“THEY WILL BUILD HOUSES AND DWELL IN THEM”: FAITH, SERVICE AND POLITICS AT THE OPEN DOOR COMMUNITY

by

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(Under the Direction of Steven Holloway)

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the intersections of faith, service and politics at the Open Door Community in Atlanta. It uses qualitative research methods to ask how the community negotiates tensions between service work and political resistance in its advocacy for homeless people in the city. It concludes that a *liberationist theo-politics* within a framework of contemporary Catholic worker personalism guides the community towards an analysis that makes space for faith-motivated concepts of service and a robust anti-capitalist political agenda.

INDEX WORDS: Faith-based organizations, Homelessness, Neoliberalism, Non-profit industrial complex

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DEDICATION

With an “attitude of gratitude,” this manuscript is dedicated to Horace H. Tribble and, of course, the memory of Peter C. Bolton

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Chapter One: Introduction

I. Overview of the argument

Homelessness is a major social problem that increasingly afflicts marginalized people in U.S. cities. Moreover, the poverty experienced by many homeless people means that hunger and homelessness often accompany one another. In particular, homelessness in metropolitan Atlanta remains inadequately addressed. A recent HUD report recorded 7,019 homeless people in 2009, 2,164 of whom were not in shelters (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2010). This indicates that there is not even enough temporary shelter housing to alleviate these numbers. However, homeless advocates in the city have suggested that the number would triple or quadruple if official estimates included the number of people living with friends or relatives; some have suggested that up to 36,000 people are homeless inside the city's perimeter (Schneider 2003, Communication with Tim Franzen). Permanent housing options are also limited because of a lack of affordable housing that partly stems from systematic removal of public housing options, even though a surplus of vacant housing exists because of the city's high number of foreclosures (Keating 2001, Schneider and Hicks 2011).

Policy shifts based in neoliberal ideology have 'rolled back' government programs that are meant to provide affordable housing, food and cash entitlements, schemes that once approached a substantive ‘safety net’ for the poorest people in the United States (Peck and Tickell 2002). Homelessness therefore forms only one part of a reality in which securing basic survival resources on a day-to-day basis is difficult. Non-governmental nonprofit organizations have

increasingly stepped in to meet the basic needs of people who once relied on federal and state governments to mitigate these material inequalities of a capitalist economic system. Though many of these organizations once considered their work to be a temporary, 'emergency' solution to such growing desperation, nonprofit organizations continue to be at the forefront of operating food pantries, soup kitchens, night shelters, and free medical clinics. Scholars and advocates who want to see broad systemic change such that these last resort resources are no longer necessary for the most economically marginalized people have critiqued them for having a 'Band-Aid' effect on the social problems that they attempt to alleviate (Poppendieck 1999, Fyfe 2005, Incite! 2007, Kivel 2007, Mayer 2007, Gilmore 2007, Chouinard and Crooks 2008). By keeping the focus on immediate material needs over more substantial systemic change, they argue that nonprofit service organizations are only helping to perpetuate these issues. These advocates argue that rather than adequately addressing the devastating effects of neoliberal policies that geographers and scholars from other disciplines have pointed to, nonprofit service work only props up states' reneged commitment to governance that ensures a minimum standard of living. They suggest that this occurs partly because nonprofits depoliticize the conditions that make such an abundance of services necessary. Faith-based service work is similarly conceptualized as an enabler of neoliberal practices, only with theological justifications in hand (Hackworth 2010, 2012). In this wide body of literature, then, there exists the impression of an oppositional relationship between service work and political advocacy and resistance against neoliberal shifts.

As one who shares many of these scholars' materialist politics of effecting changes in the long-term that will establish greater socioeconomic equality, I believe that it is essential to further look at this relationship that sets up the work of service nonprofits as an impediment to

effective advocacy or resistance. I consider this a crucial avenue of research in part because of claims made by activists and scholars about the power of free food as a means to increase membership in the Communist Party as well as the Black Panther Party (see Day 1952, Heynen 2009). These accounts show that survival-based service work – that which aims to meet people's basic material needs – does not necessarily only reinforce regressive politics (Heynen 2009). Similarly, a handful of scholars who address the "nonprofit industrial complex" have suggested that, problematic as they can be, nonprofits that do service might also shape themselves as loci of an emancipatory politics (Incite! 2007). Alongside this literature, I take heed of a vital argument that emphasizes the immediate, visceral impacts that survival-based service work has on the lives of people who are its recipients (Katz 2001, Heynen 2009). How can the issue of people's physical survival be left out of the formation of radical political praxes? I suggest in this thesis that, in the instance of the Open Door Community, faith-motivated survival-based service work can be a site from which to build political resistance while at least beginning to meet critical human needs. This project examines the potential in contemporary nonprofit service work for the formation of narratives and actions that challenge contemporary manifestations of neoliberalism. Among this mass of volunteers who mobilize to do the faith-based service work that scholars have problematized, I argue that there is more potential for a liberatory political praxis to be present in service work than has previously been acknowledged.

This project absorbs the tensions between service and politics in the literature to suggest that survival-based service work can play a critical role in political praxes. Faith-based organizations in particular, which have received much salient scrutiny in the debates to which I refer above, can actually be full of rich potential to challenge this dichotomy. In this case study

about a Catholic Worker house in Atlanta, I **first** argue that the community uses scripture and strands of several theologies to place survival-based service work as an indispensable foundation for radical analysis and action. I argue that Open Door leaders have guided a philosophy that draws on a passage from the gospel of Matthew that has long motivated Christians of diverse political orientations to engage in service work with marginalized people. It also pivots, however, on Catholic Worker thought and history, the teachings of Martin Luther King, Jr., and strands of liberation theology. Through this development of what I call a liberationist theo-politics, Open Door leaders establish an enduring praxis that builds from the experiences of their survival-based service work to form a robust analysis of neoliberal policymaking, Favoring radical changes in the allocation of housing and welfare, leaders have particularly focused on Atlanta public policy towards homelessness as a nexus of such contestation. The **significance** of this approach is that it opens up possibilities for faith-motivated survival-based service work that meets people's essential material needs to play a central part in progressive or radical social change, a role that has been doubted in the literature.

The **second** part of my argument explores the politics that take place at an interpersonal scale at the Open Door Community, which operate within an environment that is shaped by their service and political praxis. Here, I argue that while race and class inequalities certainly do not disappear from key aspects of Open Door life, the particular structure of service work creates a relatively level ground from which residents and volunteers can craft what I term a contemporary version of personalism, a theology of inherent human dignity and "destiny" that is also deeply attentive to socio-historical circumstances (Zwick and Zwick 2005). The residents and volunteers whom I discuss in this section, none of whom carry substantial race or class privilege and some

of whom have been homeless, pay profound attention to the daily struggles – including perceived agentic successes and failures - of people who are homeless. Yet at the same time, they maintain a foothold on the political economic conditions that bring homeless people to Open Door, and emerge with a communitarian view that re-affirms the immutable worth of the community's homeless guests. Their personalism, as filtered through Emmanuel Mounier and the Catholic Worker movement, poses a challenge to individualistic neoliberal subjectivities that guide the perpetuation of homelessness and interrelated social problems. Finally, I argue that personalism at Open Door is a theologically driven tool with which residents and volunteers can form radical critiques at the site of faith-motivated, survival-based service work. In this second part of my argument, then, I further show that survival-based service work is a potential catalyst for an emancipatory theo-politics at Open Door. I conceptualize a form of 'everyday' politics, shaped by theoretical guidance from Robin D.G. Kelley (1994) and Patricia Hill Collins ([1990] 1991), as emerging from the Open Door Community's soup kitchens.

These two main strands of my argument – that the Open Door Community's formally articulated faith-based approach positions survival-based service work at the center of its politics, and that the grounded experiences of service are productive of a personalist political consciousness within the environment that Open Door fosters – roundly inform a critical contribution to debates about responses to neoliberalism, the shadow state and the nonprofit industrial complex. I show that service work, and faith-based service work in this instance, should be more closely considered as potential loci of resistance when scholars look to and evaluate the potential of politics that challenge neoliberal economic policies and structures.

II. Theoretical positioning of the argument

Contemporary debates about service and politics are situated within a political economic landscape, termed neoliberalism by scholars from geography and other disciplines, that further disadvantages the most economically marginalized people in already unequal capitalist systems. Because neoliberalism is often cited as having become predominant beginning in the early 1980s with the elections of Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom, its ongoing rise to prominence has also provided the political economic context through which the Open Door Community has navigated since it opened in 1981. Having emerged from a once-marginal ideology, neoliberalism can broadly be thought of as a set of economic policy practices that prizes free market capitalism, and as an individualistic form of governmentality that is often punitive towards the 'losers' of this de-regulated system (Larner 2000). The previously dominant Keynesian model aimed to ameliorate the shortfalls of capitalism by establishing a comprehensive welfare state for most American citizens and documented migrants that was most clearly demonstrated in Roosevelt's post-Depression New Deal programs[1]. In contrast, neoliberal economic policies have systematically dismantled publicly provided entitlements to a minimal cash income, housing, food and medical care. This diminution of welfare states has taken place alongside similar trends in other areas of government to create 'hollowed out' states by contracting former state functions to private organizations, as well as by reducing or eliminating funding for public programs (Brenner and

1 As George Lipsitz and other have noted, though, the terms of New Deal programs were uneven and have contributed to contemporary realities of racialized poverty. Domestic and farm laborers, who were much more likely to be people of color, were excluded from receiving many of the programs' public benefits (Lipsitz 1998).

Theodore 2002, Peck and Tickell 2002). Though these actions appear to reduce the power of government, states have actually been highly complicit actors in putting forth neoliberalism as the only solution to economic stagnation in post-industrial places as well as developing countries (Peck and Tickell 2002, Hackworth 2007). Many have argued that city governments in Western countries have willingly served as incubators in which to test these policies before they are adopted elsewhere (Marcuse and Van Kempen 2000, Brenner and Theodore 2002, Hackworth 2007). The reduction of welfare programs, however, is most clearly tied to the individualism of neoliberal thought that tends to cast the poorest people as deserving of punishment for their perceived personal failures and abnegates the responsibility of states to provide them with basic entitlements (Larner 2000, Poppendieck 1999, Bondi 2005, Guthman 2006, Kanna 2010). Homelessness, which is the key ontological focus of Open Door's survival-based service work, occupies a position within this milieu such that neoliberal policymaking has encouraged homelessness to grow in part because of cutbacks in public housing and the widespread de-funding of public mental health institutions (Wolch and Dear 1993). At the same time, city policymakers' frenzied desire to attract private capital has contributed to the ousting of homeless people from public spaces because of their 'undesirable' presence (Smith 1996, Mitchell 1997, Mitchell 2003, Del Casino and Jocoy 2008).

Much of the literature that details these attacks on the most economically marginalized people has been critiqued for presenting neoliberalism as an all-encompassing, seemingly impermeable system (Leitner, Peck and Sheppard 2007). The critique suggests that while neoliberalism is presented by these accounts as being harmful to nearly all people except the most wealthy, there exists little space for taking seriously any resistance to such an undesirable

economic structure. Following these critiques that warn of a dead-end analysis, this project fills a gap in the literature by exploring an empirical instance of resistance to neoliberal policies, particularly those around homelessness in Atlanta. However, the critiques offered by those like Leitner et al., who advocate empirical studies of contestations of neoliberalism, do not generally consider the potential for such contestations to be present in places where service work plays a primary role. They maintain an assumption in much literature on neoliberalism that survival-based service work done by nonprofit organizations can only serve to prop up neoliberal states. This research project follows Leitner et al.'s call to look for pockets of resistance to the all-encompassing neoliberal narrative, but argues that service work can play an under-recognized role in such oppositional efforts.

A related body of work discusses the large number of nonprofit organizations that have stepped in to fill welfare gaps left by neoliberal states (Wolch 1990, Poppendieck 1999, Fyfe 2005, Chouinard and Crooks 2008, Incite! 2007, Kivel 2007, Gilmore 2007, Mayer 2007, Eliasoph 2011). As states have reneged their responsibilities to fulfill the most basic needs of the poorest people, 501 (c)(3) nonprofit service organizations have come to play a substantial role in attempting to provide for these people’s basic needs for housing, food, emergency medical care and other immediate needs. A key argument in these debates is that the work of nonprofit organizations has a 'Band-Aid' effect on social problems that require more thorough systemic change. One strand of this argument suggests that overwhelming need and funding shortages means that most of these organizations are hardly able to people's most basic needs. As a result, they find themselves keeping people who need more comprehensive help barely at survival levels (Poppendieck 1999, Chouinard and Crooks 2006, Gilmore 2007, Kivel 2007, Incite!

2007). Some advocates demonstrate that the structure of neoliberalized welfare is what keeps their organizations in this quagmire, and believe that deeper systemic change is the only way to resolve the issues that they address (Poppendieck 1999, Wolch 1999, Amin and Cameron 2002, Gilmore 2007, Kivel 2007, King and Osayande 2007, Incite! 2007). Not all employees and volunteers in nonprofit organizations want to challenge the status quo, though. Jason Hackworth, for example, has suggested that faith-based organizations are particularly complicit in maintaining rather than contesting neoliberal states (Poppendieck 1999, Hackworth 2010, Hackworth forthcoming). Scholars have argued that nonprofits are also overburdened by a never-ending demand for constant fundraising to effectively challenge this “nonprofit industrial complex” (Poppendieck 1999, Incite! 2007). At the same time, funding sources often frown upon giving grants to advocacy programs, strongly favoring supposedly apolitical short-term service work (Wolch 1990, Poppendieck 1999, Incite! 2007, Eliasoph 2011).

While the critiques of these scholars are extremely valuable probes into the “shadow state,” this project intervenes in and contributes to this work on the “nonprofit industrial complex” by complicating the way it tends to separate service from more meaningful political advocacy and systemic change (Wolch 1990, Incite! 2007). Influenced by accounts that claim that the Communist Party's as well as the Black Panther Party's food programs were critical tools for gaining members among hungry people (Day 1952, Heynen 2009), this project explores whether survival-based service work that is not necessarily linked to an organized political party can play a role in an emancipatory politics. Moreover, while Hackworth (forthcoming) has suggested that faith-based organizations reinforce neoliberal states, Cloke, May and Johnsen (2010) have also recently argued that the 'theo-ethics' of faith-based service groups challenge the

individualistic narratives of neoliberal ideology. This project seeks to further investigate these questions through its case study of a faith-based organization.

III. Research site

This thesis project has engaged these questions through a case study with the Open Door Community in Atlanta, Georgia. The Open Door Community articulates an approach to homelessness that seeks both to alleviate the conditions of homelessness in the city and to challenge the ideologies and policies that surround it. Founded by Presbyterian pastors and congregation members Eduard Loring, Murphy Davis, Carolyn Johnson and Rob Johnson in 1981, the Open Door Community is considered part of the Catholic Worker movement, which began in the 1930s to combat the widespread poverty of the Great Depression (Day 1952, Gathje 2002, Zwick and Zwick 2005). Open Door residents and volunteers are primarily Protestant, but consider themselves Catholic Workers because of founders' close identification with the spiritual and political aims of the movement. Catholic Workers have historically lived together in ‘houses of hospitality’ and survived on donations in order to serve homeless people in their surrounding communities (Day 1952, Zwick and Zwick 2005). Similarly, the core community at Open Door lives together in a 56-room house at 910 Ponce de Leon Avenue, which is three miles northeast of downtown Atlanta. Residents are expected to dedicate much of their time to Open Door’s work, meaning that they cannot hold outside jobs, and each resident receives about $11 per week for personal needs. From this setting, Open Door Community residents and non-residential volunteers conduct all of their daily affairs. As part of the Catholic Worker movement, their practices are profoundly informed by their religious convictions.

In line with Catholic Worker teachings, the Open Door Community provides services that attempt to fulfill some of the daily survival needs of homeless people. They host a soup kitchen each Tuesday and Wednesday morning that serves approximately 120 people each day. Separate men's and women's showers, a medical clinic, and a foot clinic take place once per week, and a specialized women's clinic takes place biweekly. Some people who come for these services are 'local' homeless people who live in obscured encampments dotted throughout the gentrified St. Charles and Virginia Highlands neighborhoods, while others travel long distances through the metropolitan area to reach Open Door. While the community once served two meals each day of the week, leaders have cited diminishing support for what was once a vibrant faith-based shelter and housing movement, as well as sickness and aging in the community, as reasons for Open Door's relatively decreased amount of service work. During my time as a participant observer, though, it became clear that the amount of service work at Open Door is not on a strictly downward trajectory, but varies according to the residential and volunteer community's changing capacities. For example, a group of young resident volunteers began sheltering homeless guests in a common area when temperatures began to drop in the winter of 2011. Similarly, one long-term resident initiated a family-style dinner for a smaller-than-usual number of guests. Despite this somewhat fluctuating schedule, survival-based service work remains a central focus of Open Door life.

Alongside this service work, the Open Door Community has articulated a longstanding commitment to a politics that, most generally, critiques and seeks to undo the structures of capitalism that create and perpetuate a matrix of poverty-related issues. Though they do not claim a formal political identification, the discursive tone of a statement on the front page of

their website that “[w]e seek to dismantle racism, sexism and heterosexism . . . [we] advocate on behalf of the oppressed, homeless and prisoners through non-violent protests, grassroots organizing and the publication of our monthly newspaper, *Hospitality*” unambiguously indicates their broadly leftist and anti-capitalist orientation (Open Door Community 2012). Over the past thirty years, Open Door has engaged in public protest work around homelessness that has primarily targeted Atlanta policymakers. Their protests have included a long-running campaign for public toilets, the occupation of an abandoned hotel, and annual 'street vigils' during the week before Easter (Field notes 2011). They are also active advocates against the death penalty in Georgia. Although homelessness and the death penalty are issues that are certainly interconnected, this thesis primarily focuses on their anti-homelessness politics. Although Open Door's handful of tangible victories have paled in comparison to Atlanta's increasingly punitive policies towards homeless people in the city, they have managed to sustain a vibrant community as local activists who have published a regular newsletter and several books, and who often serve as a backbone of anti-homelessness protest in the city (Field notes 2011).

The Open Door Community is an ideal place to consider the issues from the literature I discuss above because of the way that the community places service and a conception of justice together in a way that suggests provocative questions about the often assumed dichotomy between the two. Their approach is theoretically meaningful because it allows an exploration of the significance of their work that contributes to the debates engaged in by scholars who are concerned with the harmful effects of neoliberal policymaking, and who question the implications of the networks of nonprofit organizations that have come to replace Keynesian states' social welfare responsibilities. This project presents the Open Door Community not as a

model for the work of other nonprofits, but as an instance of a place that troubles a long-debated binary between direct service – particularly that which is faith-motivated - and political resistance.

IV. Research questions

This thesis project absorbs invaluable critiques of neoliberal state-making, but insists upon locating places of vibrant contestation and resistance (Peck and Tickell 2002, Brenner and Theodore 2002, Hackworth 2007, Leitner et al. 2007). In addition, it engages with scholarship that concludes that nonprofits, particularly faith-based ones, that attempt to fulfill basic material needs whose provision was once the province of Keynesian welfare states, often accidentally or complicitly reinforce the neoliberal status quo (Wolch 1990, Poppendieck 1999, Bobo et al. 2000, Fyfe 2005, Mitchell 2006, Incite! 2007, Kivel 2007, Gilmore 2007, Mayer 2007, Eliasoph 2011). However, convinced by accounts of Communist Party and Black Panther Party food programs that the service work of providing for marginalized people's immediate needs has more resistive potential than has been acknowledged in the literature, I have asked research questions that explore the Open Door Community's claim to be a radically political community that is also dedicated to service work (Day 1952, Heynen 2009). I ask, **how do Open Door residents and volunteers negotiate the tensions, as outlined by this literature, between doing survival-based service work and building a potentially emancipatory political praxis? How does their approach intersect with their status as a faith-based organization?**

In response to these research questions, this thesis considers how the Open Door Community negotiates these tensions with their insistence that, for faith-based reasons, service is

key to developing a liberatory politics. It first argues that the significance of this approach is that, using scripture and the reflections of faith leaders like Dorothy Day, Peter Maurin, Martin Luther King, Jr., and liberation theologians, Open Door creates a place for survival-based service work to play a vital role and to be an integral part of a political praxis, rather than an anemic complement to the work of organizing and direct action. Secondly, this thesis argues that the everyday experiences of soup kitchens at Open Door further elucidate survival-based service work as a catalyst for a personalist political consciousness. While Hackworth argues that the work of small leftist faith-based organizations is too small to be significant, this thesis argues that their pockets of resistance can lend important insight into debates over the role of nonprofit service organizations in neoliberal states. This case study of one such organization, the Open Door Community, elucidates the possibilities of reading Christian teachings in a way that makes space for service to become an indispensable part of a political praxis rather than a de-politicized balm for the effects of cutthroat neoliberalism. In this framework, I argue that service organizations have the potential to trouble neoliberal realities rather than reinforce them.

V. Organization of the thesis

Chapter Two discusses some history of Open Door, with an emphasis on key events and challenges that the community has faced. Chapter Three is, first, a literature review that contextualizes Open Door's work within neoliberalism and the 'neoliberal city'. This chapter also reviews literature that explores the implications of nonprofits performing social services that were once considered the responsibility of Keynesian welfare states. Lastly, a conceptual framework in the final section of Chapter Three absorbs this literature and sets up the arguments made in Chapters Five and Six.

Chapter Four discusses the methodology used in this qualitative research project. This chapter explains and justifies this project's methods of data collection, methods of analysis, and methods of interpretation. This section also discusses issues of critical distance that I encountered while doing case study research with the Open Door Community.

Chapters Five and Six makes arguments that have emerged from six months of empirical research with the Open Door Community. Chapter Five discusses the implications of the more 'official' stance of what I call the Open Door Community's liberationist theo-politics, while Chapter Six considers the everyday personalist politics of survival-based service work in the community.

Finally, Chapter Seven presents some key conclusions about the research and considers both its theoretical and empirical contributions. This chapter also explores the limitations of this research. Finally, I consider the implications of this project for future research.

Chapter Two: Background

This chapter provides an overview of the Open Door Community's formation, its location in the Ponce-Highlands neighborhood, and milestones of the community's service and activism. It also discusses Open Door leaders' reflections on the local faith-based anti-homelessness movement that they initiated in the late 1970s.

