangerous, or unhealthy.

As both Mark and Tom struggled to meet their monthly rental payments at Valleyview, they were constantly contemplating other forms of housing. Mark described how, after being released from prison his "only options were Valleyview or a homeless shelter." The possibility of a shelter deeply distressed Mark, as he had spent much of his youth cycling through homeless shelters and had vivid recollections of these shelters' quality, lack of space, and prevalence of drug use. "I know if you go into a shelter and you have an addictive personality, you just can't do it," he recalled. Tom's housing circumstances were similarly precarious and he described how: "when I got out, I thought I was going to have to live in a snow bank. I think that if I had to live that way for long, I'd just terminate my probation and go back to prison." Thus, even though Tom was finally free from prison, able to see his family regularly, and live in a world unconstrained by bars, prison was preferable to these potential housing circumstances. Other residents reported similar alternatives to Valleyview, like living on the streets, in a tent outside of

town, in their car, on a couch, etc. While these housing choices differ from each other, they all similarly subject individuals to unsafe, unhealthy, and degrading locations unfit to be a home.

Much literature has identified the systems of marginalization that compound vulnerable populations' housing instability. For example, a number of scholars have identified the barriers that low-income populations face in obtaining affordable housing, particularly when they lack necessary government assistance or the accumulated capital required for a rental down payment (Desmond, 2015; Desmond et al, 2015; Williamson, 2011). Other scholars described the inadequacy of current public housing programs, like subsidized housing, to provide adequate support for all vulnerable populations (Olsen et al, 2015; Goetz, 2013; Pardee et al, 2011). This has lead to the rise of communities forced to live in substandard housing circumstances, like on couches, in cars, on the streets, or in motels (Dum, 2016; Willse, 2015; Ehrenreich, 2011). Motel residents' housing circumstances similarly deprive them of both the accumulated wealth and political capital to guarantee safe, stable, and affordable housing.

For the majority of Valleyview's residents, this literature validates their own experiences. Just over half of my interview participants described their housing circumstances through cyclical patterns, where in order to just barely afford their motel rent each week, they would fail to save enough money necessary to pursue other housing options. For example, one resident characterized their attempts to save up enough for an apartment by stating: "I just don't have anything left after I pay for rent. By the time I pay for rent, and food, and gas, and, you know, all the other things, I'm just down to the last few pennies." Without governmental assistance, in the forms of subsidized housing or public housing programs, Valleyview's residents often found themselves trapped within the motel, balancing their budgets each month in order to retain the roof over their heads. This means that motel life is not the best option for its residents, as it

actively reduces the ability of residents to pursue better housing circumstances. Thus, motel life becomes the only option for these communities. Under more just housing circumstances, motel residents would not have to devote as much of their income to housing, which would instead allow them to save money for necessities, transportation, healthcare, or other housing options.

IV. Conclusion

Over the course of my interviews, it was clear that Valleyview's residents do not remain static in the face of their housing circumstances. Instead, they deployed innovative survival strategies, formed powerful community networks, and created locations whereby everyone could feel like they belonged. These strategies greatly increased motel residents' social capital and ability to weather crises (Putnam, 1995). Tom and Mark are poignant examples of this dynamic. They both exited prison at the same time, and experienced similarly substantial anxieties about how they would adapt to their new lives. At Valleyview, they came to not only rely on each other for physical resources, but also develop a deep friendship. Mark described his relationship with Tom, by stating: "Yeah, I didn't really know him before Valleyview but now he's one of my closest friends. I know he'll walk into town with me in the morning and always have an open door if I need anything. Even if it's just to complain about a bad day, he's there." However, just because motel residents may form networks of social capital, and just because they lack better housing options than Valleyview, this context does not make motel residency acceptable. While my participants chose Valleyview as their best of many worst options, this choice does not transform motel life into safe and stable housing. Instead, motel residents are forced to weigh which housing circumstances are going to be more dangerous, or less isolated from town, or more expensive, or less likely to have lead in the walls, or more likely to have heating, or less

likely to share space with drug users. Make no mistake, these choices are dehumanizing. Thus,

while motels can be necessary resources to alleviate short-term housing insecurity, a just remedy

to this crisis requires more robust and accessible housing opportunities for all.

Chapter 7: Service Providers' Experiences and Recommendations

"We can't help motel residents when they have their housing. We can help them when they lose their housing."
- Local Housing Authority

For over a year, Jane was Mary's connection to society. Mary, as previously described, lived at Valleyview where she cared for her elderly mother. Like many of Valleyview's residents, Mary had no transportation and relied on her friends in order to get into town. But this transportation was tenuous, and Mary struggled to access guaranteed transportation when she needed to attend job interviews or medical appointments. Mary often complained about her life's cycles of instability, where as soon as she got a job interview or found a new opportunity, her ability to actually secure them was destroyed by her lack of transportation. Meeting Jane, an employee at a local community center, broke this cycle for Mary. After Mary started visiting Jane's organization regularly for their job resources, Jane discovered the barriers that Mary was experiencing in transportation and offered to give her rides to and from the motel whenever she needed it.

For many vulnerable and low-income communities, service providers like Jane represent vital elements of their collective security nets. Service providers are individuals or organizations that manage the processes and programs of social work. This definition thus draws from theories of social work and social welfare, which characterize social services as processes of resource allocation to marginalized groups, seeking to enforce new codes of behavior or standards of living (McLaughlin, 2009). Therefore, social services include programs regarding poverty reduction, healthcare, sanitation, child welfare, educational access, or any other projects designed to improve the lives of individuals (Parton, 2015). However, to an even greater extent, service providers can offer marginalized groups connections to and recognition from society. Mary would never have been able to regularly access town or local community centers without Jane.

Mary never would have been able to develop meaningful friendships with Jane's colleagues and fellow clients, which provided her a space to voice the compounding stresses she experienced caring for her mother. Instead, without Jane, Mary would have likely been confined to her small, shared room at Valleyview for each day's entirety, dependent on the kindness of others in order to find transportation to job interviews or the supermarket. Out of the fifteen service providers who I interviewed over the course of this study, many had stories like that of Jane and Mary. One provider relayed how every holiday he would bring cooked meals to families who lived in motels because he wanted them to share a warm and healthy meal. Another provider recalled how he used to tend to motel residents' medical needs when they could not access a doctor. Six providers discussed instances where they had transported motel residents into town, so that they did not have to walk miles down a dangerous highway. These acts of kindness are key resources that help motel residents survive housing circumstances, which otherwise alienate and degrade them.

This chapter seeks to not only recognize the relationships between motel residents and service providers, but also generate meaningful recommendations as to how governments could better address motel residency. Importantly, these recommendations are derived from the opinions of motel residents and service providers who have assisted them. Of the fifteen organizations that I interviewed, eleven represented Maine and four represented non-Maine organizations. They ranged in service areas from local government and police officials, homelessness shelters, housing accessibility organizations, food pantry services, women's organizations, and prisoner reentry programs. In order to cover this topic, the chapter has three primary components. Firstly, I will explore service providers' experiences with motels and motel residents. Secondly, I will evaluate other communities' responses to motel residency, and the

impacts of these differing strategies. Finally, I will outline four policies that both motel residents and service providers identified as being valuable methods to holistically address this issue.

I. Service Providers' Experiences with Motels

Grace condemned motels all throughout our interview. "They're dirty, there's too many drugs and crime there, I hear they're expensive. And what do you get from it? All that room will be is dirty and in the middle of nowhere. It's sad that people have to be out there." As the manager of a local homelessness shelter and outreach center, Grace had seen almost every manifestation of homelessness, from people living on the streets or couches and in cars or tents. However, motels appeared to be especially worthy of Grace's condemnation. Despite this, Grace admitted that she had rarely helped motel residents. She stated, "sometimes they'll come in for our free meals, but we can't offer them a bed or help them apply for SSI and public housing." Similarly to Grace, out of the fifteen service providers that I interviewed, fourteen stated that they had experiences with motel residents. While all these organizations stated that they had contact with individuals from motels in the past, only six stated that they actually assisted motel residents. Three out of these six instances were from service providers who offered public programs that did not require any evaluations, like free meals or employment assistance. The other three instances were service providers and police officials focused on prison reentry, i.e. prison reentry specialists, police officers, and reentry support networks. Therefore, over the course of this research, I often received frustrating remarks like: "I know, those motels are so bad, but we can't help any of those people," or "there have been times when people living in motels have come here, but they can't qualify for anything." Clearly, the majority of service providers are aware of motel residency and the difficulties accruing from this lifestyle.

However, service providers experience structural barriers to helping motel residents. The primary reason that this happens is because motel residents fall out of legal homelessness standards allowing for service providers to actually assist them. In order to obtain federal or state funding, most of these providers have to follow these authorities' guideline regarding the populations they serve. As outlined in earlier chapters, HUD defines homelessness via a four part characterization, where someone is homeless when they: "Lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence;" "will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence;" are an unaccompanied youth; or are fleeing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other life-threatening conditions (HUD, 2019).