I. Open Door's formation and leadership

The Open Door Community was formed in 1981 by two young married couples who envisioned their new communal life as a vital step towards dismantling the growing problems of homelessness and deep poverty in Atlanta. Eduard Loring, Murphy Davis, and Carolyn and Rob Johnson were first active at Clifton Presbyterian Church in Atlanta's Lake Claire neighborhood, where Eduard was pastor and Murphy managed the Southern Prison Ministry[2]. The Johnsons, who held social services jobs outside of the church, formed a close friendship with Eduard and Murphy as members of the church's congregation. They became increasingly concerned about growing homelessness, inadequate shelter, and political and business leaders who were disinclined to address these consequences of economic stagnation and the beginnings of neoliberal policymaking (Wolch and Dear 1993). In 1979, the four friends started a night shelter at the church under difficult personal circumstances – including major physical health problems

2 All names used in this chapter are individuals' real names because of their public association with the Open Door Community. As the Methods chapter further details, all other research participants are represented by pseudonyms.

and two infants between them – and with few resources. The focus on economic justice that is a building block of Open Door life was present from the beginning of the night shelter program at Clifton Presbyterian. Eduard, Murphy and the Johnsons emphasized developing a commitment to that vision "through personal contact and building relationships with guests at the shelter," just as they have done at the Open Door Community (Gathje 2006, 54).

Over the next two years, Eduard, Murphy and the Johnsons began to have "questions about whether a congregational setting could adequately support an intense spirituality combined with social action with the poor" (Gathje 2006, 54). In other words, they found the structure of their lives too "fragmented" and distant from Clifton's homeless guests, and wanted to live in a Catholic Worker-style community to develop stronger intimacy and "solidarity" with them (Gathje 2006, 57). They hoped to find a large house which they could invite homeless people to share with them as a home rather than a temporary shelter. Open Door therefore formed out of this desire to share living space with some of the most marginalized people in the city. After some searching, the four founders secured the purchase of a 56-room house in the Ponce-Highlands neighborhood that was formerly a mission shelter for women. Eduard, Murphy and the Johnsons decided to break formal ties with Clifton Presbyterian Church because of growing divisions and fatigue over maintaining the church's night shelter, Eduard's controversial radicalism as a pastor, and contentious questions over what the formation of this new residential community that represented those strongly leftist values would mean for the congregation.

Although Open Door officially parted with Clifton Presbyterian Church, the community is today still institutionally linked to Presbyterian Church USA, the mainline organization that encompasses most Presbyterian congregations in the United States. However, the denominational

identification of Open Door residents and volunteers is broad, and Open Door leaders are more likely to critique the practices of Presbyterian congregations than to claim allegiance to the church. While Presbyterian theology surely influences the philosophy and practices of the community to an extent, I argue in Chapter Five that it is the combination of Catholic Worker theology, the teachings of Martin Luther King, Jr., and liberation theology that most strongly informs what I term Open Door's liberationist theo-politics.

The structure of leadership in the community has been re-shaped several times during the past thirty years. Co-founders Carolyn and Rob Johnson left Open Door in 1985 in part because of disagreements over the community's vision and practices. Open Door biographer Peter Gathje notes that at the time, "Carolyn and other community members believed that an emphasis on downward mobility and a life of solidarity with the poor had almost led to the exclusion of joy from the life of the Open Door" (Gathje 2006, 113). However, several key leaders emerged in the next few years after the Johnsons' departure. One of them, Elizabeth Dede, came to the community in 1986 and became a public voice of Open Door as a writer for the community's newsletter *Hospitality* until her departure in 2000. Ralph Dukes, a former Open Door guest, also joined the community around this time and is now one of the longest-term residents. Gladys and Dick Rustay, who joined the community as volunteers at the same time as Dede became a resident, now live at Open Door and serve on the Leadership Team. Ira Terrell, a formerly homeless resident who came to Open Door in 1991, plays a key role in the community's operations but has elected not to serve on the Leadership Team. Calvin and Nelia Kimbrough, who make up the rest of the Leadership Team along with Eduard, Murphy, and the Rustays, came to Open Door in 2004. These stalwart Open Door residents are called "partners" in the

community (Gathje 2006). John McRae, the only African American man who serves on the Leadership Team, has lived in the community for a shorter period of time and is presently considered a "novice," which makes him akin to a partner in training (Gathje 2006). This group of residents and leaders, all of whom have pledged to stay in the community on a long-term basis and who have given all of their material resources to the community's operation, comprise only a few individuals out of thousands of residents and volunteers who have passed through Open Door. People who come to Open Door from homelessness are called residents and stay for varying periods of time (Gathje 2006). Resident volunteers, who often have not experienced homelessness and who are generally much more privileged than residents, commit to stay at Open Door for six months[3] (Gathje 2006). While Open Door has a wide network of volunteers and supporters alongside its residential community, many residents and volunteers stay involved for only a short period of time relative to the community's three decades of existence.

3 In Chapter Six, I further discuss and analyze these structures of membership and authority at Open Door.

Photo: Annual Advent season community photograph.

Photos: Stalwart Open Door leaders and residents.

Photo: A soup kitchen.

II. The politics of location at 910 Ponce de Leon Avenue

When the Open Door Community first moved into their house at 910 Ponce de Leon Avenue in 1981, the Ponce-Highlands area and other surrounding neighborhoods like Druid Hills were markedly different than they are now. Open Door leader Nelia remarked upon these changes in an interview, noting that "right here in this little area [around the house], Fellini's wasn't here and Moe's wasn't here [restaurants], there was a liquor store and a pawn shop. Buildings on down the way were just, you know, boarded up, there was lots of prostitution, lots of drugs" (Interview with Nelia, July 2011). She noted that while Open Door's renovation of an old house meant that they participated in early re-gentrification of the area, nearby Virginia Highlands was one of the first post-white flight inner city neighborhoods to experience "real

extreme gentrification" (Interview with Nelia, July 2011). Open Door's most active days coincided with this widespread neighborhood change.

The crowds of homeless people who wait in front of the house before soup kitchen, and who camped in large numbers in the community's backyard at one time, have caused significant conflicts with increasingly upscale neighbors. These altercations have threatened the house's existence over the years, such as when a law firm that moved next door in the 1980s made ongoing efforts to stop Open Door's work. As Nelia noted, they "didn't like having neighbors that attracted 200 homeless men every day" (Interview with Nelia, July 2011). Leader Gladys said that "I wasn't living here at the time, but the lawyer was very upset and sent every inspector he could to our house to find [code violations], and so then they [Open Door] had to spend a lot of money bringing things up to code" (Interview with Gladys, June 2011). The same lawyer also attempted to appeal to Open Door's donors to force the community to change their practices, but because, Gladys said, "sixty percent of [their] donors were small donors," this was an ineffective tactic (Interview with Gladys, June 2011). He also offered Open Door money to serve in the back rather than front yard, but leaders like Murphy objected to perpetuating what she saw as a distasteful practice of hiding homeless people from the public eye (Gathje 2002).[4] Nelia said that the law firm "eventually decided that they liked us, and that what we were doing was right, so [now] they're very good supporters," and according to Gladys they sent the community "a check for a thousand dollars and an apology" after ten years of conflict (Interviews with Nelia and Gladys, June/July 2011). Today, Open Door's disputes with neighbors are minimal. Certain house rules are based around being "good neighbors" to others; orange slices served at soup kitchen,

4 Though see Sparke 2010 on the importance of privacy as well as access to public space for homeless people.

for example, are not supposed to be taken out of the house in case they are littered around the neighborhood (Interview with Nelia, July 2011). This creates an environment in which Open Door's presence is mostly tolerated.

However, given that Open Door is now in an undeniably gentrified neighborhood, some people close to the community have asked why they do not move to “where the poor people are,” as Nelia described it (Interview with Nelia, July 2011). Indeed, homeless guests may have to “be intentional” about navigating through the city to come to Open Door soup kitchens if they do not live in the surrounding area (Interview with Nelia, July 2011). However, several institutions along their section of Ponce de Leon Avenue, such as the public library two blocks away from Open Door, remain places where homeless people can generally expect to go without being harassed (Field notes 2011). In some ways, then, the neighborhood is relatively friendly to homeless people. Nonetheless, Nelia referred to shifts in local policy and law enforcement practices, citing “this whole new level of policing of the community” that has put “a lot more pressure on the people who come here” (Interview with Nelia, July 2011). Therefore, even though Open Door's physical structure is now reasonably safe and unlikely to be shut down in the near future, the surrounding environment has, according to Nelia and reflected in wider policy changes around homelessness, become increasingly though not entirely unfriendly to homeless guests' presence. However, Nelia believes that finding an ideal place from which to serve is a “Holy Grail” in that gentrification operates unpredictably, and the community could move to a new neighborhood only to soon find themselves in another gentrifying area (Interview with Nelia, July 2011). Some Open Door leaders also value the challenge that they believe the

house's presence poses to their surroundings (Gathje 2002). For these reasons, leaders have kept Open Door at the same location since 1981.

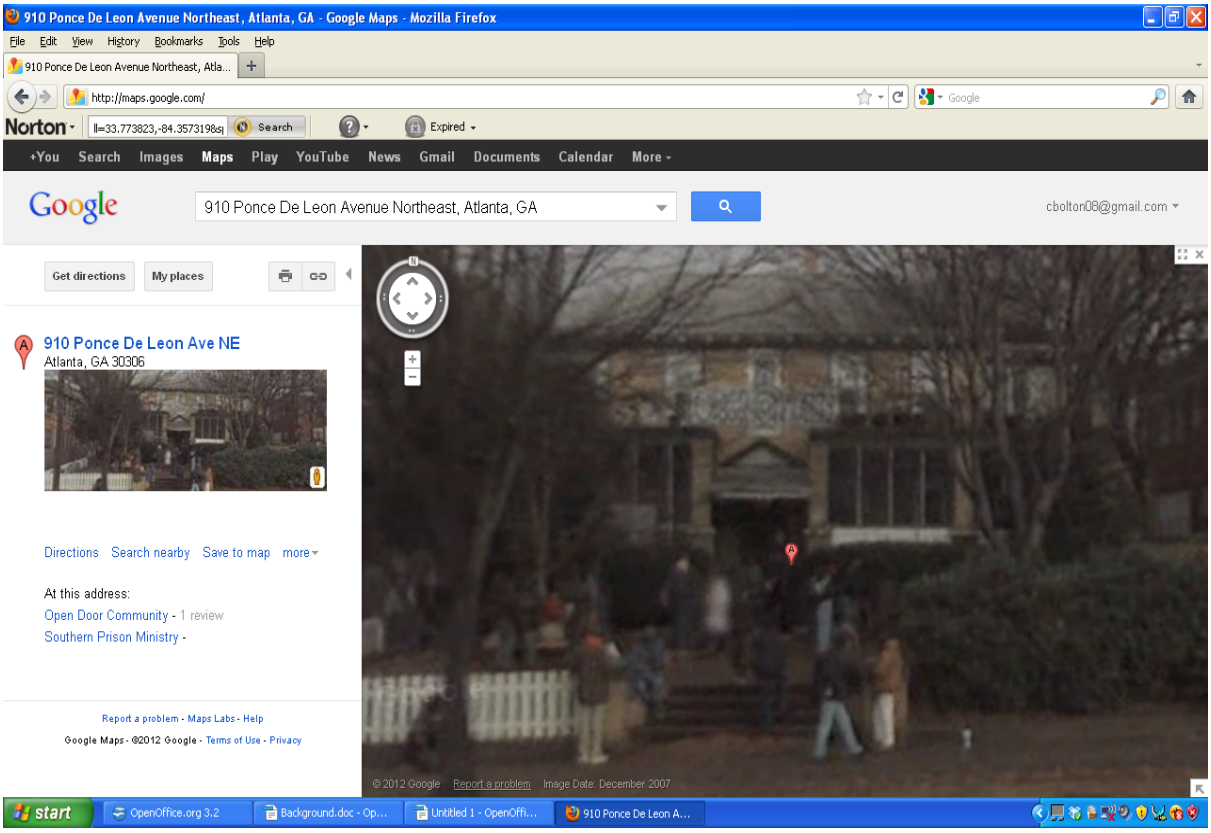

Photo: Open Door is located in the Ponce-Highlands neighborhood, which is heavily gentrified but still has pockets in which homeless people are welcome or tolerated. The community's front yard is busy on soup kitchen mornings, as this Google Street View screen shot demonstrates.

III. A brief history of service and protest at Open Door

The range and quantity of services for homeless guests at Open Door has varied over the past three decades because of changes in the community's resources and leaders' vision. After establishing a regular soup kitchen and welcoming homeless guests as residents at their new house, by the end of 1982 Open Door had also begun serving breakfast to day laborers in downtown Atlanta. This breakfast program began when residents and volunteers became aware of connections between low-wage labor and homelessness, in that substantial numbers of their homeless guests were employed to some degree in exploitative, inconsistent jobs. Soup kitchens in Open Door's dining room continued alongside this downtown breakfast serving. According to Open Door leader Gladys, the community used to be able to offer far more soup kitchen services than it has in more recent years, once serving two meals at least six days of the week. As I detail further later in this chapter, Gladys said that Open Door's work used to draw more volunteers and resident volunteers than it does now. Groups of volunteers from church congregations, for example, would volunteer to coordinate one of the breakfast or lunch soup kitchens, which would ease the workload for residents. Adding to its 'hospitality' programs, Open Door started holding a foot clinic in 1983 because of an enthusiastic volunteer who worked as a nurse, and established a more extensive medical clinic in 1995 that is staffed by local medical students and other volunteers. Both of these medical programs continue to be a consistent part of Open Door's service work.

According to Open Door biographer Peter Gathje, the early 2000s saw an intentional decline in services because of "Murphy's [struggle with cancer] . . . the aging of the core leadership, and a decline in numbers of resident volunteers" (Gathje 2006, 120). At the same

time, it was decided that the community needed more time for internal and communal reflection, study and prayer (Gathje 2006, Interview with Eduard, November 2011). Since I began research at Open Door, they have held a consistent schedule of two soup kitchen lunches a week that include the provision of clothes and medicine for all guests, as well as showers for some male guests. Time is set aside on Wednesday afternoons for Open Door's few regular female guests to take showers, and foot and medical clinics each take place once per week. The community has also added shorter-term services to this roster. In the winter of 2011-12, for example, a resident turned the house's dining room into an overnight shelter. Then, a resident volunteer began serving a small dinner on Thursday night for a group of regular guests. Guests are also often present at the residential community's nightly dinners, but not as part of Open Door's formal services.

Since Open Door's formation, residents and volunteers have extensively engaged in public protests around the issues that face homeless people. Open Door’s first street action, which was a mock funeral for the homeless people who might die outside in the upcoming winter, took place in 1982. This theatrical style of protest carried into the community’s long running campaign for public toilets in downtown Atlanta, which was one of their main focuses in the 1980s (Gathje 2002, Gathje 2006). Through tactics such as bringing freestanding toilets in City Hall meetings to use as seats, Eduard led this advocacy aimed at enabling homeless people to “pee for free with dignity” in the city's public spaces (Gathje 2002, 2006). Open Door also led protests throughout the 1980s and 1990s against ‘vagrant-free’ zones in the downtown area and against local boosterist development projects like the construction of Underground Atlanta, which was initially intended to bring white suburbanites back into the city center (Keating 2001).

Open Door leaders have cited the early 1990s, though, as one of the most fertile periods for the community's anti-homelessness activism. It was in 1990, a year after Gladys and her husband Dick's arrival at Open Door, that an event took place which Gladys referred to as “probably the height of the Open Door” (Interview with Gladys, July 2011). The community led a high profile occupation of Atlanta's Imperial Hotel in that year that resulted in a “front page news story” and negotiations with then mayor Maynard Jackson to build at least one thousand single room occupancy (SRO) units (Kuhn 2011). According to Atlanta historian Cliff Kuhn, in the years following its 1980 closing, the once luxurious Imperial Hotel had become a refuge for a number of homeless squatters (Kuhn 2011). As primary organizers of a coalition called People for Urban Justice, Open Door Community residents staged an occupation of the hotel by breaking chains around the hotel, installing new locks on its doors in the middle of the night and locking themselves inside the building. Over a hundred homeless people joined them in this temporary home, which came to have its own governing council for the several weeks of its existence.

Photo: Imperial Hotel occupation, 1990

The community has continued to do protest work around homelessness since the Imperial Hotel occupation. In the late 1990s, they opposed the threatened closing of Grady Hospital, Atlanta's main refuge for people who lack health insurance. Because Grady is the only place where most of Open Door's homeless guests as well as all community residents can obtain medical and mental health care, preservation of the hospital is closely in line with Open Door's politics (Gathje 2006). In addition, residents and volunteers put much effort into trying to stop former mayor Shirley Franklin's implementation of an anti-panhandling law in downtown

Atlanta, which she successfully passed in 2005 (Tagami 2005). Eduard has said that Open Door has been less engaged in public protest than in previous years since that defeat, suggesting that leaders tired of trying to influence public policy around homelessness in the city. In September 2011, though, an infusion of energy from young resident volunteers led to an Open Door encampment alongside the Occupy Wall Street movement's Atlanta group (Field notes 2011). Aside from this recent development, the most consistent feature of Open Door's street activism related to homelessness is their annual Holy Week street vigil. During this action, which takes place the week before Easter, some Open Door residents and other volunteers go out in teams to spend twenty-four hours on the streets (although as residents age, some of them now spend just twelve hours outside). The purpose of this action is both to show solidarity with homeless guests and to better understand the conditions in which they live (Field notes and interviews 2011). Open Door then holds a street vigil in downtown Atlanta that is designed to foster a sense of community between participants and to raise public awareness about the ongoing brutalities of homelessness in the city. Residents and soup kitchen volunteers help to form the group of people who attend this yearly protest.

In their first few years, Open Door residents and volunteers also began to increase the scope of their prison ministry and protest around the death penalty in Georgia, work that they have continued until the present day. As well as transporting families of inmates to prisons around the state, Open Door leaders, residents and volunteers have also formed personal relationships with a number of Death Row prisoners over the years. They advocate for those on Death Row through coalitional work and articles in *Hospitality*, and hold vigils at the State Capitol in downtown Atlanta on days when inmates are scheduled to be executed. Until the

notorious September 2011 execution of Troy Davis, with whom Open Door leaders, residents, and volunteers had developed a relationship during his time on Death Row, only several dozen people were usually in attendance at the community's anti-death penalty vigils (Field notes, September 2011). Organizing around the death penalty is a robust part of life for Open Door leaders like Murphy and the volunteers and residents who participate in these activities. In this thesis, I primarily focus on Open Door's survival-based service work around homelessness because of its prescient location from which to address intersections of the literature that I discuss in the next chapter. In Chapter Seven, though, I begin to draw more explicit connections between homelessness, the prison system, and the punishing subjectivities that are assigned to thousands of mostly African American male ex-offenders who are vulnerable to homelessness and other realities of racialized material poverty.

IV. The changing political context of Open Door's work

Open Door leaders Eduard, Gladys and Nelia have all commented that the political and cultural milieu out of which the Open Door Community emerged when it opened in 1981 lies in stark contrast to the present post-Reagan era in which neoliberal policy and ideology are not often presented with robust challenges. During a teaching session, Eduard articulated that the intellectual and spiritual origins of the Open Door Community were formatively shaped by the countercultural energy of the 1960s. Indeed, Open Door founders were in company with many other young people forming socially engaged communities who believed that radical change could really come to pass in their lifetimes, and could occur at least in part because of their efforts (Field notes, June 2011).

The trajectories of Open Door leaders' attempts to actualize their visions of social justice parallel the vast societal changes that have taken place since the countercultural shifts out of which Open Door formed. Nelia, who has been close friends with Eduard since the early 1970s and has lived at Open Door since 2004, recalled that as students at Tennessee Technical University, she and her husband became involved in the Wesley Foundation, a United Methodist Church campus ministry that "was the center of all political things" on campus (Interview with Nelia, July 2011). After moving to Decatur, Georgia to become Candler Theological Seminary students in 1971, they became friends with Columbia Theological Seminary professor Eduard and his wife, seminary student Murphy Davis. Nelia noted that the two couples "began to meet together every Friday night and talk about what was going on in the world and what was wrong with the world and what we were gonna do about changing it" (Interview with Nelia, July 2011). She told me that these conversations were imbued with a sense of real possibility, because

> "when I was your age in graduate school, my experience of the world was it was the sixties and the early seventies and . . . we were overcoming segregation, we were ending the war in Vietnam, everything was opening up, and all the problems were gonna be solved." (Interview with Nelia, July 2011)

These experiences shaped a desire among Nelia and her seminarian friends to form intentional communities like Open Door and Patchwork Community, an intentional community that she and her husband led before coming to Open Door. Similarly, when Eduard and Murphy were pastors at Clifton Presbyterian Church and leaders in the local night shelter movement prior to Open Door's establishment, they saw their actions as only the first step of a movement towards permanent housing for homeless people.

Nelia noted that because of their leadership in opening night shelters, when they started the Open Door Community Eduard and Murphy had substantial support from faith-based communities who shared the community's dedication to and belief in the possibility that homelessness could be eradicated. Nelia recalled in her interview that

> [O]ne of the things that's going on in that time is that homelessness is the hot issue. And everybody . . . believed hunger, in the eighties, could be taken care of. Everyone believed that, especially in the faith tradition, that if only church people realized that 80 percent of the people who were homeless at that time were baptized Christians, that once churches found that out, that homelessness would be ended. (Interview with Nelia, July 2011)

Nelia, Gladys and Eduard have all indicated that the Open Door Community was seen as a guiding light in this local faith-based movement to end homelessness. This community support was essential to Open Door's activities; as this chapter has noted, they were once able to serve many more meals because local churches would send members from their congregations to volunteer at and even lead soup kitchens. At the same time, leaders generally had a more active public presence as protesters and advocates than they do today. Gladys, who did not move to the Open Door Community until 1989, commented that even by that post-Reagan time,

> "[W]e thought this whole thing, I think the intent [of public actions and protests] was that you know, homelessness is gonna go away in 10 years. So everything was set up with that in mind." (Interview with Gladys, July 2011)

For example, Gladys recalls the occupation of the Imperial Hotel as a time when extensive support from progressive organizations coalesced around housing issues in the city. Churches from all over Atlanta donated food to the occupation, and a diverse group of local church leaders and activists showed their support. Joe Beasley and Nibs Stroupe, activists with ties to Jesse

Jackson's PUSH Rainbow Coalition, were closely involved, as was long time Atlanta housing activist Reverend Houston Wheeler. Gladys also remembered Southern Christian Leadership Committee's Reverend Albert Love leading the Eucharist in the hotel's parking lot as a particularly moving moment of the occupation (Field notes 2011).

While some of these local advocates who participated in the occupation of the Imperial Hotel remain close allies of the community today, Open Door leaders believe that this 1991 protest was the peak of Atlanta activism specifically targeting the conditions of homelessness. According to Nelia, while at one point twenty churches had night shelters, after some time many "congregations got tired of it" (Interview with Nelia, July 2011). Nelia indicated that, partly because homelessness no longer seemed likely to end in the near future, many church communities "began to be anxious about homeless people hanging around their congregation and messing up the bathroom. So now we're down, there are three congregations that provide any kind of night shelter" (Interview with Nelia, July 2011). While Open Door leaders intended the shelter movement to be a temporary transition into more substantive housing justice, Nelia's account suggests that local congregations became too fatigued to keep shelters open, let alone pursue what had begun to seem such a radical agenda. Leaders link this local withdrawal of faith-based groups from the housing movement to what they consider to be a steep decline in public concern for homelessness as an issue that has any potential to be resolved. Indeed, leaders like Eduard believe that the dramatic societal changes envisioned by young radicals came from the right rather than the left in the United States, beginning with Reagan's election and the dramatic neoliberal policy shifts that started to gain hegemonic power in the 1980s.

This local move away from homelessness as an issue of political importance that must be resolved, rather than an everyday feature of the urban landscape, reflects the challenges of neoliberalism and the "nonprofit industrial complex" that I outline in Chapter Three (Incite! 2007). Indeed, homelessness has become increasingly viewed as an inevitable issue that can be ameliorated, but not ended, with services provided by nonprofit organizations. According to neoliberal ideology, it is not the structures of contemporary forms of capitalism but the personal failings of individual homeless people that keep hundreds of thousands of them on the streets. This thesis argues that such survival-based service work can catalyze robust analyses that *do* confront the systemic problems that perpetuate homelessness, though, rather than justify the results of neoliberal practices.

Chapter Three: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

This section first reviews the key bodies of literature that have informed this thesis project. Then, the conceptual framework section of this chapter outlines in detail the structure and arguments of the thesis, and reviews further literature whose claims have most directly shaped this research.

I. Literature review

a. Introduction

During the Open Door Community's three decades of existence, residents and volunteers have seen the numbers of homeless people living on the streets, in shelters, and doubled or tripled up in households in Atlanta balloon from when they opened in 1981. At the same time, public and institutional support for the issue of homelessness has not widened to accommodate these numbers. All of this has taken place within a political climate that has seen 'safety nets' get ever smaller. A number of geographers and scholars from other disciplines have used the term neoliberalism to describe this contemporary context that has favored such scaled-back welfare programs replaced with “hollowed-out” states, fuelled by a market-driven, individualistic ideology. Much scholarship in recent years has chronicled the rise, perpetuation and, some argue, decline of this neoliberal state (Brenner et al. 2008). As Thorson and Lie (2006) explain, neoliberalism adopts ideas from classic liberal thought to form a set of principles that aim to make markets as 'free' as possible by minimizing state intervention, which includes the

privatization of social welfare programs that have been thought of as central responsibilities of Keynesian states. A key paradox lies in the fact that while proponents of neoliberalism want to minimize the role of the state, it actually takes active participation on the part of governments to shift policy making in the direction of neoliberal ideals. Peck and Tickell (2002) have suggested that neoliberal policy shifts have occurred in two distinct phases that they call roll-back and roll-out neoliberalism; while the former dismantles elements of Keynesian states, the latter creates new paradigms that reflect neoliberal ideology.

Moreover, Marcuse and Van Kempen (2000) as well as Brenner and Theodore (2002) suggest that cities have become “incubators” for testing out neoliberal policy approaches. In *The Neoliberal City: Governance, Ideology and Development in American Urbanism*, Jason Hackworth (2007) considers neoliberalism a process as much as an idea, and one that is very much uneven across space. His study of “actually existing” neoliberal urbanism in U.S. cities draws out the effects of neoliberal ideology and policy in particular places. Concluding that neoliberal governance and accompanying “quasi-autonomous” real estate markets have the most detrimental effects for the poorest residents of cities, he urges resistance against the now sedimented idea first articulated by former English prime minister Margaret Thatcher that “there is no alternative” to neoliberal policy implementation (Hackworth 2007, 200). Similarly, Leitner, Peck and Sheppard's (2007) *Contesting Neoliberalism: Urban Frontiers* suggests that grounded empirical analysis of resistance to neoliberalism is essential for “imagining alternative futures,” as Hayek and Friedman imagined what was once a seemingly implausible alternative to Keynesian states. This thesis project follows Leitner et al.'s call for studies of resistance to neoliberalism, but argues that contestation cannot easily be separated from reinforcement.

Instead, I suggest that service work, which has frequently been considered compatible with neoliberalism, can help create a site for robust contestation of neoliberal practices and ideologies.

Contemporary realities of homelessness in North American cities are inexorably linked to the declines in domestic social spending that accelerated most damagingly during Ronald Reagan's presidency, and that more recent scholarship in geography has characterized as marked turns towards neoliberalism (Wolch and Dear 1987, Wolch and Dear 1993). Indeed, Reagan and his many ideological counterparts in federal, state and local governments whittled down 'safety nets' of food, mental health, substance abuse treatment and, most significantly, housing programs. Wolch and Dear argue that these shifts along with demographic changes and the long-lasting economic woes of the 1970s recession have made homelessness a problem that seems 'here to stay'. Over the past few decades, then, the sight of street homeless people has shifted from shocking to routine. Moreover, public discourses around homelessness have increasingly placed blame on individual homeless people for their situations. Public policy moves in U.S. cities reflect these changes; local ordinances that ban panhandling and sleeping in city parks seek to codify the presence of homeless people as a 'nuisance' and to remove them from sight rather than try to remedy widespread homelessness through comprehensive state-funded programs. A number of geographers have discussed the rise of these hostile attitudes practices towards homeless people in the context of the “revanchist” or neoliberal city (Smith 1996, Mitchell 1997, Smith 1998, Macleod 2002, Atkinson 2003, Blomley 2003, Mitchell 2003, Feldman 2006). Smith characterizes the revanchist city as one in which people of economic privilege have become intent on 'taking back' the inner city from people like the homeless, whom they blame as destroyers of urban quality of life. What was once a concern for the welfare of homeless people, Smith argues, has turned into a “vicious” movement to “evict” them from public spaces with

little concern for actually resolving the complex of problems that perpetuate homelessness (Smith 1996, 212, 223). Mitchell similarly focuses on institutionally sanctioned removals of homeless people from public spaces, but paints these actions as a fallout of city governments' adherence to neoliberal ideas that cities can only thrive economically if they 'clean up' their downtown areas to draw in private investment.

In this political context that both blames the poorest people, including homeless people, for their problems yet relies on non-government sources to take care of their ever-present needs, it is critical to examine the organizations that have assumed these responsibilities. Many studies of the nonprofit sphere have lamented that organizations that provide social services often find themselves not only unable to meet recipients' material needs, but also too overburdened by these needs to have space for any kind of effective political praxis (Poppendieck 1999, Incite! Women of Color Against Violence 2007, Mayer 2007, Eliasoph 2011). A body of research initiated by Jennifer Wolch's *The Shadow State: Government and Voluntary Sector in Transition* (1990) chronicles the consequences of governments contracting social services to the 'voluntary sector'. Wolch's main concern is that government involvement in voluntary organizations could threaten their potential to enact progressive social change. While the Open Door Community has not ever received government funding, the literature on the shadow state has much relevance to this project because of its seminal exploration of the increasing involvement of nonprofit organizations in social welfare, and the constraints that the burden of taking on a government-like caretaking role can have on their ability to effect social change.

Similarly, a key concern about the rise of nonprofit organizations is their frequent inability to secure funding that enables them to do more explicit advocacy. Sociologist Janet

Poppendieck's *Sweet Charity? Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement* (1999) outlines these issues in the context of emergency food programs, arguing that the people who are most likely to be political advocates for more permanent solutions to hunger and food insecurity are working at emergency food pantries and soup kitchens, too overwhelmed by people's need for their programs and tied down to ostensibly apolitical funding sources to do substantial amounts of advocacy. Much of this literature on nonprofits argues that nonprofit programs are pressured to leave out politics in favor of an individualistic ideology of 'personal empowerment' that appeals to grant givers in cutthroat funding competitions (Chouinard and Crooks 2008, Incite! 2007, Kivel 2007, Eliasoph 2011). At the same time, nonprofit organizations cannot actually meet the material needs of all of their clients, a situation that reinforces an ideology that treats dire poverty as inevitable or natural rather than state-crafted. In general, this scholarship grapples with the constraining structures of many nonprofit organizations, often finding that there simply seems to be no *room* – because, again, of funding restrictions as well as overwhelming demand - for political engagement that might more effectively combat the oppressive structures of poverty that make so much service work necessary. I absorb these critical interventions on the 'third sector' of nonprofit service organizations, but argue that service work has rich potential to be itself a dynamic part of a political praxis, rather than a hopeless practice that only reinforces the strictures of a post-welfare state.

The particular role of faith-based service organizations in this 'shadow state' and nonprofit milieu has been explored by several geographers as well as scholars from other disciplines. The politics and practices of faith-based organizations are subject to much scrutiny in this body of literature from scholars who question a potentially problematic replacement of state with church in the realm of service work. In *Sweet Charity?*, for example, Janet

Poppendieck critiques food pantry volunteers who quote Bible passages in ways that tend to put forth the emergency food paradigm as a viable solution to widespread food insecurity, masking what Poppendieck considers emergency food's unacceptable indignity and ineffectiveness. Moreover, geographers like Jason Hackworth are well aware that faith-based social service organizations are not by any means a homogeneous group. His *Faith Based: Religious Neoliberalism and the Politics of Welfare* in the United States (2012) is a scathing indictment of Christian service organizations, whose overwhelming conservatism he considers broadly complicit with neoliberal ideologies as champions of dismantled welfare states. He recognizes the established presence of Christian groups that more closely resemble the Open Door Community – those that draw inspiration from social gospel teachings, liberation theology, the concept of agape and Catholic social justice teachings to put forth generally left-leaning political ideologies – but thinks that their numbers and influence are too minor to pose any significant challenge to the many faith-based service organizations that he considers ideological helpmates of neoliberalism. Diverging substantially from Hackworth in their study of English Christian homeless service organizations, geographers Paul Cloke, Jon May and Sarah Johnsen consider that benefits could emerge from the “theo-ethical” care of faith-based organizations' service work, particularly as they form partnerships with historically secular institutions (Cloke et al. 2010). It should be noted that the English faith-based groups that Cloke et al. focused on may have little in common politically with the conservative Christian organizations in the U.S. that Hackworth studied. Nonetheless, Cloke et al.’s suggestion that an ethics of care could be politically important has informed the questions and conclusions of this thesis.

b. The ‘neoliberal city’

1. The rise of neoliberal policymaking

A wealth of literature in geography as well as related social science fields has explored the privatization of what were once considered public functions, a process of neoliberalism that many critical geographers argue has helped to foster the contemporary realities of poverty, inequality, and homelessness that the Open Door Community encounters daily through their service and justice praxis. Theories of neoliberal urbanism understand urban processes as governed by an economic ideology and set of practices that valorize unfettered markets and demonize welfare states (and the role of states more generally). Before discussing how neoliberal urbanism functions, though, it is necessary to further explain neoliberalism as a school of thought. Neoliberalism has roots in liberalism, an intellectual tradition that emphasizes personal autonomy and individual rights. However, neoliberalism is “customarily thought of as the return and spread of one specific aspect of the liberal tradition, namely *economic liberalism*” (Thorson and Lie 2, emphasis theirs). According to a common narrative, neoliberalism did not 'go mainstream' until the 1970s and 1980s, starting when a period of recession in the early 1970s allowed it to take root. Proponents of neoliberalism like Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek had long been promoting their ideas, and politicians like Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher are known for explicitly politicizing neoliberal ideology in the 1980s (Hackworth 2007). It is also important to note that proponents of neoliberal policies would most likely not refer to themselves as 'neoliberals'; instead, the terms neoliberal and neoliberalism are almost exclusively used by critics of these policies. One central critique of neoliberalism is that it allows a wealthy few to benefit from increased privatization, but abandons poor people by diminishing the role of

welfare states. Inequalities between the 'winners' and 'losers' of capitalism are thus said to increase greatly.

Neoliberal policies aim to promote and expand the role of markets while simultaneously dismantling welfare states. An example of the former might be contracting services that were previously provided by the state to private companies, whereas a famous example of the latter is Bill Clinton's decision to replace welfare with workfare while he was president in the 1990s. The state is seen as a primary obstacle to free markets, and as such a goal of neoliberalism is to privatize state functions. Neoliberals might consider this to be a reduction of the role of the state, but in fact state complicity with neoliberalism is essential in order for neoliberal policies to actually take shape (Peck and Tickell 2002, 381). Neoliberal economic policies can be categorized as either “roll-back” or “roll-out” (Peck and Tickell 2002, 380, Brenner and Theodore 2002, 373-4). “Roll-back” policies, which were primarily instituted in the 1980s, involve *removing obstacles* to neoliberalism's goals by deregulating markets and dismantling welfare states (Peck and Tickell 2002, 384, Brenner and Theodore 2002, 373). In contrast, “roll-out” policies, which can be seen in more recent efforts, involve *actively creating* state institutions, “modes of governance, and regulatory relations” that support neoliberal hegemony (quote from Peck and Tickell 2002, 384, see also Brenner and Theodore 2002, 374). Thus, neoliberalism has been considered a project with two important temporal phases (Peck and Tickell 2002, 384, Brenner and Theodore 2002, 374).

Cities play an important role in advancing neoliberal hegemony because '[t]hroughout the advanced capitalist world . . . cities have become strategically crucial geographical arenas in which a variety of neoliberal initiatives . . . have been articulated” (Brenner and Theodore 2002,

349). Marcuse and Van Kempen have called cities a “soft spot” for neoliberal policy experiments (Marcuse and Van Kempen 2000). Cities are not just local arenas in which broader projects of neoliberalization are visible; instead, they play a central role in incubating projects supported by local governments that are then used to reinforce neoliberal hegemony in other places (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 375). Indeed, city governments have played an indispensable role in these shifts. For example, while Hackworth argues that real estate investment “has become the primary economic vehicle of neoliberalism at the local scale,” its “intertwined” relationship with local states has facilitated the sector's growth (Hackworth 2007, 78). This prominence of “quasi-autonomous” development has resulted in “the acceleration of uneven development between and within cities” and is therefore “the spatial corollary to wider social polarization” in urban places (Hackworth 2007, 78). Furthermore, because of interurban competition and a perceived lack of economic alternatives, cities are willing to allow “neoliberal urban policy experiments” that encourage market-based economic growth but also widen labor disparities, reduce welfare provisions and exacerbate inequalities in other ways (quote from Brenner and Theodore 2002, 368, see also Peck and Tickell 2002, 393). A key manifestation of neoliberalism in urban places is “place-marketing,” or advertising a city as a prime place for private investment. This attention to 'branding' urban areas in ways aimed to be attractive to capital involves “new strategies of social control, policing and surveillance” (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 368). The importance of urban areas for these projects has allowed scholars who are concerned that neoliberalism is a term that, like globalization, is too often used without sufficient attention to its meaning or to its empirical instances to “ground” theory in manifestations of “actually existing neoliberalism” (Hackworth 2007, 3, Brenner and Theodore 2002). Neoliberalism in urban places is not uniform

or easily predictable, then, but is rather “a highly contingent process that manifests itself, and is experienced differently, across space” (Hackworth 2007, 11).

This adoption of neoliberal policy and programs because of widespread fear of capital flight, however, has not been “organically absorbed” by city policymakers and other leaders (Hackworth 2007, 11). Hackworth, for one, questions the paradox that “such a diverse array of municipalities have ‘chosen’ such a common path” of urban governance practices (Hackworth 2007, 16). More than a collective fear of capital flight, he suggests that this pattern has occurred because “the choices available to cities are highly constrained even for the most powerful municipalities” due to policing by more global, “external institutions” like bond rating agencies (Hackworth 2007, 20). Partly because of federal devolution, municipalities increasingly depend on bond rating agencies “for the provision of basic infrastructure, services, and economic development” (Hackworth 2007, 17, 20). Local actors like public housing authorities ostensibly have more agency in this ‘glocalized’ arrangement, but in actuality their ability to facilitate social reproduction is becoming increasingly uneven. While it may often be assumed that local policy-makers have chosen what they collectively believe is the best path for their municipalities, this analysis shows that powerful “external institutions” have far more influence than is immediately obvious (Hackworth 2007, 20).

3. Neoliberal subjectivities

Neoliberalism, as many scholars have argued, should be understood within a framework according to which “contemporary forms of rule are inevitably composite, plural and multi-form” (Larner 2000, 20). As well as examining neoliberalism as a policy framework and top-down ideology, a number of geographers have argued that it is also critical to explore, as Abdul

Kanna notes, “[t]he ways neoliberal ideologies resonate with and are made persuasive within local formations of identity, conceptions of selfhood, and idioms of citizenship” (Kanna 2010, 102, Larner 2000, Bondi 2005, Guthman 2006). Neoliberal ideologies, then, play a critical role in political subject formation. Employing Foucault’s concept of governmentality and influenced by Nikolas Rose’s readings of it, Wendy Larner suggests that

> “The conception of a national community of citizens, made up of male breadwinners and female domestic workers, has been usurped by a new understanding in which not only are firms to be entrepreneurial, enterprising and innovative, but so too are political subjects. Neo-liberal strategies of rule, found in diverse realms including workplaces, educational institutions and health and welfare agencies, encourage people to see themselves as individualized and active subjects responsible for enhancing their own well being” (Larner 2000, 13).

Liz Bondi similarly notes that “As a form of governmentality, neoliberalism works by installing a concept of the human subject as an autonomous, individualized, self-directing, decision-making agent at the heart of policymaking” (Bondi 2005, 499). According to these conceptualizations, neoliberal dominance is crucial to making identities as well as policy, and the neoliberal subject’s severe autonomy makes him or her deeply compatible with the deregulatory aims of neoliberal policymaking agendas.

Actual neoliberal subject-making unfolds in often conflicting, incomplete ways. Aihwa Ong, for example, has extrapolated the idea of 'flexible citizens', so named because of “their shifting between different scales and cultural worlds in constructing their identities” (Ong 1999, Kanna 2010, 101). In his study of neoliberal subject-making in Dubai, Ahmed Kanna concludes that for what he calls Dubai's flexible citizens, “being a good neoliberal and national subject means seeing oneself as a sort of creative artist of identity, extracting useful and (allegedly) progressive

aspects of ascriptive identity and reframing them through neoliberal values of entrepreneurialism, individualism, and cultural flexibility" (Kanna 2010, 112). For Katharyne Mitchell, the European Commission's encouragement of flexibility among immigrants is not just about becoming adaptable to changing conditions, but becoming physically mobile as part of an "increasingly cross-border intra-EU labor market" (Mitchell 2006, 396). As well as demonstrating the incompleteness of neoliberal subject-making, this work on flexible, mobile neoliberal subjects also highlights the geographical unevenness of those processes, as it shows "how local structures of meaning and histories inflect neoliberalism" in different places (Kanna 2010, 102).

Some geographers point to the resistive potential in the study of neoliberal subject formation because of this approach's insistence on analyzing neoliberalism as a complex set of practices. As Larner notes, "Only by theorizing neo-liberalism as a multi-vocal and contradictory phenomenon can we make visible the contestations and struggles that we are currently engaged in" (Larner 2000, 21). Bondi (2006) demonstrates how such resistance could be located, as she theorizes the political possibilities of neoliberal subject-making's inconsistencies with attention to the geographies of counseling. While counseling has been critiqued a key means by which to deploy self-governing subjects, Bondi notes that counselors whom she interviewed argued for the therapeutic centrality of "collective subjectivities and relational concepts of self" as well as putting forth individualistic discourses of empowerment (Bondi 2005, 506). Neoliberal subjectivities are not monolithic, then, but can exist alongside other conceptions of self and interpersonal relations. Bondi's claim that "the language of empowerment on which voluntary sector counsellors draw is not unambiguously aligned with the highly autonomous agent of liberal and neoliberal theory" contributes to an understanding of neoliberal subject formation as

contingent, and in doing so creates space for “resistance,” as she argues (Bondi 2005, 507, 506). If neoliberal subjectivities are not all-encompassing, then a close examination of identity-making within neoliberal political projects can elucidate crucial points of contestation.

Where neoliberal subjectivities frame people as self-motivated, autonomous, and entrepreneurial, there exists varying degrees of success that an individual might obtain as such a subject. As Larner notes, “Neo-liberal strategies of rule . . . encourage people to see themselves as individualized and active subjects responsible for enhancing their own well being” (Larner 2000, 13). According to this conceptualization, homeless people seem to embody the failed neoliberal subject. Indeed, Don Mitchell (1997) argues that attempts to prevent homeless people from engaging in survival activities in public spaces hinges on the idea that they are harmful to the accumulation of capital. Then, according to Neil Smith, homeless people are characterized as having taken over city spaces from more well-behaved neoliberal subjects. This latter conceptualization frames homeless people not only as useless to capital, but as socially unwanted by people whose greater economic success makes them friendlier to neoliberal development. The revanchist actions described by Mitchell and Smith grant ‘successful’ subjects unprecedented rights to control public spaces. At the same time, they diminish homeless people’s entitlement to survive by engaging in activities like panhandling, sleeping and using the bathroom. This adds to the creation of homeless subjects who, because of their failure to successfully participate in neoliberal projects, have increasingly fewer entitlements simply to exist. This subjectivity fits well with neoliberal policy shifts that have decreased welfare states and thereby made benefits for the most marginalized people a precarious source of survival rather than the more reliable entitlement it once was.