While this definition does not directly exclude motel residents, as their housing can also be inadequate, its focus on a fixed and regular nighttime residence does preclude many motel residents. Therefore, because motel residents are regularly paying rent and remaining in the same residence, they are typically not considered homeless under federal guidelines. This context was summarized well by an Auburn city housing officer, who stated: "if an individual or family is staying in a motel, they more than likely would exceed my income guidelines as generally, it is more expensive to pay a weekly fee in a motel than it is in an apartment, and they use this income to maintain a regular residence… My interaction with any families living in motels is very limited as that usually means they are over income and would not qualify for financial benefits with the city." However, while motel residents may earn enough to pay for a room regularly, these high costs prevent them from saving enough money to actually obtain better housing. Therefore, funds or services provided by local authorities are vital resources to help motel residents escape their housing circumstances. Importantly, service providers often find themselves constrained by multiple forces in their ability to provide certain populations with aid.

As many are dependent on public funds or grants, they must maintain accordance with laws or societal norms defining populations worthy of assistance. So, service providers risk much when helping stigmatized communities, like sex offenders or motel residents, thus limiting their incentive or ability to continue working within these populations (Silverman, Patterson, 2011).

Providers described similar legal limitations across different states. Both within and outside of Maine, over three quarters of all providers reported that motel residents fell in a legal grey area, which meant they often failed to qualify for housing or poverty alleviation programs. This poses dangerous circumstances whereby motel residents may seek out services only to find that they do not qualify. One local provider described how the "people who live out there (at Valleyview) just fall off the grid. We'll lose contact with them and then never hear from them again." Therefore, it is easy for motel residents to become disenfranchised from service providers after they are denied based on their current housing stability. This means that they are less likely to access necessary services, which could help break their cycles of housing instability.

There were only two consistent points where motel residents were regularly receiving services from local providers. Firstly, motel residents often used public programs for low-income individuals, like free meals, shelter assistance, or employment services. Ten out of sixteen motel residents stated that, at some point throughout their time at a motel, they had used free meal programs or employment centers. For example, Mary would go to Jane's community center on a weekly basis in order to socialize with her friends and use its employment resources. Secondly, motel residents who had been formerly incarcerated required services from local reentry specialists and prison reentry programs. Over the course of this study, I interviewed three service providers assisting individuals who had recently been incarcerated: members of the police force,

a reentry specialist with the probation office, and a member of a reentry non-profit. Seven out of my sixteen participants were individuals who were in contact with these organizations as they had been recently released from prison.

In many ways, reentry service providers were deeply disillusioned with the prevalence of motels as a form of housing for recently incarcerated individuals. According to one reentry specialist, the Department of Corrections preferred to send individuals to shelters over motels and only "send people to motels when they are… high risk, have medical concerns, or are waiting on established plans to come through. It's never just a willy nilly decision." Therefore, the majority of people sent to Valleyview were those who could not secure housing anywhere else. At Valleyview, every recently incarcerated individual who I interviewed was a sex offender and one provider even described Valleyview as "basically a dumping ground for people on the registry." However, as populations like sex offenders are considered high risk, they must keep in regular contact with local service providers and municipal officials.

In total, providers who had contact with motel residents identified two categories of difficulties unique to assisting motel residents. Firstly, institutional barriers, like legal definitions precluding motel residency from categories of homelessness, greatly restricted providers' ability to help and even contact motel residents. Secondly, service providers identified a number of issues endemic to motels, like their isolation, prevalence of crime, and high costs, as hindering their ability to assist motel residents. For example, one provider described how they had worked extensively with a resident at Valleyview, but struggled to maintain contact with them as this individual did not possess guaranteed transportation into town. Therefore, they would regularly miss scheduled appointments or programs and eventually fell out of contact with their provider because it was too difficult for them to get into town. Issues of transportation are further

compounded by motel conditions and levels of crime. One motel resident described to me how: "I didn't want to leave my room because I don't feel safe here. I'll just go to the laundry to wash my clothes and then go straight back to my room." For this resident, her fear of Valleyview's crime levels meant that she rarely ever left her room, even to go into town for appointments with her mental health or government service providers.

II. Other States' Responses to Motel Residency

Local governments have addressed motel residency in two primary ways: restrictions on long-term units and shut downs of budget motels. With regards to the former, several cities have implemented restriction on the nature of stays within motel units. For example, in Wareham, Massachusetts, the town's Board of Health responded to issues of long-term motel residency by limiting the length of motel stays to fewer than three weeks. According to the Board of Health, this policy was designed to incentivize motels to adapt their units to meet standards for long-term, permanent habitation. However, the town did not provide motels with any funding to make these changes and instead simply imposed fines upon motels that violated the policy (Bick, 2019). Similarly, other cities sought to make motels more habitable by increasing unit requirements for long-term residents. For example, in Fayetteville, North Carolina, the city recently implemented a policy, which required long-term motel units to have stoves. This was designed to prevent fires, which commonly took place due to the portable cooking tools that long-term residents were forced to use in their rooms. While this policy was perceived as relatively small, it actually meant that motels needed to rewire their entire complexes in order to install stoves (Norwood, 2019). Therefore, like with Wareham's restrictions, these increased requirements for long-term motel units force motels to have better standards without providing

them with the resources to make these changes. In response to these new policies, motel owners would likely be more inclined to limit long-term residency or attempt to hide long-term residents from the public eye. For example, in some of these cities, there have been reports that motel owners just require residents to move rooms every month so they are not categorized as long-term residents and thus protected by these policies (Norwood, 2019).

When restrictions or policies addressing long-term motel residency have failed, local governments have often addressed this issue by simply shutting down motels. This is a common strategy pursued by local governments in the last case scenario, such as when motels cannot meet habitability standards or are public safety hazards (Johnson, 2018; Miller, 2018). Maine has also implemented this strategy and recently shut down two motels because of their reputations for criminal activity, like prostitution and drug dealing (Bouchard, 2018). While this strategy can effectively stop criminal activity from taking place at the motel's location, it can also place motel residents in even more unstable housing conditions. Quite simply, when long-term motels shut down, even though they have provided guaranteed housing for extended periods of time, their residents are left with few other housing options. In Modesto California, where the city's government shut down a budget motel because it failed to meet habitability standards, local reporters claimed that almost seventy people were removed from their permanent residencies (Valine, 2019; Valine, 2019).

While these responses to long-term motels are designed to better help residents, their bluntness often causes more harm than good. Local service providers echo these opinions. For example, in an interview with one government official from the Lewiston/Auburn area, they stated, " We've thought about shutting down Valleyview"... but hesitated to do so because "we don't know what will happen to all the people living there… Where will they go?" Another local

provider described a similar issue, by stating how at motels: "The conditions, to be honest are better than most other options. A lot of those other places will have pest problems. At least at Valleyview, they have a TV and cable, their own bathroom… So they have everything that they'd need for the short-term." Both providers illustrate the complexity of attempting to address motel residency. These communities have few options outside of motels, and those options can be far more dangerous or unhealthy. One motel resident described this by simply stating: "For me, it was either Valleyview or the streets."

Therefore, prior governmental responses to motel residency, like imposed regulations or shut downs, must better recognize the lived circumstances of motel residents. Instead of simply shutting down motels because they are unsafe and uninhabitable, governments should ensure that the individuals living in motels actually have other locations to safely reside. Instead of simply imposing new regulations on motels to make their rooms more habitable, governments should simultaneously provide motel owners with resources to make these changes while guaranteeing that motel residents are protected from owners' attempts to circumvent these requirements. Without taking motel residents' lived contexts into account when formulating responses to motels, governments will struggle to actually help their communities and address the root causes of motel residency. This has been the experience of many towns outlined above. From Wareham, MA, to Fayetteville, NC, to Modesto, CA., to Portland, ME, local governmental responses to better or restrict motels have struggled to do anything more than harm the communities reliant on these locations.

III. Service Providers' & Motel Residents' Recommendations

Across all sixteen interviews with motel residents and fifteen interviews with service providers, people were angry about the lack of resources devoted to motel communities. For motel residents, this often manifested itself in feelings of alienation and disenfranchisement. As one resident put it: "I just don't think that, like, anyone cares about the people out here." For service providers, this often manifested itself in feelings of deep frustration about their powerlessness to actually assist motel residents. As one provider put it: "We see a lot of these people come in and out, looking for help, and there just isn't really anything we can do." Thus interviewees were quick to not only describe the unique difficulties posed by motel residency, but also policies that could better help this community break cycles of instability. Importantly, most participants emphasized a housing first model of service provision. Housing first is a philosophy and strategy of service provision, which recognizes that housing is a requirement for health, security, and wellness. Thus, to address poverty and socio-economic instability, service providers should prioritize securing housing before other needs, as most other services require an individual's housing stability in order to be effective. For example, food security programs cannot succeed if an individual has no place to cook said food, or health programs cannot succeed if an individual is homeless and living in dire conditions (Haskins, 2018; Padgett, Henwood, Tsemberis, 2016).