Other conceptualizations are less punitive than the homeless subject portrayed by Mitchell and Smith. Jocoy and Del Casino (2008), for example, note that more contemporary homelessness policy under the Bush administration crafted two types of homeless subjects – the chronically and transitionally homeless. While transitionally homeless people are accorded qualities of autonomy and individual responsibility, according to Jocoy and Del Casino "[t]he chronic are neither autonomous, responsible citizens, nor effective, productive neoliberal subjects; they are the hobo subject that has been part of the geographical imagination of homeless scholars for the better part of the last century" (Jocoy and Del Casino, 194). This group of homeless people is actually more likely to receive federal aid, at least in part because "[t]he chronically homeless subject is viewed, in the end, as hopeless. Therefore, the best policy is to target them and clear them from the streets" (Jocoy and Del Casino, 194). In this conception, homeless people are maligned somewhat less, but still as subjects who cannot be useful to capitalism.

However, while homeless people are maligned in various ways because they have made the 'wrong' choices as autonomous agents, neoliberal subjectivities arguably also provide room for their redemption. This transformation could occur when they make agentic choices to turn themselves around and become 'useful' to the economy, such as through increased participation in formal labor markets. This possibility for redemption is not often discussed in this literature, but it becomes visible through Jason Hackworth's study of rescue missions for homeless people in urban areas. Here, Hackworth makes a pivotal connection between evangelical Christian narratives of personal responsibility and neoliberal subjectivities. He suggests that these missions, many of whom subscribe at least in part to the idea that homeless people are responsible for their situations and must therefore pull themselves out of destitution, can serve as

vehicles of the neoliberal individualization of poverty and homelessness (Hackworth 2010, 750). Although their approach is not explicitly motivated by neoliberal programmatic aims and has existed prior to the seismic policy shifts of the past several decades, such organizations end up being profoundly compatible with the discursive formation of successful and failed neoliberal subjects.

3. Structures of homelessness in the 'neoliberal city'

Some geographers have also discussed connections between this widespread defunding of domestic social welfare spending and the exponential growth of homelessness beginning in the 1970s and 1980s. One area of scholarship initiated by Jennifer Wolch and Michael Dear seeks to outline the particular causes of now widespread homelessness. Wolch and Dear aim to explain the rise of homelessness in many large American cities since that time period as the result of increased unemployment, underemployment, poverty and income inequality of "post-Fordist economic restructuring" after the recession of the 1970s, growing government withdrawal from domestic social spending, demographic changes, and decreases in affordable housing stock as four of several primary catalysts for homelessness (Wolch and Dear 1987, Wolch and Dear 1993). The kind of defunding that created large numbers of homeless people entailed not just cuts to welfare benefits, but the deinstitutionalization of mental hospitals because of legislation that "cleared the way for moving psychiatric patients out of state and local mental hospitals and (according to the plan) into community-based service settings" (Wolch and Dear 1993, 9). Intended by many advocates as a beneficial and even liberatory move for patients of mental institutions, community-based services were often in actuality "woefully" underfunded (Wolch and Dear 1993, 10). Finding themselves in poverty and unable to access affordable housing,

many former patients “[became] among the first to join the ranks of the ‘new homeless’” (Wolch and Dear 1993, 10).

While this scholarship was published several years before the work of the geographers I cite above and thus does not use the term *neoliberalism*, Wolch and Dear critique many of the same “roll-back” policies towards social spending and economic restructuring and consider these policy changes responsible for initiating mass homelessness from the 1970s and 1980s to the present day. While they cite personal circumstances such as mental illness and substance abuse as contributors to rising homelessness, Wolch and Dear reserve the most criticism not for individuals’ personal choices that may have led to homelessness, but for punitive policy shifts that effectively abandoned already disenfranchised people. As they articulate in this critical text for geographies of homelessness, those policy and other demographic changes have led to a contemporary situation in which homelessness is a major social problem that “is likely to be with us for the foreseeable future” (Wolch and Dear 1993, xv).

More recent scholarship in geography has focused on homelessness in the context of policies that rework the meaning of public space in urban areas (Smith 1996, Mitchell 1997, Smith 1998, Macleod 2002, Atkinson 2003, Blomley 2003, Mitchell 2003, Feldman 2006). Indeed, a number of policies have been enacted in U.S. cities, including Atlanta, that aim to remove homeless people from public urban spaces. Neil Smith's *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (1996) problematizes what he sees as

> a reaction against the supposed 'theft' of the city, a desperate defense of a challenged phalanx of privileges, cloaked in the populist language of civic morality, family values and neighborhood security. [. . .] [The revanchist city] portends a vicious reaction against minorities, the working class, homeless people, the unemployed, women, gays and lesbians, [and] immigrants. [. . .] The revanchist city of the 1990s . . . [is] about the rediscovery of enemies within. (Smith 1996, 211-212)

According to Smith, the ideologies of the revanchist city are enacted through punitive policies, many of which center around spatial practices like gentrification, and are ideologically supported as “the liberal concern for homeless people” has transformed into fears of neighborhood takeover by homeless people and the social services agencies from whom they might receive assistance (Smith 1996, 213). Smith characterizes homeless 'sweeps' as *evictions* from public space, which effectively “blame homeless people for their lack of homes” and evokes the use of public space as private property (Smith 1996, 223). Another common set of policies has emerged in a number of U.S. cities that outlaw panhandling, 'squeegee'-ing drivers’ windows, and serving food in public spaces without official permission; arrests resulting from these policies can also effectively serve to remove homeless people from public urban spaces. Don Mitchell frames this tendency towards legally enforced displacement of homeless people as attempts to privatize the public sphere according to the perceived needs of global capital (Mitchell 1997, 2003). Banning people from partaking in necessary actions like urinating, sleeping and loitering in public places (when these are often the only place where homeless people may engage in them) has the effect of “annihilating the spaces in which the homeless *must* live [. . . and therefore] annihilat[ing] homeless people themselves” (Mitchell 1997, 305). Furthermore, Mitchell claims that ideologies about the ruthlessness of globalization have allowed city governments to claim that they have no choice but to “cleanse the streets” of people whose presence might make a place unattractive to capital investment (Mitchell 1997, 305). Because homeless people are seen as anathema to attracting capital, the kind of space in which they may exist becomes 'annihilated' by means of laws that criminalize their actions.

The urban landscapes described in this literature, then, can be characterized by a stance towards homelessness that at once blames homeless people for their situations and seeks to restrict them from survival activities.

4. Conclusions

This body of scholarship on neoliberalism and homelessness in the ‘neoliberal city’ makes salient contributions towards an understanding of the ways that policy and governmentality are connected to present realities of poverty, homelessness and “abandonment” of the most marginalized people in U.S. cities (Gilmore 2007). Atlanta, the geographical focus of this project, provides a fitting context in which to examine these issues. As a locus of racialized poverty and child poverty, income inequality, and homelessness with less generous social services than more progressive parts of the United States, poor people in Atlanta harshly experience the effects of neoliberal policymaking. Moreover, Atlanta's policies towards homelessness are characteristic of Smith's revanchist city in certain key ways. Geographical scholarship on neoliberalism therefore establishes a critical framework for this project. What is largely missing from the literature I have reviewed in this section, however, is an engagement with spaces of resistance towards neoliberal policies and the effects that they have on real people and places. For example, while he suggests that challenging the ideologies of neoliberalism is a crucial step for would-be activists, his exposition of “actually existing neoliberalism” in cities does not detail the many grassroots efforts that attempt to do just that. Furthermore, although Mitchell calls for a future 'right to the city' movement, he does not examine in depth the responses of homeless people, advocates for homeless people, or organizations who provide social welfare services to homeless people to the conditions that arise from punitive policies.

However, some geographers have more thoroughly addressed the need to empirically examine ‘contestations’ of neoliberalism in a diversity of places (Leitner et al. 2007). In the *conceptual framework* section of this chapter, I engage geographical scholarship on neoliberalism that addresses issues of response and resistance, and I use that literature to further theoretically situate my research with the Open Door Community in Atlanta. This project therefore builds upon the insights of this political economy literature by examining how a leftist Christian community that advocates for and provides direct services by and for homeless people approaches these conditions of homelessness in a sufficiently 'mean' neoliberal city like Atlanta (National Coalition for the Homeless 2009).

c. The nonprofit industrial complex

1. The shadow state, the complex and their consequences

Supported by a pervasive ideology that favors a 'leaner' state, 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organizations increasingly fill the gaps left by the widespread withdrawal of federal, state and local governments in the United States from welfare and social service provision. This now robust nonprofit 'sector', as Jennifer Wolch argued in *The Shadow State* (1990), is “fundamentally” linked to Reagan’s extreme cuts to welfare in the 1980s as well as decreases in social spending in the 1970s. In a contemporary context, the “nonprofit industrial complex” plays a key role in neoliberal states that are reluctant to fund social welfare programs (Incite! 2007). Advocates and scholars who want to see systemic change rather than a 'Band-Aid' solution to social and economic inequalities have extensively explored the implications of these networks of 501 (c)(3) organizations. While the nonprofit landscape can seem like a “loose and baggy monster” whose parameters are difficult to define, several key concerns coalesce around

the potential for nonprofit organizations to effect substantial systemic change (Kendall and Knapp 1995). While certainly not all nonprofit service organizations are interested in politically radical advocacy, those that do attempt to actually change those structures so that people might have more equal opportunities to fulfill their basic material needs find themselves time- and resource-poor. Secondly, this literature argues that the “nonprofit industrial complex” is not sufficient even to adequately meet people's basic needs through service, let alone put forth a meaningful opposition to a discourse that casts endemic poverty as inevitable and no longer states’ responsibility.

Not all nonprofit organizations receive some form of government funding, but the implications of those that do operate under at least some state funding has been cause for interrogation in a body of literature that explores this “shadow state” (Wolch 1990). Although the Open Door Community does not receive any government funding and is ideologically opposed to doing so, this literature is relevant to this project because it helps to outline the landscape of what Ruth Gilmore calls social welfare “abandonment” in the United States (Gilmore 2007). The shadow state was first described as “a para-state apparatus comprised of multiple voluntary sector organizations, administered outside of traditional democratic politics and charged with major collective service responsibilities previously shouldered by the public sector, yet remaining within the purview of state control” (Wolch 1990, xvi). Wolch argues that voluntary groups have played leading roles in “the historical struggle to expand human rights and freedoms,” and her primary concern with state “penetration” into the voluntary sector is that it will “shackle” these groups’ “potential to create progressive social change”

While scholarship on the 'shadow state' contains critical insights into this fundamental transformation of human services provision in the United States and states that have seen less

extreme welfare “abandonment” like Canada and Britain, these geographers tend to under-emphasize the degree to which private foundations have become part of a funding matrix for nonprofit organizations that perform what were once state functions of social welfare provision. Contributors to this literature like the activist scholar collective Incite! Women of Color Against Violence more clearly detail problematic relations between foundation grants and grassroots groups that strive to put forth radical social agendas. *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Nonprofit Industrial Complex* (2007) considers how intersections of unequal race, class and gender relations affect the allocation of funding and can serve to alternately sustain, restrict or prevent grassroots groups from starting projects that they consider radical.

At the same time as state “abandonment” of some of the most pressing survival issues like food and housing has become normalized, people who would likely participate in political advocacy for better “distributional politics” have arguably become those who are too busy running emergency food programs to be politically effective or even active; Poppendieck, for her part, claims that it is therefore “not an accident that poverty grows deeper as our charitable responses to it multiply” (Gilmore 2007, Poppendieck 1999, 6). Indeed, many scholars and activists have noted that nonprofit organizations frequently find themselves so overwhelmed with meeting demand – which they usually cannot accomplish – and securing funding that they do not have time to also be political advocates (Poppendieck 1999, Chouinard and Crooks 2008, Incite! 2007). However, many organizations also lack the resources to fund advocacy programs, which reflects the priorities of both state sources and private foundations from whom nonprofit organizations seek grant money. Wolch initially argued in *The Shadow State* that competition for state funding and restrictions placed on it would limit nonprofit organizations' autonomy and marginalize their progressive or “anti-establishment” aims (Wolch 1990, 15, 206). Indeed, the

challenge of obtaining funding for explicit political advocacy has become notorious (Poppendieck 1999, Chouinard and Crooks 2008, Incite! 2007, Gilmore 2007, Eliasoph 2011). This is in part related to the requirement that nonprofit organizations cannot vouch for specific candidates, and other stringent rules of 501 (c)(3) incorporation that makes a given organization "bound by public rules and non-profit charters to stick to its mission or get out of business and suffer legal consequences if it strays along the way" (Gilmore 2007, 46). However, this difficulty also comes from a reluctance on the part of the state and private foundations to fund advocacy work that challenges the political structures that cause nonprofit organizations' services and resources to be necessary for so many people. Moreover, the funding that nonprofits do receive for either service or advocacy work is contingent upon whether or not funders approve of organizations' political stances; Paul Kivel notes that "While there is always a risk of not securing adequate funding, there is a greater risk that if we did something to really rock the boat and address the roots of the problems we would lose whatever funding we've already managed to secure" (Kivel 2007, 130). This conservatism among funders that focus on 'service delivery' but are reluctant to support strident political analyses therefore threatens to depoliticize the work of nonprofits that might otherwise pose stronger challenges to the status quo.

Some scholars have also noted more subtle ways that funders' standards limit nonprofit organizations' capacity to bring about more profound social change (Chouinard and Crooks 2008, Incite! 2007, Gilmore 2007, Eliasoph 2011). For example, many funders prefer to provide grants to short-term projects rather than to organizations' general operating costs; some have argued that this results in a "market-based," individualistic ideology of what nonprofit organizations' role should be (Chouinard and Crooks 2008, 173). Sociologist Nina Eliasoph's *Making Volunteers: Civic Life After Welfare's End* (2011) discusses what she calls

“Empowerment Projects,” which are “strange hybrids” of public and private funding that target 'needy' and 'high-risk' young people in urban areas. Eliasoph finds that funders' priorities force an agenda of individualistic 'empowerment' that glosses over the political reasons why such youth might be 'at-risk' in the first place, thus “severing any connection between civic volunteering and political engagement” and “breed[ing], paradoxically, hopelessness about finding any solutions” (Eliasoph 2011, 12). She notes that this emphasis on empowerment over a more radical politics is tied to the funding of short-term projects over long-term engagements with difficult community problems.

Furthermore, others suggest that even the most allegedly progressive funders and organizations have incentives to maintain the status quo rather than pose significant political challenges to it (Wolch 1999, Kivel 2007, King and Osayande 2007). Further reflecting on the “shadow state” and the nonprofit landscape in a 1999 article, Wolch questions whether progressive aims are really creating better realities for marginalized people. She writes,

> “The rhetoric of social change and betterment, so pervasive in the nonprofit world, masks a reality in which the sector is increasingly expected to uphold dominant norms and values, protect existing resource distributions, and shield the state from attacks on legitimacy.” (Wolch 1999, 33)

This statement echoes Wolch's initial concern in her 1990 book that transferring social welfare responsibility to nonprofit organizations might only serve to uphold the status quo; here she suggests that progressive or radical rhetoric is not enough to make substantial changes. Tiffany Lethabo King and Ewuare Osayande dig deeper into this critique to argue that white-dominated “progressive philanthropy” is full of institutionalized racism and “actually protects white wealth and undermines the work of oppressed communities of color” (King and Osayande 2007, 80). Cronyist practices in which foundations favor allocating funds to white-led social justice

organizations because of their shared networks of privilege are problematic, they suggest, and are part of a broader reality that “white people and white institutions continue to control the wealth gained through the exploitation of people of color” (King and Osayande 2007, 80). King and Osayande indicate, therefore, that the pull towards maintaining white supremacist wealth proves too strong for even white groups that claim progressive stances to mobilize for significant systemic change, which would entail letting go of that monopoly on wealth and power. Paul Kivel echoes Wolch as well as King and Osayande in his suggestion that in attempting to “'help' people at the bottom of the pyramid,” employees in the “nonprofit industrial complex” form a “buffer zone” that protects the interests of rich and powerful people (Kivel 2007, 134-5). Moreover, the fact that these employees' own modest livelihoods depend on distributing meager resources to the poorest people can make them susceptible to “co-optation” - or the illusion of progress in place of more profound systemic change - despite their best intentions (Kivel 2007, 36).

Related to these concerns about funding is the central critique that the presence of the “shadow state” or “nonprofit industrial complex” takes away states' responsibility to address social welfare needs; in the context of the most dire consequences of this “abandonment” such as homelessness in the United States, states need no longer be held accountable for even the most basic survival needs of their populations. This concern is reflected in Bobo, Kendall and Max’s claim in *Organizing for Social Change: The Midwest Academy Manual for Organizers* (2001) that direct service work “accepts existing power relationships” the most out of the various forms of community organizing (Bobo et al. 11). Moreover, throughout *Sweet Charity?,* Poppendieck roundly argues against the idea of charity as an appropriate response to poverty, calling it demeaning and often inefficient to meet recipients' material needs, and instead favors cash

entitlements, which she sees as more just and dignified. Finally, she emphasizes that rather than withdrawing from the politics of food altogether as emergency food programs proliferate, the "public sector has played a crucial role in the institutionalization of emergency food . . . [because it has] fit so well into the agendas of other powerful institutions, particularly government and business" (Poppendieck 1999, 122, 140). Service work around survival issues like emergency food, then, is anything but politically neutral.

A critique within Jason Hackworth's *Having Faith in a Replacement for Welfare: The Politics of Religious Neoliberalism in the United States* (forthcoming) echoes this concern that nonprofit organizations relieve the state of its responsibility for social welfare. An emerging group of geographers explore the influential presence of faith-based organizations that perform once-governmental services in post-welfare states; Hackworth's work in this area puts forth a critique of faith-based organizations' role that is particularly aligned with literature on the shadow state and nonprofit industrial complex Beaumont 2008, Cloke et al. 2010, Hankins and Walter 2011, Hackworth forthcoming). Tackling the intersecting politics of neoliberal anti-welfare practices and Christian service organizations that fill the gaps left by the former, Hackworth is deeply skeptical of what he calls "the discursive normalization of faith-based organizations as a suitable replacement for government-provided welfare" (Hackworth forthcoming, 19). Generally, he suggests that this discourse of faith-based organizations as better at caring for people than (ostensibly) secular governments has been "deploy[ed]" to justify the systematic roll-back of state-funded welfare systems in the past several decades. Hackworth argues that faith-based organizations who align themselves with this discourse are complicit with neoliberal ideology that favors seemingly 'small' or 'hollowed-out government and that places the onus of issues like homelessness on individuals rather than uneven structures of capitalism.

Although he notes that this discourse "is often associated with the Republican Party, or the Religious Right," it is not exclusively put forth by religious conservatives, but instead

> "It is a sentiment that has great political power precisely because it cuts across a number of different political and theological perspectives. Simply put, a great number of people have political axes to grind with the welfare state, and a great number of people view their form of worship as a suitable logic or motivation to replace it." (Hackworth forthcoming, 20-21)

A discourse around the allegedly superior approach to social welfare on the part of faith-based organizations, then, is used to further legitimate states' retreat from its responsibility to the most marginalized people.

Finally, perhaps the most harmful consequence of the "nonprofit industrial complex" is that it supports an ideology according to which contemporary realities of deep poverty are characterized as inevitable or natural rather than a result of harmful policy-making. In the context of the rise of emergency food, Poppendieck argues that voluntarism in place of state entitlements has mystified the structural causes and politics of poverty and that it "creates a culture of charity that normalizes destitution and legitimates personal generosity as a response to major social and economic dislocation" (Poppendieck 1999, 5). In this problematic culture, instead of "an earned recompense for earlier contributions . . . [or] an entitlement based on our mutual interdependence," under the emergency food paradigm sustenance becomes a "gift" (Poppendieck 1999, 231). While a complex mix of "harmful social conditions" defined this period, Poppendieck argues that a socially constructed idea of hunger was singled out as a problem that could be solved through more food programs. As long as nonprofit organizations are unable to fully provide for the many needs of each homeless person, for example, it can appear as though homelessness is simply an endemic social issue that is likely to always exist. In this analysis, welfare state abandonment and the inadequate resources of the nonprofit 'sector' are

masked, and a drive for more systemic change is abandoned in favor of a barely sustainable yet somehow functioning approach. This is not to suggest that, if the United States government re-committed to a more extensive entitlement-based welfare state, survival issues like hunger and homelessness would become understood as solvable problems. It is clear, though, that nonprofit organizations' food pantries and shelter programs often cannot meet the needs of their clients to a degree at which problems like homelessness could seem on the verge of coming to an end. This inadequacy of resources then contributes to a pervasive discourse according to which homelessness and other issues of dire poverty are understood as inevitable rather than contestable parts of the political economic landscape.

2. Conclusions

These critiques of the shadow state and nonprofit industrial complex set further theoretical groundwork for this project. There are many ways in which the Open Door Community's work can be said to fit into the “loose and baggy monster” of the 501 (c)(3) world; indeed, the community seeks to fulfill the food, clothing, hygiene and medical needs of people who, as Wolch and Dear (1987, 1993) describe, have been driven to destitution in a context of state abandonment (Kendall and Knapp 1995). It is absolutely crucial to consider the extent to which social welfare work – that which is done by nonprofit organizations to fill in gaps left by the state's withdrawal from that realm – could stagnate the kind of social change that would enable people who have been marginalized to thrive in their own right, rather than barely subsist on meager resources. However, the major gap in the literature that I discuss above is that it neglects to consider how social welfare work could actually be a vital part of, rather than an impediment to an emancipatory political praxis. While these scholars make a critical intervention by highlighting the need for systemic change rather than Band-Aids, they do not consider

whether nonprofit service organizations might participate in bringing about that change, at least in part directly through the service work that they do. Instead, service or social welfare work is placed as an impediment to justice. In this way, this otherwise invaluable scholarship establishes a limiting binary between the social welfare work of nonprofit service organizations, which is not considered as potentially key to a radical politics, and more explicit political organizing for progressive or radical social justice aims. This is perhaps most evident in Bobo, Kendall and Max's placement of direct service at the opposite end of a spectrum from direct action, claiming that the former "accepts existing power relationships" while the latter "challenges" them (Bobo et al. 11). Conversely, this thesis argues that there is rich potential for service work to play a key role in such political praxes.