In line with housing first philosophies, interview participants outlined four policy recommendations to address motel residency. While these recommendations were not universal, each all appeared on multiple occasions. The majority of participants proposed that all levels of government should increase funding to public housing programs and expand transportation resources to long-term motels. With regards to enfranchising motel residents, interview

participants suggested two potential policies: one third advocated for expanding homelessness definitions and just under a quarter advocated for modified tenancy laws.

First and foremost, almost all service providers and motel residents stated that governments should increase funding to public housing programs and expand the breadth of these services. There exists great discrepancy between the level of funding allocated to low-income housing programs and the actual need. For example, the federal government's funding for Section 8 Housing, which allows for programs like public housing or housing vouchers, is only $29.9 billion. Not only does this figure fall far below the amount needed to guarantee housing for everyone who needs it, but the federal government's budget for housing programs that benefit middle and upper class communities (like the MDI) is over double this figure (Woo, Salviati, pg. 2, 2017). Importantly, the outlook for programs benefitting low-income communities is dire. In 2017, the federal government slashed funding for a number of programs designed to help poorer communities (United States Federal Government, 2017). Service providers identified funding as a big barrier hindering their level of assistance to motel residents. In total, eight out of the fifteen providers who I interviewed stated that they had to narrow the services they offered or communities that they served directly because of limited funds.

Therefore, federal and state governments would better help vulnerable communities through two policy changes: increasing funding to existing programs and expanding the scope of programs offered. With regards to the former, governments must increase funding to existing programs like public housing or housing vouchers. In the context of motels, public housing projects that provide subsidized, publicly owned units to individuals struggling with poverty are preferable to housing vouchers. This is because housing vouchers operate to subsidize privately owned rental units with public funds. Thus, individuals who receive housing vouchers are still

114

subject to abuses or discrimination from landlords. This is especially important for communities who locate themselves within motels and, due to criminal or eviction records are considered undesirable to most landlords on the private market. Therefore, the government should invest more in publicly owned projects that diminish the amount of discrimination directed towards motel communities.

However, despite their flaws, housing vouchers should also receive greater investment in order to cover government shortfalls (Desmond, 2016). Housing vouchers use government subsidies in order to ensure that rental costs do not exceed 30-40% of an individual's monthly income. By Maine standards, housing vouchers are only offered to very low-income families, earning under 50% of the median income for area, and disabled or elderly individuals. Even with these limitations, Maine's waitlists for housing vouchers are incredibly long and inaccessible to most applicants (Maine DHHS, 2019). Therefore, poorer and housing insecure populations would have greater access to these programs' securities if they were better funded at all levels. This would mean that vulnerable communities would be less likely to fall into housing insecure or dangerous living conditions.

Secondly, governments must also expand the scope of programs offered. These changes should be implemented concurrently to increases in funding to ensure that more communities can access these expanded programs. A number of the individuals living in motels cannot access traditional forms of public housing because of their backgrounds. For example, seven out of the sixteen motel residents who I interviewed were recently released sex offenders, who are currently ineligible for many public housing programs and cannot live in certain areas of a city. Despite the fact that everyone in society wants these communities to progress beyond their criminal histories, sex offenders are not given the resources to do so when they are confined to

unstable and expensive motels that make finding employment almost impossible. One service provider recommended that the state creates more robust housing reentry programs, which provide recently incarcerated individuals with affordable and stable housing for their first few months of release. An analogous example of this is Maine's Bridging Rental Assistance Program (BRAP), which subsidizes rent for individuals with psychiatric disabilities in order to ensure that they do not pay more than 51% of their income to rent. In the program description, it states that BRAP was "established in recognition that recovery can only begin in a safe, healthy, and decent environment, a place one can call home" (Maine DHHS, 2019). While people with psychiatric disabilities and felons fall into different categories, states would benefit from similarly emphasizing housing programs that seek to help felons recover and reintegrate. Beyond sex offenders, many of Valleyview's other residents also had criminal backgrounds, eviction records, or health issues. Governments would better assist them through creating programs like BRAP, which recognize and address the almost insurmountable barriers these communities experience in accessing housing.

With regards to the second recommendation, governments should expand transportation infrastructure to motel communities. Valleyview's physical isolation was a constant stress for many residents. Out of the sixteen motel residents who I interviewed, twelve lacked stable and consistent personal transportation. Almost all local service providers stated that they struggled to assists motel residents due to Valleyview's physical isolation. These difficulties are unsurprising. Valleyview is located almost three miles outside of town, down a busy and dangerous motorway. As one provider put it: "it's just enough of a stretch outside of town to be very difficult to walk. And for the average person, the walk is just too much to deal with when they have to go to appointments or work afterwards." However, despite Valleyview's physical isolation and need

116

for public transportation, no bus routes service this area. Instead, motel residents have to cobble together transportation from their friends and family or just walk the three miles into town.

This lifestyle simply is not tenable for motel residents and actively undermines public programs implicating this community. For example, residents who were recently released from prison often have strict probation requirements that they must regularly meet in town. Valleyview and other motels' isolation not only hampers the ability of residents to achieve these requirements, it also increases administrative burdens on the state when individuals violate their conditions. A regular bus line running out to Valleyview would therefore better enfranchise motel residents and provide them with resources to progress beyond the motel. Importantly, any new public infrastructure must meet the lived needs of motel residents. For example, local bus companies restrict the amount of bags passengers can carry to only two. This means that individuals who rely on public transportation cannot use it to get groceries or other shopping. Therefore, vulnerable communities are barred from using public transportation in order to access resources they need to survive, like food. When constructing public transportation to motels, local officials must ensure that it accommodates communities reliant on its services by limiting these restrictions.

While interviewees almost universally agreed as to motel residents' need for better public housing and transportation options, they disagreed on how to best connect motel residents to social services. On one hand, just under a third of participants suggested that federal authorities expand definitions of homelessness in order to include motel residents. HUD's current definition is problematic because it narrowly construes homelessness in a manner that excludes transient and vulnerable populations. Under HUD's standards, someone is only homeless if their housing does not meet the three combined standards of "fixed, regular, and adequate." This means that

individuals who live in profoundly inadequate housing conditions are not considered homeless if they are continuing to pay regular rent. Thus, despite motel residents' need for homelessness or social services, local homelessness providers dependent on federal funding cannot help motel residents because these communities fall out of their defined purview.

HUD could follow the lead of many other states and expand federal definitions to include vulnerable populations like motel residents. For example, Maine defines homelessness under the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Act, which directly outlines a number of locations that fall under categories of homelessness like: motels, trailer parks, camping grounds, etc. (McKinney-Vento Act, 2018). If HUD recognized these inadequate, but permanent, housing locations as forms of homelessness then these communities could actually be helped by local and national service providers. This has particularly powerful implications for motel residents living in profoundly inadequate room conditions or in motels on a short-term basis. Many motel residents cycle in and out of motel residency over brief periods. For example, one prison reentry provider described the path of many recently released individuals by stating: "We hope that after two weeks, our people will have solidified a job or found their own housing. In reality, usually people just end up back in prison because they've violated their probation conditions." A key reason why these communities are likely to violate their probation conditions is because they lack access to necessary support structures and resources, which could better help them succeed. For all motel residents, their inclusion into definitions of homelessness would make it easier for them to apply for public housing, obtain food or health services, and qualify for monetary assistance. These resources would better create paths for motel residents to find more secure, affordable, and humanizing housing circumstances.

However, if definitions of homelessness are not expanded, states should grapple with the reality that motel residency is likely inevitable and work to provide adequate protections for these communities. Some interviewees recommended that states modify tenancy definitions in order to include individuals residing in non-traditionally permanent locations. The federal HUD definition of a tenant is: "The person or persons (other than a live-in-aide) who executes the lease as lessee of the dwelling unit" (U.S. 24 CFR. § 982.4. Definitions). Similarly, according to a Maine legal service organization, tenants come in two categories: those with leases and tenants at will. Tenants with leases possess an established agreement outlining the duration of tenancy, cost of rental unit, legal rights guaranteed to all tenants, etc. Therefore, tenants with leases are protected from unjust landlord treatment through tenant rights guaranteeing adequate notice of lease termination, paths to contest unjust evictions through the courts, or other legal protections. Tenants at will are individuals who lack leases and are not guaranteed any tenant protections. This means that tenants at will can be removed by their landlord at any time without recourse via the judicial system. Under Maine's (and most states') laws, motel residents are tenants at will who are not guaranteed any rights. Thus, despite motel residents acting as tenants in almost all respects, they have been written out of tenancy laws because of their non-traditional housing circumstances (Pine Tree Legal, 2015).