Geographical literature on social reproduction and survival further highlights this gap in scholarship on the "nonprofit industrial complex," and has fundamentally informed the questions as well as conclusions of this thesis project (Incite! 2007). As geographer Cindi Katz has outlined, *social reproduction* in capitalist systems is an area of study that merits much further attention. Katz describes social reproduction as "the fleshy, messy, indeterminate stuff of everyday life" as well as "a set of structured practices that unfold in dialectical relation with production," that "[a]t its most basic . . . hinges upon the biological reproduction of the labor force, both generationally and on a daily basis, through the acquisition and distribution of the means of existence, including food, shelter, clothing and health care" (Katz 2001, 711). The study of social reproduction for people who are homeless is therefore about the structures and practices that sustain people who occupy the most economically marginalized spaces in contemporary capitalism. As Don Mitchell (1997) points out, though, punitive policies toward the homeless seem bent on destroying rather than reproducing their daily existence. Nik

Heynen's focus on the geography of survival, which he calls “a question of the socio-natural *conditions* and *structures* that make human survival possible (in whatever form: degraded or liberatory),” is a useful way to think about social reproduction in this revanchist context (Heynen 2010, 1231, his emphasis). Without stable housing or consistent access to food and health care, and with punitive state-enforced limitations on their movements and activities, how do homeless people quite literally stay alive day to day? Mitchell and Heynen (2009) note that

> “as urban geographers, we have grown unused to raising the most fundamental, most basic questions—not 'What is the structure of everyday life in the city?' or 'What are the forms of governance of everyday life in the city?,' but 'How is it possible for people even to *live* in the city? What does it take?'” (Mitchell and Heynen 2009, 614)

These are concerns that have immediate relevance for homeless people, and are questions that must factor into discussions of nonprofit and faith-based organizations that have taken on what could be called survival activities that were once primarily considered the responsibility of welfare states. Poppendieck's argument about the political impotence of overburdened emergency food providers, for example, could be re-framed as a widespread inability of providers to be more committed political advocates because they are so consumed simply with enabling the recipients of their services to survive – with attempting to sustain them in basic ways so that they may, at the very least, stay alive.

Much of the literature on the shadow state and nonprofit industrial complex overlooks the way that much of that complex's work is about this bare human survival, and in doing so fails to take more seriously the potentially emancipatory politics of that aspect of the nonprofit world. At the Open Door Community, residents and volunteers continue to do social reproduction or survival work, even though some of them openly fear they are contributing to a 'Band-Aid' problem in which homelessness becomes an institutionalized social issue that policymakers, the

majority of the public, and homeless people themselves feel unmotivated or unable to challenge. Not all people with whom I spoke had these concerns about institutionalization, but that leaders like Eduard and Gladys did have them makes the fact that the Open Door Community continues to engage so extensively in service work worthy of much further examination. Through my participant observation work, interviews and archival research, I found that many residents and volunteers keep engaging in service work because they feel it is indeed imperative to continue doing so if homeless guests are to physically survive on the streets. At the same time as some of them worry about the Band-Aid issue, they feel that the tangible actions they can take to help their guests nonetheless have important consequences for those guests' day-to-day survival. This thesis argues that this survival work should be considered more as a potential catalyst for developing an emancipatory politics and seen less as an obstacle to organizing.

II. Conceptual framework

This section first outlines further literature that even more directly shapes the parameters of this research. The scholarship on resistance and alterity that I describe below sets up a starting point from which to empirically engage the wide body of work on neoliberalism and the shadow state or nonprofit industrial complex, and to theoretically position the role of faith-based organizations in that milieu. The second part of this conceptual framework outlines the central arguments that I make in the empirical chapters of this thesis.

a. Resistance and alterity

First, this thesis draws upon the work of a relatively small number of geographers who have called for studies of resistance to the results of neoliberal states' withdrawal from their prior

responsibility for social welfare provision. Geographers and scholars from other disciplines who write about neoliberalism often run the risk of putting forth a totalizing narrative that leaves little or no space for social actors and movements that challenge neoliberal ideologies, policies and real estate practices. Indeed, neoliberalism can sometimes sound like a completed hegemonic project that has few ideological competitors and certainly no potential successors. A small group of scholars', however, argue that while cities may experience some of the most pronounced effects of neoliberal policies, they may simultaneously be on the “front line” of resistance to neoliberalization (Peck and Tickell 2002, 395; Hackworth 2007; Leitner, Peck and Sheppard 2007). For example, Hackworth briefly examines actions that he suggests pose “meaningful resistance to neoliberal urbanism,” though these exist “in a highly fragmented way” and have not yet impeded neoliberalism's impact on urban places on a large scale (Hackworth 2007, 174). Generally, Hackworth concludes that “there needs to be a broader theoretical basis around which to organize,” and that movements, which must be grassroots, must insistently challenge the narrative which suggests that 'there is no alternative' to neoliberal structures (Hackworth 2007, 203). Similarly, Leitner et al. question the idea that cities have become strictly “neoliberal urban societ[ies]” (Leitner et al. 2007, 21; Hackworth 2002; Peck and Tickell 2002; Brenner and Theodore 2007). In an attempt to de-center this totalizing narrative, they suggest that cities are instead “central spaces where the hegemonic struggles over neoliberalism are now being fought” (Leitner et al. 2007, 21). These “alternative visions and practices” are often disregarded as too small to be effective, but Leitner et al. argue that neoliberal ideologies had similarly marginal beginnings (Leitner et al. 2007, 2). Because a neoliberal future is not inevitable, “close empirically grounded analysis is essential to better understand neoliberalism and to imagine and create alternative futures” (Leitner et al. 2007, 2). Among the possibilities of resistance are

movements to preserve elements of Keynesian welfare states; anti-globalization activism; economic justice movements (including living wage campaigns); struggles against gentrification that tackle real estate's prominent neoliberalizing role; and efforts to replace “the various aspects of life that have been affected by neoliberalism” and its individualistic mores with collectivist structures like community banks (Hackworth 2007, 192).

I characterize the Open Door Community's work as a contestation of neoliberalism because house leaders have clearly stated that part of their mission is to consciously contest capitalist ideology. This work also has close relevance to this project because, as I have described, Atlanta's policies towards homelessness can fairly be considered manifestations of individualistic neoliberal subjectivity. Moreover, Leitner et al.'s consideration of the ways that these types of policies are contested fits with my proposed examination of the Open Door Community's challenges to the ideologies and policies around homelessness in Atlanta. Geographers like Tony Sparks (2010) have explored contestations of neoliberalism around homelessness; Sparks details the refusal of SHARE/WHEEL, “a consortium of 13 peer-managed homeless shelters and two tent cities” to participate in a Seattle government program that seeks to collect information on homeless people (Sparks 2010, 842). Here, Sparks aims to show how the group sought to “escape the public gaze” on its own terms (Sparks 2010, 842). However, as is the case with much political economy work in geography, few scholars have yet considered the role of faith-based organizations in the formation and development of resistant responses. Accordingly, this project contributes an understanding of how a faith-based organization that follows the 'radical Jesus' shapes practical and political responses to the neoliberalized conditions of homelessness.

A handful of scholars and activists who have written on the shadow state and nonprofit industrial complex have also argued that nonprofit organizations have the potential to be sites of resistance; these analyses provide the foundation for this thesis's argument that service work at Open Door is a central element of a liberationist theo-politics. Amin, Cameron and Hudson (2002), for example, have conceptualized the 'third sector' as a potential space of "alterity," or "advocacy for another way of life" (Amin et al. 2002, Fyfe 2005). Similarly, in a 1999 article that fits closely with her earlier work on the shadow state, Jennifer Wolch insists that nonprofit organizations must "advance to the margins, and transform the sector into a space of resistance" (Wolch 1999, 28). "Rather than stand quiescent as the social safety net is dismantled," she writes, "nonprofits could become the most critical site of resistance to pauperization in the name of 'ending welfare as we know it'" (Wolch 1999, 28). It is not entirely clear whether Amin et al. and Wolch believe that service work, as opposed to nonprofits' political advocacy, has the potential to become a site of resistance. Nonetheless, their positioning of the nonprofit sphere as a possible space of "alterity" situates this thesis's argument for service work as a central part of a liberatory politics at Open Door, which is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Finally, Paul Kivel (2007) most directly argues that service work itself contains rich political potential. Kivel, who critiques the "buffer zone" of social service providers that prevent substantial challenges to the power of the most wealthy people, suggests that the resources of the buffer zone could be "mobiliz[ed] . . . to help people get together" (Kivel 2007, 143). Citing the service work enacted by the Zapatistas and Black Panther Party, Kivel argues that the provision of social services or survival needs does not have to be detrimental to radical aims; this claim echoes Nik Heynen's argument that the Black Panther Party's survival programs were essential to building mass political support for the party's full scope of revolutionary actions (Heynen 2009).

Kivel insists that the resources of service organizations should similarly be used “as a tool for organizing” and “empowering people to work for social change” (Kivel 2007, 142). Kivel's arguments support and inform this thesis's claims that the tasks of service work are employed in the collective creation of a liberationist theo-politics at Open Door. However, these politics at Open Door resemble traditional political organizing perhaps less than Kivel envisions. I argue that the key significance of the structure of service work at Open Door is that it challenges participants to actively put forth alternatives to the ideologically informed narratives that shape neoliberal practices. I suggest this longstanding commitment to rethinking punitive subjectivities of homeless and marginalized people through service work is as important to the community's politics as their more traditional organizing and protest activities.

This thesis also argues for a reading of faith-based service organizations that considers them as a potentially vital part of a resistant political praxis. Except for one brief reference to a Catholic Worker soup kitchen, Janet Poppendieck avoids bringing Catholic Worker houses into her discussion of emergency food in *Sweet Charity? Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement* (1999). Moreover, Poppendieck is generally quite skeptical of faith-based approaches to emergency food that invoke the virtues of feeding “the least of these” but fail to more critically analyze the political histories and structures that make people hungry (Matthew 25:31-46, New International Version). Furthermore, while Jason Hackworth recognizes the presence of Christian service organizations that do not espouse what he calls religious neoliberalism, he writes that

> “it is difficult for me to conclude that the marginal presence of the social gospel or Liberation Theology nullifies the anti-tax, small government activist successes of more conservative threads of the American evangelical Protestant experience.” (Hackworth forthcoming, 2011)

While I concur with Hackworth that the Religious Right has far more influence on policy-making than Christian leftists, I disagree that this marginality makes that latter group unworthy of study. This research project is based in the idea that even though the Open Door Community's positions and practices are on the fringe of faith-based service organizations, their longstanding commitment to vocally contesting the strictures of neoliberalism makes them a crucial subject of inquiry. Here, I borrow again from the concept espoused by Leitner et al. in *Contesting Neoliberalism: Urban Frontiers* that potential sources of resistance to neoliberalism, even those that remain minor and may seem insignificant in the 'bigger picture', are critical points of study if alternatives are to be imagined and articulated. Hackworth aims to show that religious leaders and groups in the United States have been widely complicit with anti-welfare neoliberal ideology, but his rejection of the significance of organizations that actively work against that ideology is misguided. Given the rich theo-political analyses of social gospel and liberation theologies, leftist faith-based organizations show great potential as leading architects of alternative, liberationist politics in a post-welfare era.

British geographers Cloke, May and Johnsen have absorbed the same critiques of neoliberalism that informs Hackworth's analysis, particularly the geographical scholarship that addresses contemporary realities of homelessness in neoliberalized urban places. However, they emerge with a markedly different analysis of the implications of faith-based social welfare organizations. Cloke et al. (2010) are convinced that it is necessary to study the landscapes of homeless services as well as hostile shifts in policy and practice, and are particularly interested in what they call “postsecularism”. Broadly, they seek to understand how “a rapproachment [sic] of secular and faith-based ethical motivations is forging new forms of collaborative ethical praxis, and new geographies of compassion and care, in the city” (Cloke et al. 2010, 20). Cloke et al.

assert that a growing partnership between secular and faith-motivated organizations has political potential that is invisible when one only examines revanchist treatments of homelessness. They argue that these partnerships can

> "help to foster a broader politics of hope that stands in stark contrast to the politics of revenge or abandonment that allegedly characterizes the revanchist, or postjustice, city. In Britain at least this politics is currently unfolding as part and parcel of a broader realignment of the secular and the religious." (Cloke et al. 2010, 251)

Although Cloke et al. do not think that these secular-faith alliances suggest an easy solution to homelessness because "it is clearly unrealistic to expect voluntary welfare organizations to fully meet the needs of homeless people *and* to address the deeper problems that underlie Britain's homelessness crisis," they see political potential in the ways that they claim secular and faith-based organizations are adopting practices from one another and coming "together within organizations and spaces devoted to the ideas of care and compassion for the socially excluded" (Cloke et al. 2010, 248, 254). One of the key ways that faith-based organizations have impacted this emerging milieu, they argue, is through their "more holistic approach[es] to service, including a capacity to deal with spiritual as well as material issues," and a relational approach focused on interpersonal care (Cloke et al. 2010, 252). Secular organizations with whom faith groups are building rapprochements are then increasingly and more explicitly adopting an ethics of care that Cloke et al. suggest is directly influenced by Christian teachings and values and that challenges the norms of the 'revanchist city' (Smith 1996).

This insight into the value of Cloke et al.'s "theo-ethics" is meaningful for this thesis project because of its central suggestion that service work, in this case imbued with an ethics of care and compassion, can be more than just a panacea for deeper wounds - that it can actually have political implications for an issue like homelessness. However, Cloke et al. do not discuss in depth how or whether their "politics of hope" is or could become linked to a clear analysis of

the structural inequalities, such as a lack of affordable housing and treatment programs, that perpetuate homelessness in England as in the United States (though there are substantial differences between the two countries' policy approaches to homelessness) (Cloke et al. 2010, 251). This thesis project thus carries Cloke et al.'s assertion that faith-based homeless service work can counter the politics of revanchism, but insists that in order to pose a robust challenge to neoliberal ideologies, these care ethics of service work must also incorporate strong analyses of the political economic landscape that perpetuates homelessness.

b. Politics

In this thesis, I employ the term *politics* primarily to connote actions that challenge punitive subject formations stemming from neoliberal ideology. Two key texts from the critical race literature have most roundly informed my emphasis on this kind of politics. First, Robin D.G. Kelley puts forth a definition of politics that moves beyond formal political organizations and well-articulated social movements. In *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (1994), Kelley argues that

> "we must begin to dig beneath the surface of trade union pronouncements, political institutions, and organized social movements, deeply into the daily lives, cultures, and communities which make the working classes so much more than people who work. … Most importantly, we need to break away from traditional notions of politics. We must not only redefine what is "political" but question a lot of common ideas about what are "authentic" movements and strategies of resistance." (Kelley 1994, 4)

This thesis takes such a 'politics of the everyday' approach to its analysis of service work at the Open Door Community. Although Open Door's service work does not resemble more formal political organizing, I argue that it is shaped by leaders (whose liberationist theo-politics I focus on in Chapter Five), residents, and volunteers (whose politics I discuss in Chapter Six) to form a central part of the community's political praxis.

Furthermore, in her *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment,* Patricia Hill Collins similarly offers a broad interpretation of politics that stems from "Afrocentric feminist ways of knowing" (Collins [1990] 1991, 232). Collins speaks in part of a kind of politics in which knowledge from one's standpoint serves to empower the marginalized, which she argues is a critical part of any political praxis. "Empowerment," Collins argues, "involves rejecting the dimensions of knowledge . . . that perpetuate objectification and dehumanization" (Collins [1990] 1991, 230). As I show in Chapter Six, the key political contribution of service work at Open Door is that it poses a powerful personalist alternative to neoliberal ideology. Knowledge that stems from the standpoints of individual volunteers and residents, but that is also actively shaped by the structure of service and teaching at the Open Door Community, is the foundation for that alternative vision.

c. Outline of arguments

The arguments of this thesis are deeply informed by the scholarship included in the literature review section of this chapter, and are even more directly framed by the conceptualizations of resistance and politics that I outline above. This thesis's central claim is that the Open Door Community's service work is a central part of their political praxis. The first part of this argument discusses what I have termed the *liberationist theo-politics* that is foundational to the Open Door Community. Open Door's founders were motivated thirty years ago to serve food and provide shelter to homeless guests, and to situate this work within a robust theological and political economic analysis that questions the ideologies and policymaking practices that have enabled homelessness to become an entrenched part of Atlanta's urban landscape. I argue that Open Door leaders have shaped a philosophy that places service work at the center of political action, knowledge-making, and practice. A passage in the gospel of

Matthew that is a common scriptural reference for Christian service organizations is particularly central to Open Door's service work. This passage, in which Jesus tells his followers that if they feed the hungry, tend to the sick, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, and visit the imprisoned, it is as if they have done these acts for or to Jesus himself, guides Open Door's liberationist theo-politics (Matthew 25:31-46, New International Version).

Over thirty years, leaders like Eduard, Murphy, Gladys and Nelia have crafted a complex theo-politics that pivots on Matthew 25 as a foundational scripture but is also shaped by Dorothy Day, Peter Maurin and the Catholic Worker Movement; the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; and the teachings of Latin American liberation theologians like Gustavo Gutierrez and teacher Paolo Freire. Their philosophy developed from these thinkers' focus on building close relationships with homeless guests through service work, which then form the basis of a commitment to justice and inform the political agenda that is to be pursued. The experiences of homeless guests are meant to 'set the agenda' for political action, knowledge-making and practice at Open Door, which makes the relationships formed through service work a vital center of the community's liberationist theo-politics. I argue that Open Door's liberationist theo-politics places service, social welfare or survival work at the center of the community's political praxis. Open Door teaching sessions are an important way to maintain this position for service work because they provide a space in which volunteers and residents use the direct experiences of service to collectively develop knowledge that counters dominant ideologies about homelessness and marginalization. This placement disrupts the common division in much political economy literature that separates service work from more explicit political resistance; that binary suggests that the former is apolitical at best and an impediment to justice at worst. This thesis offers a

different interpretation of the role of service work, suggesting that it can be a vital part of a liberatory politics.

The second part of the argument uses the accounts of several volunteers and residents who are not Open Door leaders to further argue that this kind of politics is present in the community's service work. While race, class and gender inequalities do not disappear inside the community, I argue that the structure of service work at Open Door provides a relatively even ground from which volunteers and residents can at least begin to challenge individualistic neoliberal subjectivities that cast homeless and marginalized people as deserving of the dire situations in which they find themselves. This process of contestation has taken place on the part of formerly homeless volunteers questioning their own subjectivities, and of working class African American volunteers who have developed a form of solidarity with homeless guests that fosters a deep commitment to systemic change on their behalf. The second part of this thesis's argument, then, further suggests that rather than being a necessary yet anemic complement to their most traditionally political work, the relationships formed through the Open Door Community's service work have a potentially liberatory politics to them. I call these politics a contemporary version of Catholic Worker *personalism* that, in recognizing the dignity of individuals within their political economic context, poses a powerful counter-narrative to punitive neoliberal subjectivities of the most marginalized people. Rather than personalism itself being a radical concept, I suggest that personalism is a tool that these residents and volunteers use to connect the experiences of service work to a materialist politics that critiques neoliberal structures. This thesis project's arguments about the Open Door Community therefore provide insight into the potential for survival-based social welfare programs to not only be politically engaged, but to shape the practices of their service work as a rich part of their political praxis.

d. Conclusions

This conceptual framework has outlined the geographical literature and scholarship from other disciplines that mostly directly shapes the approach of this research project. First, I follow Leitner et al. and other geographers' call to study contestations of neoliberalism. This point of study absorbs vital critiques of neoliberalism but also de-centers the totalizing narrative that can be present in that body of scholarship. Then, I use a call from a small number of critics of the "shadow state" and "nonprofit industrial complex" to conceptualize the nonprofit 'sector' as a possible space of "alterity" or resistance, and to consider service work itself as able to be productive of an emancipatory politics (Wolch 1990, Incite! 2007, Wolch 1999). While the literature on the "shadow state" and "nonprofit industrial complex" largely does *not* consider these alternative vantage points, this handful of insights into new ways of analyzing service or social welfare work is essential for this project (Wolch 1990, Incite! 2007). Geographical work that sets up faith-based organizations as potential spaces of alterity also sets the context for this thesis. Finally, I briefly outline scholarship that informs this thesis's interpretation of the term *politics*. Like Kelley and Collins, the politics to which this thesis continually refers is one that produces narratives that are challenging to dominant ideologies and that emerge from the everyday.

The second part of the conceptual framework outlines the substantive arguments that this thesis makes. Through an analysis of what I call the liberationist theo-politics that Open Door leaders have guided over the past three decades, this thesis first argues that service work is situated at the center of the community's political action, knowledge-making, and practice. This placement unsettles the binary found in the literature on the "shadow state" and "nonprofit industrial complex" that separates service from more explicit or traditionally conceptualized

forms of political resistance (Wolch 1990, Incite! 2007). The second part of the argument suggests that service work at Open Door creates space for residents and volunteers to put forth a personalist politics as a tool by which to challenge neoliberal ideologies that justify the punishment and abandonment of homeless people. Through this two-part argument that emerges from the literature reviewed herein, this thesis claims that service work has the potential to become part of a radical politics. The next chapter demonstrates the research methods of collection, interpretation and analysis that shaped these claims.

Chapter Four: Methods and Methodological Reflections

This chapter discusses the key components of this thesis project's methodology. First, I explain why a case study is the most appropriate research design for this project. I explain and justify three further elements of the project's design - its methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation. I briefly address the use of pseudonyms in this project. Lastly, I engage feminist methodological theory to guide readers through some issues of positionality and critical distance that I encountered in the process of doing fieldwork for this project.

I. Research Design

A case study was the best way to structure this project because of the type of research questions that I asked. First, this project's research questions are primarily explanatory ones, asking *how* the Open Door Community negotiates tensions between survival-based service work and the development of a robust political praxis. They also ask, for the most part, about contemporary circumstances at Open Door, though it was also necessary to review key elements of the community's history in order to answer those explanatory questions. The questions are also complex enough that they necessitated an in-depth study of the Open Door Community. In his *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Robert Yin explains that these three elements – explanatory questions, a contemporary circumstance, and the necessity for what he calls

"extensive"[5] research – make a case study the most appropriate research design (Yin [1984] 2009, 4). Yin further suggests that case studies are fitting for researchers who seek "to understand a real-life phenomenon in depth, but such understanding encompasse[s] important contextual conditions – because they [are] highly pertinent to [the researcher's] phenomenon of study" (Yin [1984] 2009, 18). The "contextual conditions" of this research project with the Open Door Community are indeed essential to the research questions that I ask (Yin [1984] 2009, 18). The neoliberal decline of welfare states, and its relation to the contemporary conditions of homelessness in Atlanta around which the part of Open Door's work that this project examines is based, provides the context for this project. It therefore would not have been possible to form salient research questions about the Open Door Community without considering the 'outside' context in which they operate. This consideration solidifies the appropriateness of a case study as this project's basic design.

II. Methods of Data Collection

Following Yin's recommendation that case studies triangulate methods of gathering empirical evidence, I collected materials for this project through interviews, participant observation and archival research. I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with fourteen people.

5 Human geographers may be accustomed to a definition of 'extensive' research that favors quantitative, positivistic methodological approaches. In contrast, Yin's "extensive" research more entails the kind of in-depth qualitative research that constitutes a case study (Yin [1984] 2009, 4).

a. Interviews

I felt that a series of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with Open Door Community residential and non-residential volunteers would be the best way to understand how each of them personally related to the questions that I asked for several reasons. First, interviews entail a more intimate, one-on-one process that allows interview participants to talk about their own experiences in a private setting, which is less possible through participant observation (Glesne 1999). Furthermore, the positionalities represented among interview participants are quite diverse in a number of ways. While the Leadership Team of residents is comprised of white men and women over fifty years of age, greater age and racial diversity is present among other residents and non-residential volunteers whom I interviewed. Conducting one-on-one interviews with residents and volunteers might reveal that the experiences and framings of the founding residents are markedly different from those of someone who, for example, has been a committed volunteer for twenty-five years but has never lived in the community. This kind of personal information is more likely to emerge from interviews than from participant observation or archival analysis. Finally, interviewing was the most interactive process out of these three methods in that it allowed participants to directly respond to research questions (Glesne 1999). This structure is important because it grants a particularly agentic role to residents and volunteers who take part in the research process.

Interviews took place on site at the Open Door Community in private spaces, and took an average of one hour and fifteen minutes each to complete, although some interviews were much longer (up to two and a half hours) and a handful were shorter (as little as forty minutes). I used a digital recorder during interviews. I transcribed most recordings within four days of each

interview because a clear memory of the interview assisted the transcription process. I conducted the majority of interviews during June, July and August of 2011. Some interviews also took place throughout September, October and November. My procedure for each interview was to use the attached guide. These questions each aimed to address different parts of my research questions. Each numbered question was an open-ended one that could be followed by several of the listed prompts. I asked interview participants each question that applied to them, but I did not necessarily read each question verbatim. Instead, I modified the way I asked each question as necessary throughout the process of conducting multiple interviews. I also conducted a pilot interview with a young man who visited the Open Door Community in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the questions before the official interview process began. Some interviews demonstrated that I could better convey the meanings of certain leading questions if I worded them differently. One of my interview questions was originally worded in the following way:

> If Mayor Reed made you the official expert on homelessness, what policies would you implement? If you could write a bill or design a policy to improve the lives of people who are homeless, what would you prioritize?

The wording of this question now seems too formal given the casual, congenial setting of most interviews. After realizing that the wording was awkward, I began to generally ask this question in the following way:

> If the mayor of Atlanta made you the official expert on homelessness, what would you do to end homelessness?

Here, I edited the first part of the question because of its formality and left out the second part because I soon found that many interview participants valued a solution to homelessness that would combine non-government as well as state actions. In order to leave space for them to

articulate exactly what they would do if they had power and influence, I tended not to ask the second part of this question unless participants mentioned a policy-based response to homelessness.

b. Participant observation

As a participant observer, I observed the fourteen people who were interviewed and who signed consent forms. Participant observation of residents and long-term volunteers was one of the most important components of this project because it allowed me to better understand the nuances of community life, including soup kitchens, teaching sessions, and other activities that took place in collective settings (Glesne 1999). Whereas interviews were private conversations, participant observation took place in social settings. Taking note of the different ways that residents and volunteers talked and acted in these separate venues made it possible to develop a better understanding of my research questions in the context of the community's interpersonal dynamics (Glesne 1999). In some interviews, for example, participants who rarely spoke in teaching sessions expressed ideological views that were not as closely in line with the politics that Open Door leaders teach at soup kitchens as I had expected them to be. Secondly, participant observation was the best of this project's three methods for comprehension of how the Open Door Community's politics around homelessness play out in their day-to-day practices. Interviews and archival research helped me to understand Open Door's politics and how they are influenced by Catholic Worker thought, Latin American liberation theology and the teachings of Martin Luther King, Jr. When I began my research, though, I knew little about how Open Door's philosophies manifest in practice, and participant observation was the essential tool that helped me to understand this aspect of my research questions.

Participant observation work also stemmed from my desire to establish a reciprocal, mutually fulfilling relationship with Open Door Community residents and volunteers. As such, I participated in soup kitchens on a regular basis and became a reliable volunteer. In addition, I asked Open Door leaders to consider whether they needed assistance with any special projects throughout the duration of my fieldwork. This request resulted in my helping with a shower program for female homeless guests on a monthly basis. My schedule for participant observation consisted of visits to the Open Door Community 1-2 times per week, beginning in mid-May 2011 and running through the end of September 2011. In order to record my experiences, I maintained a notebook in which I wrote down my observations within several days of the end of each participant observation session. These notes were guided by a series of codes (see below).

c. Archival research

For the archival component of this project, I first examined past issues of *Hospitality,* Open Door's monthly newsletter that dates to the community's early days. I obtained some of these articles from *A Work of Hospitality: The Open Door Reader 1982-2002*; more recent *Hospitality* articles were available online (Gathje 2002). I also read and analyzed books published by the Open Door Community Press including Eduard's *The Cry of the Poor: Cracking White Male Supremacy (An Incendiary and Militant Proposal*) (2010)and Open Door biographer Peter Gathje's *Sharing the Bread of Life: Hospitality and Resistance at the Open Door Community* (2006). Finally, I read and analyzed printed programs from Sunday worship services dating to 2006. I analyzed the materials in these archives according to the codes that I describe below. Examining the Open Door Community's fruitful collection of newsletters, published books and other materials was a vital component of this project for several reasons.

First, it allowed me to gain an understanding of how members of the Open Door Community have represented their philosophies and practices to people who do not necessarily participate in Open Door life on a regular basis (Wolford 2010). Whereas interviews and participant observation enabled me to better understand Open Door's approach to homelessness as it manifests in their daily workings, analysis of archival materials demonstrated how residents and volunteers who write *Hospitality* and other publications represent their ideologies and practices to a wider audience. Secondly, exploration of how residents and volunteers represent the Open Door Community through writing allowed for greater depth in my analysis because, as Renkema notes, written discourse does not entail immediately reciprocal interactions, although writers can certainly "anticipate probable reactions and write the text accordingly" (Renkema 1993, 87). Indeed, the ways that Open Door residents and volunteers express themselves in writing, rather than in conversation, sometimes differed in notable ways; some participants' articles in past issues of *Hospitality* articulated certain concepts in more depth and with more clarity than those participants expressed in interviews and participant observation. (Renkema 1993).

Thirdly, because I was able to access Open Door Community newsletters spanning nearly three decades, archival research enabled me to gain a rich historical understanding of the community's philosophies and practices around homelessness (Peräkylä 2005). Knowledge of the Open Door Community's earliest days as well as key developments in the community over time proved integral to understanding how Open Door has come to be situated as it is today. Participant observation and interviews both provided a certain degree of this historical context. However, while some participants talked at length about the past in teaching sessions and interviews, they did so reflectively from their present context. In contrast, archival research

allowed me to examine how Open Door residents and volunteers have structured their politics around homelessness in various historical contexts. While it may have been productive to ask Eduard to accurately recall how he felt about city government's policies on homelessness in 1984, for example, archival analysis helped me to see how he wrote about the issue at that actual point in time. For these reasons, archival analysis was a crucial component of this project.

Archival research was not conducted on site at the Open Door Community because I was able to access Open Door's published books and recent archives of *Hospitality* online. I was also able to borrow and photocopy excerpts from a binder of past Sunday worship programs. Unlike participant observation and the interview process, I did not ever visit the Open Door Community with the express purpose of looking at their archives. Instead, most archival research took place remotely throughout the fieldwork period.

d. Conclusions

The temporal circumstances of this research project guided the amount of material that I collected from participant observation, interviews and archival research. While I began to form relationships with Open Door residents and volunteers in November 2010, I did not start Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved research until six months later. This period of time was necessary not only to develop a proposal that would be satisfying to my committee and the IRB, but also to build relationships at the Open Door Community such that I would be welcome as a researcher. Open Door leaders have accepted a number of researchers in the past, but they emphasize that these community outsiders must become relatively dedicated and trusted volunteers before starting their work. Therefore, it was not until May 2011 that I was both academically and practically prepared to begin research. Following guidance from my

committee, I planned to end this research in September 2011 so that I could spend the fall and spring semesters analyzing and finally writing this thesis. I therefore spent six months doing the fieldwork component of this project. Rather than engage longer-term data collection methods with the Open Door Community such as ethnography, this amount of data collection was the most fitting for the time period in which this project took place.

III. Method of analysis

In order to analyze interviews and participant observation field notes, I transcribed them and coded parts of them using NVivo. This software allowed me to sort and categorize my findings, and to identify important themes in Open Door Community residents' and volunteers' statements and writings. I used *a priori* (based on the research questions and theoretical framework) and emergent coding (based on themes that emerged from fieldwork) to analyze the material (Glesne 1999). *A priori* coding was an essential tool for grounding this study within this project's original conceptual framework, but this project's growth – both theoretically and empirically – meant that I added several key emergent codes over the course of the fieldwork. Then, instead of codes based on keywords, I constructed my codes around important themes (Glesne 1999). The *a priori* themes were as follows:

- Practices and strategies in which residents and volunteers engage around the conditions of homelessness in Atlanta
- Religious and theological influences on the Open Door Community
- Residents' and volunteers' political perspectives on homelessness in Atlanta

Then, the following emergent themes demonstrate the complexity that developed in the conceptual and empirical parts of this project during the process of doing fieldwork. These themes were as follows:

- Links between survival-based service work, political praxis, and knowledge-making
- Dynamics of race in the community
- Gender dynamics in the community
- Other components of positional relationships at Open Door
- Perspectives on homeless people as individuals
- Open Door's relationship with local police and neighbors
- Significance of food and eating together as a community
- Reflections on Open Door's history

After transcribing and coding the material using NVivo, I was able to link it to my research questions in a more organized way than if I had not engaged this method of analysis.

Archival data was analyzed using the same *a priori* and emergent themes listed above. A disadvantage of this archival research was that the amount of materials to analyze was much larger than that which I collected from participant observation and interviews. I therefore needed to develop a good method to sort through archives, because it was unproductive to read every word of every document that I could access. Nonetheless, I also considered it unsatisfactory to sort through articles looking only for *a priori* themes; it was necessary to create space for

emergent themes in the archival process. I began the archival analysis by reading in full *A Work of Hospitality: The Open Door Reader, 1982-2002* (Gathje 2002). Although this book was not a perfect first source because of its limited scope and the positional closeness of its editor to Open Door leaders, it provided the most comprehensive collection to which I had access of Open Door's full thirty years of *Hospitality* articles. Most of the emergent themes for this project came out of my reading of that anthology. As I read *A Work of Hospitality*, I took note of common emergent themes that arose in addition to the *a priori* ones (Peräkylä 2005). Then, I used this foundation created through my reading of *A Work of Hospitality* to scan the other documents to which I had access – which included *Hospitality* articles dating to 2003, Sunday worship service programs dating to 2006, and several books published by the Open Door Community Press – for the *a priori* themes as well as the emergent ones developed through my analysis of *A Work of Hospitality* (Gathje 2002).

IV. Method of interpretation

In analyzing the material collected from interviews, participant observation and archival research, I was attentive to Norman Fairclough's extensive writing on what he has called critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1989, 1995, 1997, 2007). Fairclough argues that language should not be taken at face value; rather, the ideologies and relations of power expressed through language as well as the social context in which it operates should all be considered when interpreting conversations, billboards, interviews, television news and other texts. Language, he insists, should therefore be treated as both “discourse and as social practice” (Fairclough 1989, 26). What must then be analyzed is “the relationship between texts, processes, and their social conditions, both the immediate conditions of the situational context and the more remote

conditions of institutional and social structures (Fairclough 1989, 26). More generally, this practice pays close attention to the "meaning-making" or semiotic abilities of spoken and written texts, as well as the power relations between and among those who speak and write (Fairclough et al. 2007, 10). As Teo notes, "by analyzing the linguistic structures and discourse strategies in light of their interactional and wider social contexts, we can unlock the ideologies and recover the social meanings expressed in discourse" (Teo 2000, 11). Critical discourse analysis of each interview, *Hospitality* article and set of field notes therefore shaped an interpretation of these materials that paid close attention to the relationship between discourse and power.

This thesis follows the concepts of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis in several central ways. I recognize and regularly point to Open Door's teachings about service and justice as a discourse that is carefully structured and put forth by leaders through soup kitchen teaching sessions, publications and protest activities. I point to this discourse's dominance in these arenas of Open Door life, and suggest that it may be more accessible to relatively privileged residents and volunteers like summer resident Gina and Mission Year volunteer Benjamin. Chapter Six then seeks to understand the community's politics beyond these most dominant discourses of Open Door life.

V. Participants and privacy

a. Participants

Three of these participants are residents of the Open Door Community who have lived there for at least seven years, and who serve on the decision-making body called the Leadership Team. One of these leaders is Eduard, an Open Door founder and former seminarian who, along with

his wife Murphy, is one of the most public faces of the Open Door Community. He has published many newsletter articles and several books outlining the religious and political philosophies upon which Open Door Community practices are based, and he frequently leads teaching sessions. Gladys is another long-time resident and leader who has lived in the community with her husband, Dick, for over twenty years since leaving a career as a teacher in the late 1980s. Nelia has known Eduard and Murphy since they became friends through seminary networks in Atlanta in the 1970s, and moved to the Open Door Community with her husband Calvin in 2004 after spending many years as an artist and founder of another intentional Christian community in Indiana. Three more participants were, at the time of their interviews, residents of the community who did not hold leadership positions. One of them, Gina, is a college student and cradle member of the Mennonite Church USA who lived at the Open Door during the summer of 2011. Daniel, the first person who volunteered to be interviewed for this project, lived in the community after being released from prison. After a month as a resident, he re-offended, then was arrested and likely re-incarcerated. Finally, Howard is a devout Baptist who has been homeless in the past and who lived at the Open Door Community for nearly a year. All residents must commit themselves full time to all that community life entails at Open Door without outside employment, and they receive only about $11 per week for personal needs. This kind of commitment to living in community can require considerable personal sacrifice and substantial dedication to the Open Door Community's ideals. For others, living at Open Door is a lucky break from homelessness. I wanted to gain insight into the perspectives of people who have been motivated to choose Open Door as a home, as well as those who live in the community more for survival-related reasons. Interviewing people who actually live at the Open Door Community also helped me to understand how the community functions on a day-to-day basis.

Additionally, I interviewed a number of people who do not live at Open Door, but who are committed and regularly involved members of the community. Although Open Door Community life might seem to revolve around its residential community, non-residential volunteers' contributions were crucial to understanding how Open Door leaders maintain a supportive community of people who do not live in the house. Furthermore, regular non-residential volunteers can be just as familiar as residents with the community's survival-based service work, which was the primary focus of my research. One interview participant, Fred, has been volunteering at Open Door for twenty-five years after meeting Eduard through local activist projects, including meetings for the PUSH Rainbow Coalition. Olive is a volunteer of sixteen years who claims more conservative political views than Open Door leaders, but who remains dedicated to the Open Door because, as she said, "It's . . . the most important thing I do . . . and it is a blessing to me" (Interview with Olive, July 2011). Charles is a retired auto worker who has been volunteering at the Open Door Community for three years, but has been familiar with the community and has developed friendships with many of its homeless guests since 1992. Steve was homeless for about 23 years, was an Open Door guest for five of those years, and has now been a regular volunteer for two years. Clive, Victor, and Benjamin have each been volunteers for one or two years. Outside Open Door, they have been involved with various local progressive churches like famously intercultural Oakhurst Presbyterian Church (Clive) and Midtown Bridge Church (Victor), as well as religious service projects like Mission Year (Benjamin) and Mercy Community Church (Clive). Finally, Jennifer is a friend of Matthew who visited the community only twice. I conducted an interview with her in order to gain a very new volunteer's perspective of the work that Open Door does. Of the fourteen interview participants, half are African-

American and half are white (including all three leaders). Nine interview participants are men, and five are women.

b. Privacy and pseudonyms

The names of interview participants have been changed, except for Eduard, Murphy, Gladys and Nelia. Following the University of Georgia's privacy guidelines, I have kept these leadership team members' names in tact because of their public association with the Open Door Community.

VI. Process and positionality

a. Uncovering process

Feminist theorist Barbara DuBois has suggested that in order to do social science research that counters the rigid subject-object separation of positivist epistemologies, "[w]e must . . . make our *processes* accessible" (DuBois 1983, 110, emphasis hers). In accordance with DuBois, this section explores the parts of this research process that I felt were successful, as well as some of the epistemological and ethical dilemmas I faced. Having the time and resources – specifically, a time-generous graduate research assistantship and a car - to do this kind of engaged research had a number of benefits for this project. First, visiting the Open Door Community on a bi-monthly basis for five months before officially beginning my fieldwork helped me to develop strong research questions. Open Door soup kitchens on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, which were the empirical focus of this project, are often chaotic and crowded. An average of 30 volunteers and 120 homeless guests pass through the house within a four hour period, and much social interaction takes place in large group settings which are often structured

by Open Door leaders as teaching sessions. With limited opportunities for one-on-one conversations, it took several months for me to get to know individual people at Open Door, whose reflections on the community's survival-based service work were absolutely critical to developing a sense of the research questions I wanted to ask. Similarly, each soup kitchen and teaching session that I attended lent crucial new insights into the community's structure, history and priorities. While I could have primarily built research questions from Open Door's published materials and only a handful of soup kitchens and teaching sessions, being able to spend such a long period of time at Open Door before formulating these questions made them much stronger.

The value of doing such engaged research is also evident in that many times throughout this initial five month period of pre-fieldwork, I found that various assumptions I had held about the community were not correct. For example, I frequently misunderstood the extent to which people who are homeless or formerly homeless participate in Open Door soup kitchens as trusted volunteers and community members. I was long convinced that Steve, a white volunteer in his sixties whose participation has become central to this project's conclusions, was from a similar middle class background to many Open Door leaders. During a teaching session approximately three months into my volunteer work, I was genuinely shocked when he referred to his homeless past and struggles with addiction. These kinds of realizations happened many times with other Open Door residents and volunteers, and they are significant because my research questions grew out of this understanding of Open Door as a place in which the boundaries between 'helpers' and 'helped' are blurry. This often ambiguous line that can easily go unnoticed is in fact an intentional part of a structure that Open Door leaders have created in an attempt to “reduce the distance” that they believe sustains oppressive societal hierarchies (Loring 2010). Throughout

my research and in this thesis, I have therefore asked questions that consider how the uneven class and race positionalities within this structure impact Open Door's philosophies and practices.

As well as being critical to developing salient research questions, this long-term engaged approach helped me to build trusting relationships with the Open Door Community residents and volunteers who would become participants in this project. These relationships have resulted in an ability on my part to make stronger knowledge claims than if this project had used a less involved approach. Most basically, establishing myself as a trusted volunteer as well as researcher meant that those who chose to participate in this project had at least some awareness that I had concern for the community's well-being rather than only valuing Open Door in terms of its usefulness for my research. Perhaps the best example of these relationships' epistemological value is the results of my interview with Open Door founder Eduard, which did not take place until November 2011. During this interview, he remarked that he was enthusiastic to talk with me because of the apparently unusual commitment that I had shown to the community as a researcher over the past eleven months. Because of his comments, I felt comfortable asking him some of the most challenging but important questions about life at Open Door, including questions about the predominance of white leaders and the community's potential role in the institutionalization of homelessness in Atlanta. Eduard's willingness to discuss these topics with me lent invaluable insights to my analysis of those questions. Without my engaged research approach, this kind of richness and depth would not have been possible.

1. Issues with critical distance

However, this productive approach as a long-term participant observer also created some problems around critical distance. Quite often, I noticed slippage between being a community

member who is integral to Open Door's work and a researcher who simply volunteers at Open Door. I detail some of the tensions that have arisen between these roles below, but here I would like to clarify what I have generally seen as the distinctions between the roles of community member and researcher. Scholarship on feminist methods has pointed to an "insider/outsider" dilemma that can be ethically challenging but that can also raise questions about whether sound knowledge is being made. While this work does not necessarily draw a strict binary between insiders and outsiders, it tends to explore the conflicts that stem from researchers who are both insiders and outsiders at once. A common insider/outsider situation arises when a researcher works with a group of people who share the same, often marginalized ethnic background. While many have argued for the benefits of ethnic insider status for access, ethics and knowledge-making, Patricia Zavella asserts that her "status as a simultaneous cultural 'insider' and Chicana feminist researcher reflected a conundrum" (Zavella 1987, 138). In her study of a community of Chicana cannery workers, Zavella found that her "sense of Chicana feminist identity, constructed through participation in the Chicano movement, ironically hindered my understanding of the nuances of the ethnic identity of the women I studied and regarded as historical actors" (Zavella 1987, 138). Here, Zavella expresses doubts not about whether her research was ethical (a concern that she addresses at other points), but whether it was intellectually valid given this closeness to her research participants.

Zavella's reflections provide some perspective on the confusion around closeness and critical distance that I have felt at the Open Door Community. When I began this research, I thought that certain points of positionality – like my race and class privilege, the substantial age gap between myself and most residents, the fact that I do not share the community's Christian

beliefs, and my gender identity – would be particularly consequential. In actuality, the most difficult point of positionality was my sympathy to Open Door's politics, which is itself tied up in the privileges that I share with the Open Door leaders who most vocally put forth their political perspectives. While I do not agree wholeheartedly with Open Door leaders and other residents and volunteers on every political point, I agree with them on many issues and am inspired by the commitment and compassion that they bring to their life together. This sense of commonality and affection sometimes made me concerned that I might not have enough critical distance from my research and therefore might be missing important insights about the community. I found Kim Etherington's concept of reflexivity indispensable for working through this particular positional issue. Reflexivity is "an ability to notice our responses to the world around us, other people and events, and to use that knowledge to inform our actions, communications and understandings" (Etherington 2004, 19). In my research, reflexivity entailed noting the strongest points of political commonality and shared privilege with Open Door leaders. While analyzing research materials, I then aimed to cast a strong critical eye on those intersecting places.