Unlike Maine or Federal authorities, some states have sought to generate tenancy laws that include non-traditional housing circumstances. For example, California guarantees tenancy rights for individuals who are month-to-month motel residents. This means that individuals who live and pay rent in motels, even if they do not possess a lease, are considered tenants when their residency exceeds 30 days and they do not obtain certain services from the motel, like room cleaning or meals (CAL. CIV Code. § 1946. West 2019). Therefore, motel residents have the

same basic protections as any other tenant, like adequate notice before rental termination and established legal processes to contest landlord abuse or unjust evictions. California law even explicitly restricts the ability of landlords to circumvent the establishment of tenancy status. Its civil code states that any attempt to limit the application of tenancy status, like periodically moving motel residents between rooms each month, is precluded by law (CAL. CIV Code. § 1940. West 1996). Other states, like New York, have similar laws that establish tenancy for non-transient occupants after thirty days (N.Y. REAL PROP. ACTS. §711. McKinney 2019). These laws allow motel residents to obtain legal protections necessary to restrict landlord abuses and better secure their own housing stability.

Importantly, increased enfranchisement of motel residents only makes motel residency more comfortable. Modified tenancy definitions do not provide motel residents with any path out of their current housing circumstances. Instead, they merely protect these communities from landlord abuses or unjust removal. Similarly, expanded definitions of homelessness typically only provide motel residents with resources necessary to survive. To truly ensure that all communities, including those in motels, have access to a home, governments must invest in public housing projects and expand the infrastructure necessary to connect marginalized communities to employment or community.

IV. Conclusion

Jane and Mary lost contact a few months after this research began. According to Jane, living at Valleyview finally became too much for Mary and her mother. Given that Mary struggled immensely with the motel environment, the way it affected her mother's health, and its complete isolation from town, there were a variety of reasons, which could have contributed to Mary's

frustration with Valleyview. As Mary began pursuing alternatives to Valleyview, her once regular attendance at Jane's community center began to dwindle. Eventually, after weeks of silence from Mary, another community member told Jane that Mary had moved out of Valleyview and was currently attempting to obtain a subsidized apartment in a nearby town. That was the last Jane heard of Mary.

Jane and Mary's relationship illuminates the immense difficulties service providers face when assisting motel residents. Not only are these communities physically alienated from society, but also the construction of state and federal homeless laws essentially write them out of existence. Quite simply, motel residents are, in all but definition, homeless or performing daily balancing acts in order to maintain the meager motel rooms they regard as home. Despite being legally coded as transient, non-residents, these communities are often permanent in their confinement to motels and in dire need of housing assistance. Without adequate aid, service providers described how motel residents regularly find themselves trapped within cycles of housing instability. So, as motel communities scrape together enough money to pay for rent each month, they lose their ability to save capital for better opportunities. Or, as motel residents struggle to find regular transportation into town, they are precluded from jobs that pay more than the bare minimum. It is an injustice that, as one service provider, "We can't help motel residents when they have their housing. We can help them when they lose their housing." Both motel residents and local governments would be better off addressing this issue by actually assisting motel residents before they become officially homeless, instead of simply confining them to the margins of society.

The most resounding belief amongst all service providers was that responses to motel residency must recognize the lived context of motel residents. Prior responses to motel residency

have failed to do this, and instead left motel residents with even fewer options for housing security. Without comprehending the complexity of motel residency, where profoundly inadequate motel units are often individuals' only or most preferable housing option, blunt governmental responses have caused motel residents to lose the units they regard as home. This research's fifteen interviews with service providers and sixteen interviews with motel residents thus generated four community recommendations to address motel residency. Firstly, the federal government must increase funding for low-income housing programs and expand the communities these programs serve. Currently, programs like housing vouchers or subsidized housing are entirely under-funded and inaccessible to many individuals who need them. Further, at risk communities, like recently incarcerated individuals, often cannot access any forms of housing in the private market or with public programs. Governments must recognize the dire need for these programs and the barriers many face in accessing them. Secondly, local governments must establish public transportation infrastructure to motels. This would better allow motel residents to access basic necessities like employment, food, healthcare, or community. If these programs are not implemented, government should provide more robust protections to motel residents through two potential policy changes. With regards to the first, state and federal housing authorities could modify homelessness definitions in order to include certain individuals residing in motels. Through allowing motel residents to be considered homeless, these housing authorities would make homelessness programs more accessible to individuals living in uninhabitable motels or cycling in and out of motels over short-term bases. With regards to the second policy change, states could also change tenancy definitions in order to include individuals residing in non-traditional housing locations, like motels. By expanding tenancy definitions in order to include individuals living at motels over a set period of time,

122

motel residents are guaranteed legal protections that limit landlord abuses or instability. Through

implementing these four recommendations and recognizing the voices of motel residents when

constructing new policies, governments can better ensure that these communities can actually

access the security and stability of a home.

Conclusion

This research is driven by the stories and narratives of motel residents from the Lewiston/Auburn area. It is only fitting that, to conclude, we revisit the individuals who featured prominently in this story and give voice to their continued efforts to find socio-economic security. This conclusion will thus have two parts. Firstly, I will return to the ten motel residents whose stories guided this thesis and explain their current housing circumstances. Secondly, I will summarize the meaningful takeaways of this thesis and its implications for future policy proposals or research.

Tom, Mary, Mark, Ryan, Steve, Juan, David, Jimmy, Sarah, and Bob's experiences illustrated not only the context of daily life at Valleyview, but also motel residency's implications for their holistic socio-economic security. At the conclusion of this research, I reached out through my own personal contacts and local service providers in order to check up on their current housing circumstances. In total, I was able to contact six individuals. Of those six participants, five continue to reside at Valleyview: Mark, David, Steve, Tom, and Bob. This group holds mixed opinions regarding their housing circumstances. David, Steve, and Bob report that they are happy with life at Valleyview. All continue to work and have maintained access to a car. Bob is now approaching his eighth year at Valleyview and continues to feel as though it is home. Unfortunately his health issues have worsened over the past year, but Bob maintains good spirits on the parts of life he holds most dear. For example, he was recently excited about a new kitchen gadget that his daughter bought him, which would better allow him to cook fresh vegetables in his room. David still feels guilty about forcing his son out of their room, but is confident that it was the right decision. If anything, according to him "the space has been good for us." Steve is "very comfortable" at Valleyview and is working incredibly hard in order to

124

save up for a new life. Later in the year, he plans to marry his girlfriend and cannot wait for the day to finally arrive.

However, Mark and Tom did not share the same opinions of Valleyview as their fellow residents. Mark still resides in the same room and has not been able to find a job. The isolation of Valleyview sometimes wears at him and he hopes that he will be able to move somewhere else soon. Tom similarly has come to resent Valleyview. He greatly misses his hometown in the woods of northern Maine, and feels confined within the city. Tom's health issues have also restricted his ability to find employment, and he struggles to make the two-mile walk into town everyday. Because of his inability to find a job, Tom recently attempted to obtain SSI, however his application was denied. According to him, these extra funds would have allowed him to start paying his own rent instead of relying on his family or friends, which has been a recurring source of anxiety and guilt for Tom ever since he got out. When I asked Tom what his next steps were, his reply was quite simple: "I'm going to be at Valleyview indefinitely, indefinitely… But, you know, it's living, it's freedom, and it's more enjoyable than being locked up."

Jimmy was the final participant who I was able to contact, and his story greatly diverges from everyone else. Since speaking to me, Jimmy has moved out of Valleyview, found a "beautiful, big" apartment, moved in with his girlfriend (who is now his fiancé), obtained a good paying job, and left behind the smell of Valleyview. He plans to save up enough money to obtain a Master's degree in counseling so that he can help people who were also incarcerated. Most importantly, Jimmy says that he is happy. While Jimmy's story is uplifting, it is not representative of motel residents' experiences. After hearing about Jimmy's outcome, I hesitantly asked the community partner who connected us where Jimmy fit in relation to his other clients. His response was: "Jimmy is a special case, a very special case. It's because he's so

125

intelligent and well spoken; he can do whatever he wants… That's why he's one of the few who's graduated from a room to an apartment." Thus, Jimmy's story is not representative of motel residents' lived contexts. Jimmy's success derives from his capabilities, determination, and luck. Unlike the vast majority of Valleyview's other residents, Jimmy was college educated, had owned his own business and thus knew how to balance a budget, was experienced in applying for professional jobs, had family locally who could support him, and was incredibly intelligent. It was only through this repertoire of resources that Jimmy could surmount the physical, interpersonal, and institutional insecurities imposed upon Valleyview's community. Unfortunately, no other motel resident possessed this collection of resources.

I could not contact four of the participants whose stories feature heavily in this thesis: Mary, Ryan, Juan, and Sarah. Over the course of this study, each of these individuals lost contact with their service providers and essentially disappeared. Mary lost contact with Jane after she moved to another town in hopes of finding better housing for herself and her mother. Jane has not been able to confirm if Mary was able to secure housing. The phone number that Juan provided me had no answering machine and disconnected shortly after I interviewed him. When we last spoke, Juan was approaching his third month of homelessness after moving out of his family's room and was hoping to find an apartment with some friends or an uncle. Similarly, Sarah struggled to maintain contact with her service providers. The last her counselor directly heard from her, was when she called him in order to ask for advice on housing. She had been struggling to pay rent at Valleyview and feared that she could be removed at any point. Because of Sarah's background, she was ineligible for many shelters or public housing programs, so she decided to stay with some old friends until she got back on her feet. Given Sarah's history of

drug use, her counselor worried that these housing circumstances would make it impossible for her to achieve sobriety.

Ryan's current circumstances are perhaps the saddest. Despite managing to obtain a unit at a local rooming house, he was rapidly evicted after he failed to find a job and pay for rent. As a sex offender, Ryan has few options: he cannot live with his family as they reside in public housing that bans felons, he cannot afford to live in an apartment because he does not have a job, he cannot get interviews for rental units because of his criminal and eviction records. But yet, as a sex offender, Ryan's homelessness is a violation of his probation conditions and will likely result in his return to prison if unaddressed. Perhaps out of fear that he would be considered in violation of probation or out of simple hopelessness, Ryan stopped contacting the community partners who had been supporting him and has rarely interacted with his probation caseworkers. Ryan's circumstances greatly saddened the men still residing at Valleyview. When I asked about Ryan, they reported that he "wasn't good," or "not good at all." One resident worried that "Ryan had started drinking again," which is a violation of his probation. When I asked the community partner who had most closely worked with Ryan, he seemed resigned to the fact that Ryan would soon violate his probation or reoffend and return to prison.

These four unfinished stories illuminate the invisibility of motel residents. Because of systematic marginalization, Mary, Sarah, Juan, and Ryan could not access the resources they needed to escape poverty. Quite simply, they were not as lucky as Jimmy, and their unfinished stories show the fine line motel residents balance between relative housing stability and complete socio-economic insecurity. These experiences of insecurity are not unique to the individuals who could not maintain motel residency, and instead represents the reality of almost all who live at Valleyview. For most motel residents, they live on the margins every day: struggling to pay rent,

find employment, afford food, physically take care of themselves, or maintain healthy relationships with their families and friends. In our final conversation, Tom described his housing best, stating: "I'm just surviving right now… Who knows what'll happen next."

What next?

This thesis sought to answer two questions: Does motel residency reinforce socio-economic insecurity? How do motel residents navigate their housing circumstances? By using frames of socio-economic insecurity, which encompasses both objective (i.e. physical or structural) and subjective (i.e. emotional or mental) experiences of deprivation, these questions attempted to recognize motel residency's intersecting and compounding impacts on individuals' lives (Mau, Mewes, Schoneck, 2012; Stephens, 2004). Through conducting thirty-one interviews with motel residents and service providers, and through using the narratives of motel residents to guide my analysis, I arrive at two conclusions.

Firstly, motel residency reinforces socio-economic insecurity through exacerbating issues of physical, interpersonal, and institutional insecurity. These three separate categories of motel residents' experiences with marginalization recognize the diversity of barriers barring motel communities from security. Physical insecurity refers to circumstances where individuals lack access to sufficient and safe necessities (Death, 2016). When describing their daily lives at Valleyview, motel residents identified three primary forms of physical insecurity detrimentally affecting their lives: a lack of safe and guaranteed transportation, inaccessible food (compounded by an inability to cook food in motel rooms), and room conditions. Interpersonal insecurity refers to the deterioration of positive social support networks between friends, families, and communities (Kent de Grey et al, 2018; Lincoln, 2007). For Valleyview's residents, the motel environment placed immense strain on their relationships with significant others and subjected

these communities to the almost complete authority of motel management. These contexts drastically increased the amount of anxiety motel residents regularly experienced, and the degradation of their support networks made them more vulnerable to abuse. Finally, institutional insecurity refers to the barriers motel residents faced in accessing social services or institutional enfranchisement. At Valleyview, motel residents were constantly subjected to factors that reduced their ability to obtain services or advocate for themselves. As these communities are unable to obtain a mailing address, or qualify for social services when their residency is a non-traditional housing context, or find safe havens from crime, they are less likely to secure the political power necessary for social change (Amster, 2008; Purdie-Vaughns, Eibach, 2008).

However, motel residents are not simply passive in the face of these insecurities. This thesis secondly argues that motel residents deploy innovative strategies and cultivate motel community networks in order to survive their housing circumstances. Through this question, I explored the actions motel residents took in order to increase their social capital (Putnam, 1995). Motel residents sought to increase their social capital in two primary ways. Firstly, many residents created community networks of resource and knowledge sharing. Often, individuals from Valleyview would report that they shared food, tools, transportation, and information with their fellow motel residents. These shared resources meaningfully helped individuals when they were teetering on the edge of complete insecurity. So, when someone did not have food for dinner, or transportation to a job interview, or a microwave to cook their food, their fellow residents were regularly there to help. Secondly, Valleyview's residents created networks of belonging and friendship in order to survive their social marginalization. For many of Valleyview's residents, their lives have been marked by isolation, poverty, and social alienation, as evidenced by their current housing circumstances. However, the condensed community of

motel residents often provided a place for these individuals to find others like themselves and generate meaningful relationships of support. Importantly, the survival strategies that motel residents deployed do not absolve motels of their effect on reinforcing socio-economic insecurity. Instead, these survival strategies must be considered as not only necessary responses to the marginalization of motel residency, but also evidence of this community's capacity to form social networks and advocate for themselves.

Service providers validated motel residents' experiences with socio-economic insecurity and are clearly frustrated by policy failures to address this community's needs. For many service providers, they hold a complex perspective with regards to motel residency. On the one hand, the vast majority of service providers condemn motels as a source of housing because of its effects on long-term socio-economic insecurity. On the other hand, many service providers also acknowledge that communities who seek out motels have few other options. So, if not for Valleyview, many of its residents would likely be forced into chronic homelessness, where their only choices would be shelters, cars, tents, or simply the streets. Just because motels may be the best options for their residents, this context does not mean that our communities should simply accept them as an adequate form of housing. Motels cause immense harm by forcing individuals into almost inescapable cycles of socio-economic insecurity.

This issue thus requires meaningful policy changes in governments' responses to motel residency. Current responses of motel shutdowns or imposed restrictions are harmful in their bluntness and often result in motel residents losing their housing. Instead, through my interviews with motel residents and service providers, they focused on the importance of emphasizing policies based on Housing First philosophies. Housing First philosophies propose that, in order to best address poverty, policies should first focus on providing individuals with safe and

affordable housing as this is a requirement to reduce other insecurities like physical illness, lack of transportation, or exposure to crime (Haskins, 2018; Padgett, Henwood, Tsemberis, 2016). Therefore, these interviews generated four policy recommendations to better help motel communities secure housing. Firstly, all levels of government must invest in public housing resources through better funding current programs and creating structures that assist particularly housing insecure populations, like felons. Secondly, local governments must expand public transportation resources to motels. In order to increase motel residents' access to social services and protections, governments could pursue two policies. The Federal government could expand definitions of homelessness in order to include short-term motel residents or individuals living in unsuitable motel conditions. Alternatively, states could modify tenancy definitions in order to protect communities living in non-traditional and unregulated forms of housing from landlord abuse or unjust removal.

Despite these recommendations, this thesis is constrained by a number of factors. As an undergraduate work, my research was limited by a lack of time and resources. Unlike most post-graduate works, this research was primarily conducted over a period of ten months, and thus struggles to obtain the depth of analysis or breadth of content that develops over longer periods of time. It is also limited to the Lewiston/Auburn area, and while this data is applicable to other similar cities, it would struggle to encompass the experiences of motel residents in other areas or larger cities. Furthermore, my positioning as a young woman from a private liberal arts college, greatly affected both the content of information that I received and the manner through which I interpreted it. My participants certainly understood this, and moderated themselves or limited the topics they discussed with me because of the interactions between our identities. For example, individuals who were on probation reported fewer instances of motel criminality than individuals

who were not on probation. I suspect this was because they did not want to implicate themselves in acts of criminality and did not trust me to maintain the confidentiality of that information.