Throughout my time as a participant observer, these insider/outsider boundaries were nonetheless continually problematic. As well as the epistemological issues I describe above, I was concerned about exploiting research participants as well as homeless guests by developing close relationships with them, following Judith Stacey's assertion that "the greater the intimacy [in fieldwork relationships] . . . the greater is the danger" of exploitation (Stacey 1991, 114). As I volunteered more frequently, leaders began to entrust me with more responsibility, which added to my sense that I was increasingly considered an insider. I also developed closer personal relationships with residents and volunteers than during the previous six months in which I

volunteered only once every two weeks. Then, towards the end of my fieldwork in September 2011, the announcement of Georgia death row inmate Troy Davis's execution date had a chaotic impact on life at Open Door. Open Door leaders who run the community's death row ministry had fostered a relationship with Davis over his more than twenty years of incarceration, and had advocated for him as part of their ongoing anti-death penalty activism. In the two weeks before his execution, the community became extremely busy organizing vigils and protests on Davis's behalf. The events also took a significant personal toll on some community members, particularly those Open Door leaders who had frequently communicated with or met Davis during his years on death row. I felt empathy for community members as they struggled to do their usual work as well as participate in advocacy efforts and confront the emotional effects of what they saw as a grave injustice.

These tumultuous times around Davis's execution complicated this research because the potential to exploit the community's sorrow for the sake of this project became higher. In her *Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork* (ed.), Diane L. Wolf notes an ethical conundrum that can take place in fieldwork when "the crises and tragedies we see occurring to our respondents or study population – for example, death, illness, and natural disasters – may enhance our own research by exposing basic relationships or social processes that we would not have observed otherwise" (Wolf 1996, 21). This statement aptly describes my sentiments in the periods before and after Davis's execution. The impact of Davis's impending death on members of the Open Door Community showed me two important aspects of life there that I would not have been able to witness were it not for the tragic events at hand, the second one of which very directly informs my argument in this work. First, I was able to see how members of the Open Door Community

bring their political activism into public spaces. I had not previously been able to attend any of their public actions, which this year included smaller vigils outside Atlanta's Capitol building for men on Georgia's death row, a vigil and outdoor encampment during Holy Week and Easter, and a trip to the widely attended annual School of the Americas protest in Columbus, Georgia. Here, I was able to be with them as they participated in two large public actions that attracted several thousand people. At one of these, I saw that leaders like Eduard recognized and stopped to speak with nearly every homeless person on the crowded streets of the downtown and Auburn Avenue area, which showed me a depth of acquaintance on his part with Atlanta homeless people that I had not witnessed before. At a prayer vigil that was partly led by Open Door leaders, I noted that while some vigil attendees seemed comforted by Open Door speakers' references to Christianity, others outwardly expressed discomfort towards the vigil's explicitly religious overtones. This experience helped me to better understand some of the wider political context in which Open Door residents and volunteers do their work. More generally, my attendance at both the march and vigil provided insight into the Open Door's significant capacity to mobilize quickly on political issues while still engaging in the service work, prayer and reflection and that is also an integral part of community life.

In addition, my experiences at the Open Door in the two weeks before Davis's execution helped me to better comprehend how leaders conceptualize the relationship between service work and political engagement. A particularly poignant moment encapsulated this shift in my understanding. It was announced on the Tuesday morning before Davis's Wednesday execution date that his final opportunity for clemency had been denied; this announcement was made about forty-five minutes before the pre-soup kitchen teaching session usually starts. Not having heard

the bad news, I arrived at Open Door to find residents and Tuesday volunteers somberly sitting in a circle in the dining room, which was dimly lit by three candles on an altar table in the middle of the circle. Instead of leading a typical teaching session, Eduard asked anyone who was willing to speak about their feelings and reflections about the situation. The discussion that followed was muted and marked by a heavy mood. On the drive from Athens, I had wondered whether the community would have the energy and resources to do a full soup kitchen. After this difficult period of discussion, though, Nelia told the circle that it was at that moment more important than ever to serve food to the homeless men waiting outside, that doing so was a way to keep alive the sense of justice that was missing from Davis's case. Residents and volunteers were then as attentive as ever during the soup kitchen. To a degree that I had not previously understood, Nelia's statement and the mood of the soup kitchen that followed showed me how central Open Door's service work is to their political knowledge-making and praxis, an insight that has strongly shaped the focus of this thesis.

2. Conclusions

Wolf's notes on the problematic nature of benefits to research that come from a tragic event continue to resonate with me after these weighty experiences around Davis's execution, and there are no easy answers to these questions about the exploitative elements of research. The insights I describe above point to a certain depth and strength of character held by Open Door residents and volunteers that helps me to better describe the ways that survival-based service work is such a profound element of their political work, which is closely linked to this thesis's central arguments. However, what if the events around Davis's death had revealed more unpleasant qualities about community practices and dynamics? Surely these observations would

still be 'good' for my research in the sense that they would better contextualize my research questions and broaden my understanding of the Open Door Community. However, I am not sure how I would have confronted the ethical and epistemological dimensions of writing if my observations around Troy Davis's execution had led to a less flattering portrayal of Open Door. While in this case the 'benefits' to my research of these unjust events help me to craft a better and more compassionately rendered argument about the Open Door Community, the questions that Wolf and Stacey pose deserve continuing consideration during the writing of this thesis project as well as in future research.

The next two chapters put forth arguments that emerge from the empirical work whose methods I have detailed in this chapter. In order to imbue these arguments with methodological rigor, it has been necessary to absorb the insights around reflexivity and critical distance that I discuss here. I have approached the empirical chapters with careful consideration of these issues.

Chapter Five: Analysis Part 1 - Soup and Justice

"There has always been something wrong about the way we live together."

- Interview with Nelia, July 2011

I. Introduction

Open Door leaders, residents and volunteers have described their community as desirable because of its unusually balanced commitment to both service and justice. I argue in this chapter, however, that Open Door's framework more accurately situates service work as the very center of the community's political praxis. In this conception, service is no longer either an anemic complement or a regressive enemy of the justice side of that binary. I call this schema in which politics pivot on service Open Door's *liberationist theo-politics*, so named because its principle aim is to put forth a vision of a society liberated from the oppressions of racialized homelessness and poverty. The term *theo-politics* then refers to the profoundly interwoven strands of religious reflection and political analysis that inform service's centrality within this approach. As the most active guides of the community's liberationist theo-politics, Open Door leaders place the scale of interpersonal relationships with the most marginalized people as the most important part of spiritual and political life and thought. I aim to bring out this philosophy's implications for the role of service or social welfare work more clearly by arguing that service work definitively forms the center of Open Door's framework, and as such I demonstrate that it can take on a

political potency that is not acknowledged when service is schematically separated from justice. Indeed, this section posits that Open Door's interpretation of the teachings of Martin Luther King, Jr., Latin American liberation theology, and the Catholic Worker movement as primary influences - as well as their reliance on Matthew 25:31-46 as a foundational scripture - deconstructs the binary of service vs. justice by placing service work as the dynamic center of a political praxis.

II. Matthew 25: Open Door's foundation of service as theo-politics

A passage from the gospel of Matthew is the scriptural foundation of what I characterize as Open Door's positioning of service work, and the scale of interpersonal relationships on which it takes place, as the center from which political action and knowledge must emerge. In the context of Open Door's work, this passage is used to speak to the importance of serving homeless people's immediate needs for food, medical care and shelter; this section of Matthew has been critical to Open Door's praxis since the community's inception. Murphy, an Open Door co-founder, wrote in a 1994 *Hospitality* article that "Matthew 25:31–46 is at the foundation of all we hope to do and be in the Open Door Community" (Gathje 2002, 20). The part of the passage that is most pivotal for Open Door , in which Jesus tells his disciples about the spiritual significance of feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, and visiting the prisoner, remains a theological lynchpin of Open Door's service work today.

> 31 "When the Son of Man6 comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate

6 This passage, as well as all other Bible passages in this thesis, is from the New International Version. Open Door leaders often change the wording of passages for gender inclusiveness while reading aloud in teaching sessions.

> the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.
>
> 34 “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’
>
> 37 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’
>
> 40 “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, *whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me*.’
>
> (New International Version)

According to Open Door leaders’ interpretation of the passage, tending to the needs of “the least of these” - the hungry, the stranger, the sick, the prisoner – becomes an act of corporeal connection to Jesus himself. Nelia, who became a leader in the community in 2003 after nearly thirty years of friendship with Eduard and Murphy, further points to the idea of Open Door's service work as a bodily engagement with Jesus in her remark that this passage evokes “the image that we are indeed welcoming Christ in the Open Door,” or that he is present in each homeless guest (Interview with Nelia, July 2011).

Several volunteers who do not have leadership roles in the community also noted Matthew 25:31-46 as an impetus to do service work. According to Benjamin, a twenty-seven year old volunteer with Christian service organization Mission Year, the idea that Jesus took corporeal form and as such “is able to sympathize, to empathize with [humans] . . . [that he] has actually, literally been there” is compelling (Interview with Benjamin, June 2011). Benjamin, who generally shares Open Door leaders' political perspective, expressed that Matthew 25:31-46

and its equation of Christ's human experience with the bodily struggles of the most marginalized people lends a sacred element to service work for a devout Christian like himself. He said that "[It's] like he [Jesus] is speaking to me through the poor . . . I think [the meaning of Matthew is] not just sort of, oh I approve of you helping out poor people that's good, but it's like really . . . a profound sense of Jesus himself in a sense being in the poor" (Interview with Benjamin, June 2011). Fred, a volunteer of twenty-five years, characterized this bodily engagement with the most marginalized people as a non-negotiable responsibility for all Christians according to this part of the gospel of Matthew. He said that because of the line "when I was hungry, you fed me . . . well that's what I do, that's what we're supposed to do in the name of Christ . . . that's all our Christian duty" (Interview with Fred, September 2011). Chastising Christians who neglect this mandate, Fred said that "if you talk the talk you need to walk the walk. Show people, we ain't in Missouri, but show me, you know" (Interview with Fred, September 2011). According to these volunteers' analyses, it is therefore both sacred and spiritually mandated that Open Door does direct service work.

However, an engagement with Matthew 25:31-46 as a call to do direct social welfare work is common in Christian service organizations of all political orientations. What makes Open Door's adherence to this scripture any different from, for example, an evangelical mission run by people who might vehemently disagree with Open Door's leftist critiques? Part of what I demonstrate in this section is that at Open Door, Matthew 25:31-46 helps to set a clear position for service work within a radical political analysis that starts at the scale of individual homeless people's bodies. Confronting questions about the effectiveness of their service work, Open Door leaders have drawn on this scripture to insist that attending to the immediate bodily needs of

homeless people is a critical, biblically mandated part of an emancipatory political praxis. Indeed, the significance of this passage for Open Door is that it serves as a spiritual requirement to be physically close to the most marginalized people in order to tend to the material needs that allow them to survive in the context of what Gilmore has called “abandonment” by state actors (Gilmore 2007, 44). For Open Door residents and volunteers, Matthew 25:31-46 creates an imperative to do the kind of work that scholars and organizations with otherwise similar political analyses have critiqued as ineffective against the structures of poverty that many Open Door residents and volunteers wish to change. Although Open Door leaders have expressed fears that such work *is* only a Band-Aid - as those critics maintain - they continue to hold soup kitchens and clinics because of their Matthew 25-informed conviction that acting from this scale of interpersonal relationships plays a critical role in their politics. In the remainder of this chapter, I explore how the teachings of Latin American liberation theologians, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Catholic Worker movement constitute a liberationist theo-politics at the Open Door Community in which service work is actually the lynchpin of political solidarity, knowledge-making and daily practice.

III. Interpreting Martin Luther King, Jr.: How Open Door places service at the center of theo-political action

Martin Luther King, Jr. left a lasting impression on Open Door co-founder Eduard when Eduard first encountered King's work in the 1960s, and King's legacy has since become central to the Open Door Community’s liberationist theo-politics (Interview with Eduard, November 2011). Inspired by King’s teachings on racial and economic justice in the 1960s before King died, Eduard more consciously “made a commitment to Dr. King on the night he was killed,” visiting Memphis two days after King’s assassination (Interview with Eduard, November 2011).

“I went in a coat and a tie [laughs] and dress shoes. That’s just to show you how far out I was, you know really from the movement,” he told me (Interview with Eduard, November 2011). The central significance of King for Open Door is that his teachings have convinced leaders that it is crucial to start political movement at the scale of interpersonal relationships, with close attention to racial and economic injustice. Their adherence to King centers around his later work, which is generally considered radically anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist in comparison to his earlier, narrower focus on civil rights. In this section, I identify three interrelated ways in which those teachings have helped to shape service work as a dynamic part of Open Door’s political praxis. First, King’s complication of the boundaries between “love and justice” allows both service and more traditionally conceptualized political resistance to together be part of a resistant political praxis, and counters the idea that the latter is more politically legitimate and consequential than the former. Secondly, his concept of a “person-oriented” “revolution of values” makes space for the “love” practice of service work to play a central political role in its own right (Interview with Eduard, November 2011, King 1967). Thirdly, the wider context of these two concepts is King’s “profound theology of black and white together” (Interview with Eduard, November 2011). King’s teachings on racial justice have convinced Open Door leaders to incorporate analyses of systemic racism as a lynchpin of their service-centered praxis.

Open Door leaders like Eduard have interpreted King's teachings on the binary between Christian love and social justice as a call to include service work in their political praxis. Raised in lower South Carolina in “a culture that separated the church from politics,” Eduard was moved by King’s insistence upon combining interpersonally engaged practices of Christian charity with racial and economic justice, particularly King’s emphasis on this concept in his 1967 “Where Do

We Go From Here?" speech (Interview with Eduard, November 2011, King 1967). Perceiving that a conceptual separation between the two was especially strong in the South, Eduard felt a regional sort of kinship with King, noting that

> "King was a Southerner, and King was very convincing to a little white boy like I was of the relationship between love and justice." (Interview with Eduard, November 2011)

In King, then, Eduard realized the possibility of merging his background as a student of church history with his growing interest in contemporary issues of social justice. His desire to bridge this binary has fundamentally informed the practices of the Open Door Community. There, work associated with love or charity according to this dichotomy – like soup kitchens – takes place alongside political actions more commonly thought of as resistance- or justice-oriented. Deconstructing the opposition between love and justice in this way serves to muddle the idea that a groundbreaking radical politics can only really emerge from the justice side of that binary. Instead of subscribing to the idea that only their protests and publications constitute the 'real' political work, Eduard's and other Open Door leaders' embrace of this framework of King's creates space for politics to be part of the lived experiences of service.

King's concept of a "revolution of values," which he outlined in a seminal 1967 speech against the Vietnam War, further fortifies a position for the centrality of service work at Open Door because it explicitly suggests that political movement must start at the scale of interpersonal relationships (King 1967). In this speech, King called upon listeners to adopt a "person-oriented" approach to the world which would necessarily include an incisive critique of capitalist structures (King 1967). While King played an invaluable role in securing the legislative

victories of the Civil Rights era, he believed that substantial struggle was still necessary to change the structures under which African American people and other people of color remained socioeconomically disadvantaged. This approach to building that social change by focusing on interpersonal relationships and transformation was the means that he proposed would bring about such change. In Eduard's 2010 book *The Cry of the Poor: Cracking White Male Supremacy – An Incendiary and Militant Proposal,* he suggests a "reigniti[on]" of King's Poor People's Campaign "with his concomitant 'revolution of values'" (Loring 2010, 29). Eduard interprets King's words as a mandate to reach out to people who are at the margins of society, as he writes that "if a revolution of values is going to take place . . . we must stand with the poorest of the poor" (Loring 2010, 11). He further clarifies that his invitation to "stand with" such people as King did is more than symbolic, as he insists that

> "There is no salvation, no hope, no education in truth, power and peace for white people, most particularly white men who have medical insurance, without choosing to be WITH the outcasts, homeless and prisoners. By "with" I connote: in our bodies (where we live and with whom we eat), with our money, with our political visions and policies, on our vacations, at our churches, mosques, and synagogues, *yes*, with our very blood and lives." (Loring 2010, 33)

Eduard thus advocates a form of political solidarity that, resembling King's "person-oriented" strategy, is based on an active corporeal engagement with these most marginalized people (King 1967). Indeed, this call to the "revolution of values" using one's body is the bedrock of Eduard's King-inspired approach to confronting the "structure of domination" (Loring 2010, 5).

This interpretation of King's "person-oriented" approach creates a place for service work as the foundation of Open Door's political praxis because of its legitimation of interpersonal relationships as a building block for movement (King 1967). One could argue that instead of

spending time and resources on soup kitchens and medical clinics, Open Door ought to place all of their “person-oriented” focus on building close organizing relationships with homeless people (King 1967). The materialities of many of Open Door’s homeless guests’ daily lives, however, are so lacking that sharing the community’s copious resources becomes an essential part of forming relationships with them. A “person-oriented” approach to a politics around homelessness necessarily involves, and may even be strengthened by this attention to homeless people’s most basic needs. Moreover, as I detail further in the next chapter, the community built around service work does in fact have the potential to foster organizing partnerships and political leadership among some homeless and formerly homeless people. Eduard’s and other Open Door leaders’ interpretation of King’s deconstruction of love vs. justice certainly makes space for service work in their political praxis. Their use of King’s “person-oriented” “revolution of values,” though, more overtly places the scale of interpersonal relationships as the center from which other political actions emanate (King 1967). Then, because of homeless people's material poverty, service work that attempts to meet their basic needs becomes a critical element in starting Open Door's politics around homelessness at the scale of interpersonal relationships.

Finally, King’s position as a Civil Rights movement leader for racial and, later, economic justice fundamentally formed the context for this “love and justice” approach as well as his “revolution of values” (Interview with Eduard, November 2011, King 1967). Open Door leaders' use of King as one of the guiding figures of the community’s work is intended as a symbol of “welcome,” an intention imbued with the acknowledgment that the majority of Open Door’s homeless guests are African American men (Interview with Eduard, November 2011). However, while many white people have used King’s anti-segregationist stance to suggest that racial

differences ought to be transcended or erased in a “color blind” schema, Open Door leaders foster an environment in which residents and volunteers are encouraged to confront and try to work through rather than ignore racial tensions (Bonilla-Silva 2006). For Open Door's theo-political framework, then, King is positioned as an embodied reminder of what Eduard calls “the unfinished agenda … [of] racial justice,” or the change that still needs to occur to remedy past and present racial inequalities, particularly those between African American and white people (Interview with Eduard, November 2011). Within the schema of service work as the dynamic center of a liberationist theo-politics at Open Door, King's presence as a vital figure serves to constantly push those politics towards an analysis that is attentive to the racialized character of homelessness as well as closely related realities of poverty and criminal justice.

Open Door leaders' interpretation of these teachings of King then helps them to deconstruct the boundaries between charity and justice through an embodied approach that emphasizes, above all, being in close proximity to the poorest people. In addition, King's influence in the community functions to insist that the racialized character of homelessness is an integral part of the community's theo-political analyses. The consequences of King's impact on Open Door for the 'Band-Aid' argument is that it places such a “person-oriented” approach as the key solution to intertwined racial and economic woes (King 1967). Using King as a guiding influence, Open Door's practices are built around this physical closeness; their regular service work that attempts to provide for homeless people's material needs is the pivotal means by which the Open Door Community “stand[s] with” them (Loring 2010, 33). Although the community has extensively engaged in street protests during its thirty year history, the soup kitchens and clinics that have also been a consistent feature of Open Door life are the base from which this

political action is shaped. This means that service work has the potential to be a rich point at which to form political solidarity – a locus of action that can also be the basis for other forms of emancipatory political praxis.

IV. Influences from Latin American liberation theology and Freire: How Open Door places service as the center of theo-political knowledge-making

Open Door leaders have also been strongly influenced by concepts from Latin American liberation theology and Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that emphasize marginalized people as the most vital agents in history and knowledge-making (Gutierrez 1971, Freire 1970). Their engagement with these strands of thought further positions their service work as not only a vital part of action in a liberationist theo-politics, but as a site from which knowledge that informs such movement is created. As I further describe later in this section, the teaching sessions that shepherd soup kitchen volunteers through their service are based on Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Eduard's interpretation of its guiding principle that “the poor are the subjects of their own history, and that by listening to the cry of the poor you find the directions of thought” (Interview with Eduard, November 2011). While Freire was not one of the original liberation theologians, his critical pedagogy is in many ways impacted by related concepts from those strands of thought that place marginalized people at the center of historical analysis (The Freire Project 2010). This philosophy is not just the building block of teaching sessions, but is key to much of Open Door's approach. A 1994 *Hospitality* article by Open Door co-founder Murphy, for example, argues in favor of a “liberation spirituality” that crafts theo-political knowledge out of the visceral experiences of poverty and oppression (Gathje [1994] 2002, 20). She writes,

> "Generally we read Matthew 25 as a mandate for action. But it is about more than action. It is a description of a spirituality: a liberation spirituality that teaches us about the complete transformation, conversion, change of orientation that scripture calls for. As the Latin American liberation theologians teach us, a spirituality that is not concrete is not real. Our spirituality is a manner of life that gives unity to our thought, prayer, and action." (Gathje 2002, 21)

Rather than simply act upon Matthew 25 by feeding and clothing people who need those things, Murphy indicates here that adherence to Matthew 25 as a liberation spirituality should shift people's entire way of being so that they examine God and the world from the perspective of the "concrete" realities faced by people who live in poverty (Gathje 2002, 21). I characterize this "change of orientation" as theo-political *knowledge-making* because it requires a shift to a different paradigm of thought based on active engagement with those materialities of marginalization (Gathje 2002, 21). The concept of a liberation spirituality therefore suggests that the experiences of poverty foster vital spiritual and political knowledge that must become a basis not for co-optation by more privileged people, but for a solidarity that pivots on the recognition of its value.