Future research must better explore the implications of current responses to motel residency and further develop meaningful policy recommendations that help motel residents. Research on motel residents would also benefit from analyzing how different populations interact with motels and experience socio-economic insecurity. Outside of their current housing circumstances, Valleyview's residents did not fit within any holistic category. Their paths to the motel, experiences within it, and opportunities to progress beyond, are all shaped by their own lived identities. Greater exploration of the different contexts of motel residency would provide more robust foundations for policy changes that lift up all motel residents. Thus, future research must ask questions like: how do motel shutdowns or long-term residency requirements affect motel residents? How can local governments work with motel owners in order to improve motel conditions? What are the best policies to help motel residents? What policies could provide more robust foundations for specific motel populations, like families, sex offenders, or poorer individuals, to achieve socio-economic stability? These questions outline action for local policy makers and have the potential to generate policies that recognize motel residents as citizens deserving enfranchisement.

It is only just to conclude this thesis where it began, with the words of Sam. Sam continues to live at Valleyview and still hopes that he can save enough money to move out and be closer to his family. His kindness and compassion are widely known within both the motel and service provider community. I often throughout this project would think back to Sam's characterization of home: "Home is where you are." While these words sought to create a space for Sam to call his own, in the same breath, he qualified: "But this isn't really my home. My

home is always packed full of people, it's always packed full of my boys." Sam thus embodies the tenacity and yet alienation of motel residents. On the one hand, Sam firmly asserts his belonging to a community and establishes innovative strategies to survive his housing circumstances. But on the other hand, Sam is profoundly marginalized by his position in a motel. Each week, as he struggles to scrape together enough money to pay for rent and food and healthcare, his inability to save any money makes dreams of reunification with his family less and less likely. As Sam's motel residency approaches eighteen months, it seems difficult for him to maintain the hopes he once had for life outside of a motel. At Valleyview, Sam's room was sparse in decorations; his only personal item was a large photo frame holding a collage of his family's photos. In one segment, his boys were playing football; in another, his family was enjoying a meal outside; in another, one of his children shot a gap-toothed smile towards the camera. When I departed Sam's room at the conclusion of our interview, he was focused on the pictures of his family. I left him alone, with his memories of lives that could have been and whispers of his cigarette smoke spiraling through the air.

References

Allen, D. J. (2018). Lost in the transit desert: Race, transit access, and suburban form. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY; Routledge.

Amster, R. (2008). Lost in space: The criminalization, globalization, and urban ecology of homelessness (1st ed.). New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing.

Anderson C. (2017). You cannot afford to live here. Fordham Urban Law Journal. 44(2). 247-276.

Ausikaitis, A. E., Wynne, M. E., Persaud, S., Pitt, R., Hosek, A., Reker, K., Flores, S. (2015). Staying in school: The efficacy of the McKinney–Vento act for homeless youth. Youth & Society, 47(5), 707-726.

Autor, D. H., Palmer, C. J., Pathak, P. A. (2014). Housing market spillovers: Evidence from the end of rent control in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Journal of Political Economy, 122(3), 661-717.

Baker, S., Bergoch, C., Tsou, S. (2018). The Florida Project. June Pictures. Santa Monica, California: Lions Gate Entertainment.

Bick, C. (2019). America's hidden homeless: Life in the Starlight Motel. Aljazeera. Available at: https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/07/america -hidden-homeless-life-starlight-motel-160728034318034.html [Accessed 4 Mar. 2019].

Bouchard, K. (2018). South Portland motels follow through on threat to sue city over council's license denial. Press Herald. Available at: https://www.pressherald.com /2018/05/25/south-portland-motels-file-court-action-to-block-councils-shutdown/ [Accessed 4 Mar. 2019].

Bowles, S., Durlauf, S. N., Hoff, K. (2011). Poverty traps. New York; Princeton; Russell Sage Foundation.

Brescia RH. (2009). Sheltering counsel: towards a right to a lawyer in eviction proceedings. Touro Law Rev. 25:187–271

Butler, S. M. (2018). Housing as a step to better health. Journal of the American Medical Association, 320(1), 21-22.

Carliner M. (2013). Reducing Energy Costs in Rental Housing: The Need and the Potential. Cambridge, MA: Joint Cent. Hous. Stud. Harvard Univ.

Carrillo, P., Green, R., Malpezzi, S. (Forthcoming). A Primer on U.S. Housing Markets and Housing Policy. Urban Institute Press. 2nd edition.

Chambliss, D. F., Schutt, R. K. (2016). Making sense of the social world: Methods of investigation (Fifth ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.

Cho, S., Crenshaw, K. W., McCall, L. (2013). Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis. Signs, 38(4), 785-810.

Clemens, E. S. (2016). What is political sociology? Malden, MA; Cambridge; Polity Press.

Clifford, S., Piston, S. (2017). Explaining public support for counterproductive homelessness policy: The role of disgust. Political Behavior, 39(2), 503-23.

Cornwell, E. Y. (2014). Social Resources and Disordered Living Conditions: Evidence From a National Sample of Community-Residing Older Adults. Research on Aging, 36(4), 399–430.

Cox, M. (2009). Social capital and peace building: Creating and resolving conflict with trust and social networks. London; New York; Routledge.

Cummins, S., Macintyre, S. (2002). "Food deserts"--evidence and assumption in health policymaking. BMJ (Clinical research ed.), 325(7361), 436-8.

Death, C. (2016). Food security. Oxford University Press.

Department of Housing and Urban Development. 2017. Public and Indian Housing, Public Housing Capital Fund, 2018 Summary Statement and Initiatives. Washington DC. United States Federal Government. https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/10-PUBHSNGCAPFUND. PDF

Department of Housing and Urban Development. 2018. Public and Indian Housing, Public Housing Operating Fund, 2019 Summary Statement and Initiatives. Washington DC. United States Federal Government. https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/CFO/documents/10%20-% 20FY19CJ%20-%20PIH%20-%20Public%20Housing%20Operating%20Fund%20-%20Updated.pdf

Desai, M. A. (2008). Tax incentives for affordable housing: The low income housing tax credit. National Bureau of Economic Research.

Desmond, M. (2016). Evicted: Poverty and profit in the American city (First ed.). New York: Crown Publishers.

Desmond, M., Kimbro, R. T. (2015). Eviction's fallout: Housing, hardship, and health. Social Forces, 94(1), 295-324.

Desmond, M., Perkins, K. L. (2016). Are landlords overcharging housing voucher holders? City & Community, 15(2), 137-162.

Desmond, M. (2014). Relational ethnography. Theory and Society, 43(5), 547-579.

Desmond, M, Wrinkler, R, Ferriss, T. (2013). Evicting Children. Social Forces, 92(1), 303-327.

Dum, C. P. (2016). Exiled in America: Life on the margins in a residential motel. New York: Columbia University Press.

Duneier, M., Carter, O. (1999). Sidewalk (First ed.). New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Elliot, M., Fairweather, I., Olsen, W. K., Pampaka, M. (2016). A dictionary of social research methods. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ehrenreich, B. (2011). Nickel and dimed: On (not) getting by in America (First Picador ed.). New York: Picador.

Entner Wright B, Caspi, A., Moffitt, T. E., Silva, P. A. (1998). Factors associated with Doubled-Up Housing—a common precursor to homelessness. Social Service Review, 72(1), 92-111.

Fenelon A., Mayne P., Simon A. E., Rossen L. M., Helms V., Lloyd P., Steffen, B. L. (2017). Housing assistance programs and adult health in the United States. American Journal of Public Health, 107(4), 571-578.

Friedman, S. (2015). Commentary: Housing discrimination research in the 21st century. Cityscape, 17(3), 143-149.

Garrett, G. R., Bahr, H. M. (1974). Comparison of self-rating and quantity-frequency measures of drinking. Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol, 35(4), 1294.

Gaylord A, Crowell W, Hoepner L, Perera F, Rauh V, Herbstman J. Housing Instability and Child Growth and Development. Resilience and Health: A Potent Dynamic, 95-110.

Green, J. (2017). Epidemiology of opioid abuse and addiction. Journal of Emergency Nursing, 43(2), 106-113.

Goetz, E. G. (2013). New deal ruins: Race, economic justice, and public housing policy. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Goffman, E. 1963. Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity. Engle-wood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Guittar, S. (2017). Barriers to food security experienced by families living in extended stay motels. Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare, 44(2), 29.

Griffin, G. Reflexivity. A Dictionary of Gender Studies. Oxford University Press. Retrieved 1 Nov. 2018, from http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780191834837 .001.0001/acref-9780191834837-e-327.

Gunderson, A. (2017). The affordable housing gap leaves low-income renters without options. Chicago Policy Review (Online).

Halstead, J. M., Deller, S. C. (2015). Social capital at the community level: An applied interdisciplinary perspective. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY; Routledge.

Haskins, J. (2018). Housing first model gaining momentum. American Journal of Public Health, 108(5), 584-584.

Hendrickson, D., Smith, C. Eikenberry, N. (2006). Agricultural and Human Values. Volume 23: pg. 371.

Henwood, Benjamin F., Cabassa, L. J., Craig, Catherine M., Padgett, D. (2013). Permanent supportive housing: Addressing homelessness and health disparities? American Journal of Public Health, 103(2), S188-S192.

HUD. (2019). Expanding Opportunities to House Individuals and Families Experiencing Homelessness through the Public Housing (PH) and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Programs. Available at: https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/PIH2013-15HOMELESSQAS.PDF [Accessed 12 Mar. 2019].

HUD. (2018). The 2017 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report to Congress. HUD. Gov/US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Retrieved 3 October 2018. https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf

Jackle J., Rogers J., Sculle K. 2002. The Motel in America. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.

Johnson, D. (2018). Thunderbird residents get help from local organization. WSAV3. Available at: https://www.wsav.com/top-stories/thunderbird-residents-get-help-from-local-organization/1664008803 [Accessed 4 Mar. 2019].

Knight, G. P., Roosa, M. W., Umaña-Taylor, A. J. (2009). Studying ethnic minority and economically disadvantaged populations: Methodological challenges and best practices (First ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Kramer A. (2018). The unaffordable city: Housing and transit in North American cities. Cities. Volume 83. Pages 1-10

Kuebler, M. (2013). Closing the wealth gap: A review of racial and ethnic inequalities in homeownership. Sociology Compass, 7(8), 670-685.

Lee, B. A., Tyler, K. A., Wright, J. D. (2010). The new homelessness revisited. Annual Review of Sociology, 36(1), 501-521.

Lucy W. (2010). Foreclosing the Dream: How America's Housing Crisis is Reshaping our Cities and Suburbs. American Planning Association Planners' Press. Chicago; Washington DC.

Maine DHHS. (2019). Housing - BRAP (Bridging Rental Assistance Program) - Mental Health; DHHS Maine. Available at: https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/samhs/mentalhealth /housing/brap/ [Accessed 12 Mar. 2019].

Maine DHHS. (2019). Housing - Housing Choice Vouchers (AKA Section 8) Fact Sheet - Mental Health; DHHS Maine. Available at: https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/samhs/mentalhealth/ housing/section-8/eligibility.html [Accessed 12 Mar. 2019].

Mast, B. D. (2014). Markov chain model of rent burden in the housing choice voucher program. Journal of Housing Research, 23(2), 177-202.

Mau, S., Mewes, J., Schöneck, N. M. (2012). What determines subjective socio-economic insecurity? Context and class in comparative perspective. Socio-Economic Review, 10(4), 655-682.

McLaughlin, K. G. (2009). Social work, politics and society: From radicalism to orthodoxy. Bristol, UK: Policy.

Metcalfe, R. (2018). The urban belonging of public housing residents and the form of public space: A case study of the victoria commons development in San Antonio, Texas. Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Miller, T. (2018). City locks down units at Merced motel, forcing residents out on the streets. Merced Sun Star. Available at: https://www.mercedsunstar.com/news/local/community/ article221624295.html [Accessed 4 Mar. 2019].

Mische, A. 2008. Partisan publics: Communication and contention across Brazilian youth activist networks. Princeton Studies in Cultural Sociology. 41. 410.

Motel (2012). (1st ed.) Oxford University Press.

Newman, S. Holupka, C. (2016). Housing Affordability and Children's Cognitive Achievement. Health Affairs, 35(11), 2092-2099.

Norwood, M. (2019). Clock ticking for Fayetteville motel owners to comply with ordinance. ABC11 Raleigh-Durham. Available at: https://abc11.com/society/clock-ticking- for-fayetteville-motel-owners-to-comply-with-ordinance/5158282/ [Accessed 4 Mar. 2019].

Lorenzo-Dus, N., Marsh, S. (2012). Bridging the gap: Interdisciplinary insights into the securitization of poverty. Discourse & Society, 23(3), 274-296.

O'Flaherty, B. (2004). Wrong person and wrong place: For homelessness, the conjunction is what matters. Journal of Housing Economics, 13(1), 1-15.

Oishi, S. (2010). The psychology of residential mobility: Implications for the self, social relationships, and well-being. Perspectives on Psychological Science, 5(1), 5-21.

Olsen, E. O., Zabel, J. E. (2015). US housing policy. (Pg. 887-986) Elsevier B.V.

Padgett, D., Henwood, B. F., Tsemberis, S. J. (2016). Housing first: Ending homelessness, transforming systems, and changing lives. New York; Oxford. Oxford University Press.

Pardee, J. W. and Wright, J. (2011). Public Housing. The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology, G. Ritzer (Ed.).

Parton, N. (2015). Colin Turbett: doing radical social work. Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2014; 216 pp.

Perry, J., Craig, T. K. J. (2015). Homelessness and mental health. Trends in Urology & Men's Health, 6(2), 19-21.

Pine Tree Legal. (2015). Rights of Tenants in Maine. [online] Available at: https://www.ptla.org/sites/default/files/tenants.pdf [Accessed 12 Mar. 2019].

Purdie-Vaughns, V., Eibach, R. P. (2008). Intersectional invisibility: The distinctive advantages and disadvantages of multiple subordinate-group identities. Sex Roles, 59(5), 377-391.

Rafferty, Y., Shinn, M., Weitzman, B. C. (2004). Academic achievement among formerly homeless adolescents and their continuously housed peers. Journal of School Psychology, 42(3), 179-199.

Pathak, R., Christopher K. Wyczalkowski, Xi Huang. (2017). Public transit access and the changing spatial distribution of poverty. Regional Science and Urban Economics. Volume 66. Pages 198-212

Raymond E., Duckworth R., Miller B., Lucas M., Shiraj P. (2016). Corporate Landlords, Institutional Investors, and Displacement: Eviction Rates in Single-Family Rentals. Federal Reserve Bank Atlanta Community and Economic Development Discussion Paper. Atlanta, GA.

Rickard, D. (2016). Sex offenders, stigma, and social control. London; New Brunswick, New Jersey; Rutgers University Press.

Rosen, E. (2014). Rigging the rules of the game: How landlords geographically sort Low Income renters. City & Community, 13(4), 310-340.

Rothstein, R. (2017). The color of law: A forgotten history of how our government segregated America. (pp. xvii-xvii)

Rothwell, J. T., Massey, D. S. (2010). Density zoning and class segregation in U.S. metropolitan areas. Social Science Quarterly, 91(5), 1123-1143.

Rubin, H. J., Rubin, I. (1995). Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Ruth, T., Matusitz, J., Simi, D. (2017). Ethics of disenfranchisement and voting rights in the U.S: Convicted felons, the homeless, and immigrants. American Journal of Criminal Justice, 42(1), 56-68.

Saegert, S., Thompson, J. P., Warren, M. R. (2001). Social capital and poor communities. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Sanchez, T. (2008). Poverty, policy, and public transportation. Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice. Volume 42, Issue 5. Pages 833-841.

Sen, A. (2004). Capabilities, lists, and public reason: Continuing the conversation. Feminist Economics, 10(3), 77-80.

Silverman, R. M., Patterson, K. L. (2011). The effects of perceived funding trends on non-profit advocacy. International Journal of Public Sector Management, 24(5), 435-451.

Smith, C. (2010). What is a Person?: Rethinking Humanity, Social Life, and the Moral Good from the Person Up. The University of Chicago Press. Chicago; London.

Stephens, M. (2004) Job Loss Expectations, Realizations, and Household Consumption Behavior. Review of Economics and Statistics, 86, 253 –269.

Stewart, F., Saith, R., Harriss-White, B. (2007). Defining poverty in the developing world. New York; Basingstoke; Palgrave Macmillan.

Strand, K.; Marullo, S.; Cutforth, N.; Stoeker, R.; Donohue, P. (2003). Community-based research and higher education: Principles and practices (First ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Thacher, D. (2008). The Rise of Criminal Background Screening in Rental Housing. Law & Social Inquiry, 33(1), 5–30

Treadwell S. (2005). The Motel: An Image of Elsewhere. University of Auckland Press. 8(2). 214-224.

Tursi, N. O. (2011). Poverty de-concentration, housing mobility, and the construction of recent US housing policy: A discourse analysis of the policy-making process.

Tyler, K. A. (2006). A qualitative study of early family histories and transitions of homeless youth. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 21(10), 1385-1393.

United States Federal Government. 2017. America First: A Budget Blueprint to Make America Great Again. Washington, DC. Office of Management and Budget. https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/budget/fy2018/2018_blueprint.pdf

Valine, K. (2019). Bankrupt, abandoned Budgetel still a home for the poor. Modesto Bee. Available at: https://www.modbee.com/latest-news/article225286935.html [Accessed 4 Mar. 2019].

Valine, K. (2019). Modesto seeks to have troubled Budgetel motel condemned. Modesto Bee. Available at: https://www.modbee.com/news/article226844469.html [Accessed 4 Mar. 2019].

Walker R., Keane C., Burke J. (2010). Disparities and access to healthy food in the United States: A review of food deserts literature. Health & Place. Volume 16, Issue 5. Pg. 876-884.

Whitzman, C. (2006). At the intersection of invisibilities: Canadian women, homelessness and health outside the 'big city'. Gender, Place & Culture, 13(4), 383-399

Williamson, A. R. (2011). Can they afford the rent? Resident cost burden in low income housing tax credit developments. Urban Affairs Review, 47(6), 775-799.

Willse, C. (2015). The value of homelessness: Managing surplus life in the United States. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Wilson, A., Hodgson, P. (2012). Trust, coercion and care: Researching marginalized groups. (Pg. 111-128) Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Woo, A., Salviati, C., 2017. Imbalance in Housing Aid: Mortgage Interest Deduction v. Section 8. Apartment List. Retrieved October 20, 2018. https://www.apartmentlist.com/rentonomics/imbalance-housing-aid-mortgage-interest-deduction-vs-section-8/

Appendix A: Interview Materials

Questions for Motel residents

Demographics:

- What is you age, gender, race, or ethnicity?

- Are you currently employed? If so, how much do you earn?

- Do you have any children, if so do they live with you?

- Do you have a criminal background?

Initial reasons for using motels as a form of housing:

- How did you first learn about motels?

- What caused you to stay at the motel?

Experiences in motels:

- What is you relationship with the motel managers?

- What is your relationship with the other motel residents?

- Do you spend the majority of your time at motels?

- Do you find that you struggle to access things like supermarkets, employment, or local service providers?

- Do you think that motels are a similar quality to other forms of housing?

Reasons for remaining in motels permanently:

- Are you currently seeking out other forms of housing?

- Have you sought alternative forms of housing, if so what happened?

- Why did you decide to remain in motels long term?

Resources or services that could best help:

- What is your opinion on local service providers, regarding housing, food security, or childcare?

- Are there any services that you think local services could provide to help long-term motel residents specifically?

Questions for Service Providers:

Demographics of clients:

- What types of issues does your organization focus on?
- Does your organization keep records of your clients? If so, what are the economic, criminal, gender, and family statuses of your clients?

Biggest barriers in providing/obtaining services:

- What are your organizations primary programs?
- What are the biggest barriers your clients face in accessing social, employment, or welfare services?
- What are the biggest barriers your organization faces in helping your clients/implementing your programs?

Experience with homeless individuals/motel residents

- Does your organization assist homeless individuals? If so, how?
- Does your organization work with individuals living in motels? If so, how?
- What types of programs does your organization provide for homeless individuals?

Strategies to help clients

- Beyond seeking help from your organization, in what ways do your clients obtain assistance?
- Anything else?

Interview Agreement

As part of research for my Sociology senior thesis, at Bates College, I am exploring long-term motel residency in the Central Maine area.

This form is designed to ensure that we talk about the procedures to be used in this interview, and that you have the chance to ask any questions you may have. An extra copy of this agreement will be left with you, and your interviewer(s) will keep the signed copy.

OUTLINE OF PROCEDURES:

- Interviews will last roughly 30 minutes. We will ask you a few questions regarding your own experiences finding motels as a source of housing, deciding to remain there long-term, and accessing local homelessness services.
- This project will develop a report and thesis for local service providers. However, these groups will not be present in any interviews and they will not receive any identifying information of the participants. Any information regarding illegal activity will be kept confidential to the full extent permitted by the law.
- The interview will be conducted by two Bates College students. Abby Westberry will be the interviewer. Another Sociology student will conduct the recordings and will not ask any questions. Neither student is affiliated with local service providers or any other government organization.
- You are welcome to skip any questions you would prefer not to answer, or to end the interview at any time if you decide you would like to do so. If the interview is ended after 15 minutes of time has passed, you will be fully compensated for your time. This compensation will be a $10 voucher to a local supermarket. If the interview is ended before 15 minutes of time has passed, you will not be compensated for your time.
- Confidentiality: If participants identify themselves by name, this information will be removed from all transcripts. Each participant will be given a code at the beginning of the interview; there will be no record linking the participant's name to their code. The only document containing your name will be the consent form, which will be kept in a locked box for 3 years after the project concludes. At this point, they will be destroyed.
- Both students will follow the confidentiality agreement and will not reveal any participants' identities or information.
- In any presentations or written documents resulting from this research project, we will not use your name or other identifying information. We may refer to quotes from your interview, but at no time will either your first or last name or any other uniquely identifying information about your occupation, background, etc. be attached in any way.
- If you have any questions about the procedure now, your interviewer(s) will be happy to answer them. If you have any questions later, please feel free to contact Abby Westberry at Bates College.[1]

---

[1] The interviewer's contact details were included in this document, however they have been removed for privacy reasons.

TO BE SIGNED BY THE PARTICIPANT: I have reviewed and understood these procedures.

_____   _____

Signature   Date

TO BE SIGNED BY THE PARTICIPANT: I consent to be recorded over the course of this interview.

_____   _____

Signature   Date

TO BE SIGNED BY THE INTERVIEWER: I have discussed these procedures with the participant and will conduct the interview in accordance with them.

_____   _____

Signature   Date

Debriefing Form
Bates College Department of Sociology

<u>Title of the Study:</u> Long Term Motel Residency in Auburn, Maine
<u>Researcher Name:</u> Abby Westberry

       Thank you for participating in this research study. We are conducting this study to explore the use of motels as a form of permanent housing. This project will focus on the unique experiences of everyday, motel-residents. The final goal is to produce a document for the wider Lewiston/Auburn community in order to educate local service providers about the unmet needs of this community and provide recommendations for resources that would help this community. The project has two research questions: why do people turn to motels as a form of housing, and why do these individuals stay there permanently?

Two Bates College students will conduct the interview. It will recorded and the audio recording will have all identifying features removed and replaced with a code that only the researcher will have access to. After the recordings have been typed up, they will be destroyed. We will ask you a few questions regarding your own experiences finding motels as a source of housing, and deciding to remain there long-term. There will be no deception in this interview. Both interviewers are Sociology students at Bates College, and this research will not be used for any purposes beyond this project. There will be two final products for this project: a white page document detailing the experiences of long-term motel residents and some resources the community could need, and a senior Sociology thesis completed per the graduation requirements.

If you are interested in learning more about this study, please feel free to ask us questions in person, or contact us using the email address above. If you would like to learn more about long-term motel residency we recommend the following:

- Amster, R. (2003). Patterns of exclusion: Sanitizing space, criminalizing homelessness. Social Justice, 30(1 (91)), 195-221.
- K. A., & So, M. (2016). Lost in limbo: An exploratory study of homeless mothers' experiences and needs at emergency assistance hotels. *Families in Society, 97*(2).

If you have any concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the Bates College Institutional Review Board.[2]

Thank you again for participating!
Abby Westberry

---

[2] The interviewer's and Bates College IRB's contact details were included in this document, however they have been removed for privacy reasons.

Appendix B: Service Providers' details

Organization's Area	Interviewee's Position	Organization's Mission	Contact with Motels	Location
Legal Assistance	Outreach officer	"Providing high quality, free, civil legal assistance to low-income people in Maine."	Yes	Maine
Center for women	Executive Director	"Offers safe and sacred opportunities for women to heal from adverse life experiences, thrive, and enrich each other's lives."	Yes	Maine
Policing	Chief of Police	"Preserving life and property, maintaining the public order, and enforcing local, state and federal laws."	Yes	Maine
Policing and Housing Policy	Police Officer/ Board member of homelessness NGO	"Preserving life and property, maintaining the public order, and enforcing local, state and federal laws."	Yes	Maine
City Housing Authority	Director of Health & Social Services	"Develop, provide and assist decent, safe and affordable housing for lower income persons."	Yes	Maine
Homeless Shelter	Director	Provide emergency housing and free meals for homeless communities.	Yes	Maine
Prisoner Reentry NGO	Director	Assist recently incarcerated individuals with re-entering their communities.	Yes	Maine
Prisoner Reentry NGO	Outreach Officer	Assist recently incarcerated individuals with re-entering their communities.	Yes	Maine
Probation	Reentry Specialist	Connect individuals on probation with services to facilitate reentry	Yes	Maine
Homelessness assistance	Director	Provides homeless or housing insecure populations with resources. Educates communities about homelessness	Yes	Maine

Homeless Shelter	Director	Provide emergency housing and free meals for homeless communities.	Yes	Maine
Housing Advocacy NGO	Executive Director	"Ending family homelessness by taking a holistic approach in leveraging policy change."	Yes	Mass
School	District Superintendent	Providing minors of the community with a safe and high quality education.	Yes	Cali
Homeless shelter and housing organization	Outreach Officer	Providing emergency housing for homeless communities and connecting them to housing resources	Yes	Flor
Housing advocacy NGO	President	"Preserve, create and sustain affordable, healthy homes that support economic security and access to opportunity for all."	No	Mass