Another, later *Hospitality* article written by Murphy brings this liberation spirituality more directly into connection with the concept of a theo-politics that starts knowledge at the scale of the most marginalized people, tying the Matthew 25 verses to Gustavo Gutierrez's concept of a "preferential option for the poor" (Gutierrez 1971, Gathje [1998] 2002, 30). Murphy argues that by practicing the mandate of Matthew 25:31-46,

> "we are given the eyes to see God – especially in the suffering of those who are forgotten and condemned. This is the basis for solidarity, the basis for a preferential option for the poor, the basis from which the poor and oppressed can begin to set agenda in our lives." (Gathje 2002, 30)

Here, Murphy asserts that the Matthew passage, foundational as it is to the Open Door Community, is about more than giving food, medicine, clothing, and shelter to 'needy' people when possible. Through seeing divinity rather than dirt and disgust in the most marginalized people's situations, as Matthew 25 implores Christians to do, such Christians should be educated by their suffering. For Murphy, through this sustained attention to these dire circumstances Christians should allow the experiences of poor and suffering people to “set [their] agenda,” a concept that echoes Freire's pedagogy (Gathje 2002, 30). Indeed, the call to “do for the least of these” as in Matthew 25 should teach those who follow this part of the gospel about the need to change the structures that perpetuate such suffering. Murphy's insistence that the people who are most cast aside by present social structures should have a “preferential option” and should “set agenda” deeply challenges conventions of service as condescending charity to which no one is entitled but must receive as a gift from the kindness of more 'fortunate' people (Gathje 2002, 30). This more conventional view often casts charity recipients as helpless, irresponsible, or endearing in an infantilized way. Murphy's interpretation of the epistemological role of the 'served', however, places them at the center of knowledge-making; it is from their experiences that more privileged people can learn anything at all about how to resolve the social ills that perpetuate such suffering.

The significance of these Open Door leaders' arguments based in Latin American liberation theology is that by placing history- and knowledge-making as the province of poor and oppressed people, they make it their responsibility as white privileged people who strive for social justice to become close to those most marginalized people. Given their Gutierrez- and Freire-influenced determination that the experiences of homeless people in Atlanta must set the

agenda for their anti-homelessness political praxis, it becomes essential that leaders – because they are not themselves homeless - seek to intimately know the struggles of people living on the streets and in unstable housing situations in the city. In the abstract sense, forming ties to homeless people might not need to include service work, but the lived realities of homelessness are such that many homeless people are constantly in need of basic material assistance that will help them to survive on a daily basis. Out of their conviction that they must form relationships with homeless people so that their history and knowledge can set the agenda for a politics of housing justice, then, Open Door leaders have structured their own lives so that they may begin to fulfill those most basic needs.

Indeed, the particularities of their social welfare work for homeless people directly emerges from a close understanding of the realities of those people's lives; their weekly foot care clinic, for example, emerged from homeless people's testimonies of the ravages of street life upon their bodies. For Open Door, doing service work therefore becomes an indispensable part of their call to follow the teachings of Gutierrez and Freire. What they learn about the visceralities of homeless people's lives from service work informs the political position that they express in public protests, newsletters and books. However, in this schema social welfare work is not merely a conduit for bigger, better political action. Rather, service is in itself a dynamic political force precisely because it provides the space in which such liberationist knowledge can be created and shared between homeless people, housed advocates, and the many members of the Open Door's extended community who have been both of these. If the experiences of homeless people are indeed to set the agenda for the life decisions of people who strive for housing justice,

service work becomes an indispensable part of forming relationships with them in order to build a political praxis based in these teachings from Latin American liberation theology.

V. "Love in action": How the Catholic Worker movement further develops Open Door's framework and grounds it in a lived practice of theo-politics

The principles of the Catholic Worker movement are also central to Open Door's work, and the significance of Catholic Worker thought for Open Door is that it enables them to immerse themselves, through everyday lived experience, in their theo-politics that insists on starting analysis at the scale of interpersonal relationships with the most marginalized people. As I detail above, the teachings of Martin Luther King, Jr. are nearly or equally as important as Open Door leaders' commitment to the Catholic Worker. However, Eduard notes that Catholic Worker beliefs have perhaps the most pervasive influence on Open Door's practices because, as he said, "[we] live Dorothy Day every day" (Interview with Eduard, November 2011). While Catholic Worker teachings are not often the most central focus of Open Door soup kitchen teaching sessions or Sunday worship services, the philosophy and theology of Day and Maurin is nonetheless strongly present in the structure of life and service work of the Open Door Community. Open Door founders make the most direct links to the profound influence of Day and Maurin on the community, and one volunteer is particularly knowledgeable about Catholic Worker teachings and consciously shares many of their spiritual and political convictions. However, most volunteers and residents point to the model of service at Open Door as politically and spiritually meaningful, whether or not they are fully aware of its Catholic Worker origins. The primary role of the Catholic Worker movement in shaping Open Door's liberationist theo-politics, then, is that it has presented a practical way of living that is politically and spiritually relevant to Open Door, and that accommodates service work as an important part of daily life.

Day and Maurin's blueprint provided two of Open Door's co-founders, Eduard and Murphy, with an example of how they might situate the ethic of care that they had come to value as Presbyterian pastors with their burgeoning leftist political analyses. Eduard remained unaware of the Catholic Worker movement throughout his time as a student at Columbia Theological Seminary (an institution of the Presbyterian Church USA), and it was not until later that he learned about the movement's long history. On a trip to New York City in 1979 to raise funds for their church, which served as the epicenter of a local faith-based night shelter movement, he and Murphy made a side trip to Maryhouse, the Catholic Worker house where Dorothy Day lived until her death in 1980. The trip had a profound impact on the couple. Though according to Murphy they "never really met" Dorothy, Eduard said that "we spent a good hunk of the day with [the people at Maryhouse] and fell in love with that place, those people" (Gathje 2002, 29, Interview with Eduard, November 2011). Given a copy of Day's autobiography *The Long Loneliness*, he recounted that

> "the next day we were leaving on the train, and I started reading that book and I couldn't put it down. When I would put it down Murphy would pick it up. And by the time, oh within a week I guess . . . [w]e figured, here's something we've got to pursue." (Interview with Eduard, November 2011)

Eduard and Murphy's initial encounter with the Catholic Worker movement thus suggested a practical way for them to build what is now Open Door's well-established approach in which service work is a key part of their liberationist theo-politics.

Indeed, the Catholic Worker movement's long history has set precedent for left-oriented Christians like Open Door's founders to live communally with "the least of these," performing "works of mercy" centered around offering food, clothing, "welcome" and, to some, a shared

home (Forest 1997). Eduard has referred to Day's past as a Communist turned Catholic convert as part of the political roots of the movement, noting that “She learned the works of mercy from the communists. They would use a soup line or working with the children and all, like that [was] a way to organize families for the labor movement” (Interview with Eduard, November 2011). Although Day’s adherence to the works of mercy was not focused on organizing a critical mass of political dissenters as were the Communist Party’s food programs, the Catholic Worker movement has always been and continues to be deeply tied to leftist politics. Instead of a party-based politics, though, Day and Maurin strove to build a decentralized, “distributionist” movement that would ward off the need for a welfare state through personalism and collective caretaking (Zwick and Zwick 2005). Day and Maurin’s vision stemmed from the idea that living “love in action” with poor and disenfranchised people was the only solution to “tear[ing] down this filthy rotten system” (Gioseffi 1988, 103). Open Door’s basic structure of daily life, which has remained much the same since the community’s inception, is similar to Day and Maurin’s original conception of Catholic Worker houses of hospitality in that a group of residents from uneven social positions forms the core from which the community’s service work emanates. This service work primarily focuses on the material needs of homeless guests, which reflects Day’s works of corporal mercy. Day and Maurin’s original conception of how to foster a world “where it is easier for people to be good” has thus fundamentally shaped the daily practices of the Open Door Community (The Catholic Worker Movement 2008).

Furthermore, residents' and volunteers’ emphasis on the spiritual value of paying individualized attention to homeless guests while sharply critiquing the structures that perpetuate their homelessness reflects the Catholic Worker concept of personalism. This philosophy has

been developed into several distinct 'schools', but this thesis has focused on the version of personalism put forth by French theologians like Emmanuel Mounier and advocated from the Catholic Worker movement's beginnings (Williams and Bengtsson 2011). This iteration of personalism places heavy emphasis on each individual person's essential dignity, agency and spiritually-derived “destiny,” but, unlike neoliberal forms of individualism, recognizes the effects of societal structures on people's subjectivities (Zwick and Zwick 2005). At the same time, it suggests that Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin placed the form of personalism espoused by Mounier as a foundation of the Catholic Worker movement. Mounier's thought emphasized that “any movement or effort toward human rights must be based in the affirmation of the value of the person,” and placed “engagement and love and respect for the other person” as a key value (Zwick and Zwick 2005, 99-100). He insisted that this approach was markedly different from bourgeois individualism, with its focus on comfort and self-sufficiency, and from moralistic philosophies that are “restricted to the dimension of the individual without a foothold on history” (Zwick and Zwick 2005, 103). Instead, Mounier suggested that such deep engagement with other people must be placed in its economic, historical and political context. Zwick and Zwick (2005) argue that Day and Maurin's allegiance to personalism explains why they placed so much emphasis on engaging with social issues rather than withdrawing from the material world; in line with Mounier's teachings, they believed they needed to agentically act to challenge the material poverty of the Great Depression. Because the Open Door Community's structure of life and service is fundamentally based on the Catholic Worker approach to engaging individuals in the context of community, Open Door is itself profoundly enmeshed in a personalist tradition. All volunteers and residents participate in the personalist “method,” then, in the sense that the form

and scope of the service work they do at Open Door has been conceived according to personalist principles (Zwick and Zwick 2005).

The teachings of the Catholic Worker movement are significant for Open Door because they provide a basis for a "practice of everyday life" that allow the community to place service as key to a dynamic, lived leftist politics (de Certeau 1984). While Matthew 25:31-46 and related scriptures have long inspired Christians to engage in charity, Day and Maurin demonstrated an approach that placed such theologically driven ethics as a central, politically charged element of daily life. This framework then enabled Eduard and Murphy to place their religious convictions that strongly emphasized interpersonal care ethics within the context of an increasingly radical politics. Indeed, it is unlikely that Open Door would exist as it does today if Eduard and Murphy had not visited Maryhouse and witnessed a way to structure a communal life that had previously eluded them. Day and Maurin's thought has inspired the foundation of a shared house, 'hospitality' to the poorest neighbors, and the mouthpiece of a regular newsletter as a lived articulation of an embodied approach to leftist politics. Open Door's politics and practices are by no means identical to Day and Maurin's original vision, and Open Door exists in a vastly different political landscape than did the founding Catholic Worker communities. However, the influence upon Open Door of those first Worker houses has allowed them to draw a vital politics out of service within the constraints of a nonprofit industrial complex that so systemically depoliticizes and professionalizes those embodied relations of care.

In addition, the long history of Catholic Worker communities that have juxtaposed a left-derived politics with a personalist ethos has further guided practice at Open Door, as residents have attended annual Catholic Worker gatherings and formed relationships with members from

other Worker communities. These communities' parallel (though not identical) attempts to live out their values of closeness with the most marginalized people have been full of significant disappointments as well as successes. Worker communities have struggled, for example, to effectively bridge the vast gaps of class and race privilege that are often present between long-time leaders and short-term guests in houses of hospitality (Troester 1993). Vocalizing these shared experiences among dispersed communities serves to legitimize the Catholic Worker approach through those most difficult moments of doubt about the validity of the work. This support network of contemporary Catholic Worker communities helps Open Door leaders to pragmatically, often messily work through the realities of trying to live a theology of closeness through direct social welfare work within the context of a radical political perspective. Indeed, these relationships with other Catholic Worker houses allow Open Door to maintain a practice in which service work can form the center of their theo-politics.

VI. Action, reflection, transformation: How Open Door leaders frame service as the center of a theo-politics through teaching

Over thirty years, Open Door leaders as well as long-time residents and volunteers have crafted this approach to social welfare work that places it at the center of theo-political action and knowledge-making around homelessness in Atlanta. How do they demonstrate this power of service work, though, to the hundreds of shorter term volunteers and residents who pass through the community each year? As the literature on the nonprofit industrial complex shows, diverse factors presently function to depoliticize social welfare service. Despite the detailed philosophy behind Open Door leaders' conception of service work, it could nonetheless be easy to lose the work's connection to the community's theo-political analyses. It is therefore necessary to ask how, through daily practice rather than abstract arguments, the Open Door Community positions

service work as the epistemic center of their politics. In this section, I argue that the teaching sessions that Open Door holds before and after service work at soup kitchens are key to their ability to hold onto this framing of service throughout their multi-faceted political praxis. As Laura Pulido has noted, Los Angeles leftist organizations that participated in the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s similarly relied upon knowledge-sharing sessions; generally, 'teach-in' workshops remain a powerful tool of activism (Pulido 2006). At Open Door, teaching sessions consistently direct participants' attention to the lived experiences of service work and encourage them to draw theo-political analyses out of their reflections. Furthermore, the fact that these twice-weekly sessions emphasize learning from the praxis of service means that volunteers are pushed to develop particularly agile analyses that are able to shift according to new experiences rather than remain rigid or static. I draw on my experiences as a soup kitchen participant observer to outline the ways that these teaching sessions built around Tuesday and Wednesday soup kitchens are central to maintaining Open Door's liberationist theo-politics of service work.

The most tangible practical way in which the Open Door Community's service work helps to form the community's leftist political praxis is through teaching sessions that take place both before and after each Tuesday and Wednesday soup kitchen. For these sessions, which have been a part of Open Door life since the community's inception, soup kitchen volunteers are expected to arrive at least an hour before serving begins. They are then encouraged to stay after soup kitchen to eat lunch together and reflect on the morning's lesson and service (Field notes 2011). Teaching sessions before soup kitchens are fora in which the Open Door Community's commitment to justice can be discussed, developed, and disseminated in direct relation to the

service work that is the central activity of soup kitchens. As I demonstrate in the next several paragraphs, Open Door leaders' lessons about social justice are nearly always drawn from volunteers' experiences of participating in the service work of the soup kitchen. Leaders aim to develop knowledge through a participatory teaching approach whose structure is most clearly influenced by Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). Directly referencing Freire's emphasis on both experiential engagement with the world as well as classroom learning, Eduard calls Open Door's style of teaching the Action-Reflection-Transformation model. According to this schema, soup kitchen volunteers *act* during serving time, *reflect* before and afterward, and through these experiences develop pieces of *transformational* knowledge. As I argue in this section, this model helps to craft a living theo-political analysis out of work that might otherwise become repetitive or begin to seem futile as homelessness seems to become increasingly ossified.

During my five months as a participant observer, Eduard and Nelia were the two Open Door leaders who most often conducted these teaching sessions. Their teaching combines study of key scriptures with sharp critiques of capitalist structures that create and perpetuate homelessness and poverty. Most critically for this argument, Eduard and Nelia link these lessons to the social welfare work in which volunteers are about to participate so that the experiences of serving form the parameters of knowledge developed in each session. Nelia emphasizes the principles of Matthew 25:31-46 in her teaching, explaining that

> "it is [soup kitchen volunteers'] task . . . to be able to see that [Matthew 25 embodiment of Christ in homeless guests], to be able to see between, beyond the most difficult behaviors and the dirt and the urine and the addictions and all of that, to see the image of God in that person" (Interview with Nelia, July 2011).

At a teaching session in May 2011, Nelia taught this lesson in a particularly incisive way using a work of sculpture entitled The Vagrant Christ as a pedagogical device. This piece depicts a man wearing disheveled clothes and covered in blood who is painted black on the right side of his body and white on the left. He wears a crown of thorns made out of what looks like barbed wire, and a beanie-style hat. His eyes, painted on in black, gaze blankly ahead, and his mouth is a broad brushstroke across his face that slopes slightly downwards in a look of resignation. Nelia's use of The Vagrant Christ a teaching tool, as she asked volunteers how the sculpture reminded them of Open Door guests, first situated the forthcoming soup kitchen within a theological context according to which the bodily struggles of homeless people are equivalent to the torture of Jesus on the cross. Then, given that Jesus was persecuted by people in power in his own time, The Vagrant Christ could serve to prompt volunteers to question the structures of a society within which homeless people are similarly cast out. This teaching session therefore encouraged volunteers to examine the theo-political implications of homelessness starting at the scale of the interpersonal relations of that day's soup kitchen. With service at the center of her teaching, Nelia was able to draw out such connections in this lesson.

Caption: The Vagrant Christ, sculpture

Another teaching session in June 2011 brought principles of Christ-like humility and social justice together in a lesson whose key points similarly turned on the experiences of doing service work. Eduard introduced this session and told volunteers that they would be engaging in foot-washing, citing Jesus' emphasis on the importance of this practice in John 13:1-17. Eduard suggested that the value of foot-washing is that it presents an opportunity to practice Christianity in an interpersonal and tactile way. During the morning teaching session, leaders kept this focus on the Biblical and personal resonance of the foot-washing practice as volunteers reciprocally washed one another's feet in plastic basins. At the afternoon reflection session, Eduard asked volunteers to draw connections between the immediate personal experience of washing fellow volunteers' feet, the service work volunteers had just done, and the wider political implications of

serving in both of these contexts. Steve, a stalwart volunteer who was homeless for over twenty years, responded by characterizing the practice of foot-washing as a visceral connection with the bodily experiences of Open Door's homeless guests. These guests, Steve said, often walk long distances each day in inadequate shoes, resulting in sore and wounded feet which are treated on Wednesday nights at the community's foot clinic. Echoing this significance of the practice's intimacy, Eduard suggested that sharing space with people from unequal positions helps one to become less "patient" about the destruction caused by capitalist accumulation, and that the practice should thus inspire a desire for justice for homeless guests and fellow volunteers who occupy marginalized positions in society (Field notes, June 2011). Here, the practice of foot-washing first challenged a group of volunteers characterized by wide chasms of class and race position to consider a scriptural teaching about tactilely and reciprocally tending to one another. Then, the experiences of serving homeless guests during the soup kitchen became a lynchpin by which to consider lessons about this kind of empathic solidarity within a broader context of widespread homelessness and need.

As these examples demonstrate, teaching sessions clearly emphasize the importance of service work as a catalyst to develop critiques about capitalist structures that allow so many people to remain homeless and unable to meet their most basic material needs. The central significance of Open Door teaching sessions is therefore that they provide a space to continually develop such a living liberationist theo-politics in a collective setting. While the community's protest and publication activities tend to ebb and flow, these teaching sessions two to three days a week are a constant, stabilizing feature of the community. Residents and volunteers to whom service is an essential part of their involvement with Open Door also help to create a critical

mass from which to stage organized political protests. However, I focused on teaching sessions here specifically to outline the ways in which service work, which is so frequently disregarded as stultifying to radical politics, can actually serve as a catalyst for developing agile, contemporary analyses of and potential movement approaches to entrenched poverty.

VII. Conclusions

Open Door's theo-political philosophy, which has roots in the teachings of Martin Luther King, Jr., liberation theology, and the Catholic Worker movement insists that service is important not only as a grudgingly necessary complement to the 'real' work of street protest and advocacy. Instead, it is the most vital component of a liberationist theo-politics because of its capacity to shape action, knowledge-making and daily practice. While leaders' interpretation of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s teachings form a basis for solidarity that can be actively fostered through service work, Open Door writings influenced by liberation theology suggest these that relationships formed out of service should also inform theo-political knowledge-making. In addition, the long history of the Catholic Worker movement provides a blueprint for a theo-political practice of daily life in the community. Open Door's approach is significant beyond its own small community because of the way that it breaks down a binary that has remained relatively unscathed in critiques of neoliberalism and the nonprofit industrial complex. Those accounts provide indispensable analyses of the problematic rollback of welfare states and their replacement with nonprofit organizations, who find themselves overwhelmed by social welfare work and unable to be more active political advocates. The aim of this analysis of the Open Door Community's theo-politics is not to dismiss these very real dilemmas faced by leftist and radical groups, nor to claim Open Door as a flawless model of the right way to do politics. As co-

founder Eduard acknowledges in his *The Cry of the Poor,* in the vast landscape of homelessness and poverty Open Door's work "accomplish[es] so little . . . not enough; hardly anything" (Loring 2010, 70). Instead, I have attempted to theorize how that ubiquitous service work might become central to a liberationist politics, and how that role could be sustained as in Open Door's teaching sessions.

This section has discussed how Open Door has crafted what I call a liberationist theo-politics that, I have argued, places service work as a central agent of a radically-oriented political praxis. Rather than simply a complement to justice work, I argue that service in Open Door's schema – influenced by Martin Luther King, Jr., liberation theologians, and the Catholic Worker movement – forms a basis for theo-political action, knowledge-making and daily practice. I then emphasize that the practice of twice-weekly teaching sessions before soup kitchens function to keep alive that conception of service, and to collectively develop ongoing analyses based on the changing experiences of each soup kitchen. In the next chapter, I focus more directly on that collective of volunteers and residents, a substantial portion of whom have experienced homelessness as well as more general race and class marginalization. While this chapter has discussed the theo-political philosophy that has been most actively guided by Open Door's white privileged long-term leaders, the next chapter gives critical attention to the day-to-day lived experiences of Open Door's service work and their implications for that wider body of residents and volunteers.

Chapter Six: Analysis Part 2 -

The Everyday Personalist Politics of Service Work at Open Door

"Those are our friends out here."

- Interview with Howard, June 2011

I. Introduction

As the previous chapter shows, Open Door leaders have guided a liberationist theo-politics that deconstructs a service vs. justice binary by placing survival-based service work at its center. Within the day-to-day routines of Open Door's service work, though, how does such a politics emerge? What does it look like in practice? Through a deeper exploration of field notes and interviews with Open Door volunteers and residents, this chapter argues that the structure of service work at Open Door forms a site from which a powerful on-the-ground politics can come to fruition. This approach, which is articulated by Open Door residents and volunteers who do not necessarily hold leadership positions in the community, presents an alternative framework to the neoliberal ideologies that normalize realities wherein homeless and other extremely marginalized people have limited access to their survival needs. In teaching sessions, interviews, and several of the community's publications, Open Door leaders have put forth little pretense that theirs is a utopian community wherein all guests, residents and volunteers share equal privilege and authority (Gathje 2002, Gathje 2006, Loring 2010). Nonetheless, the structure around service

work provides at least some relief from the inequalities 'outside,' and in doing so creates space for residents and volunteers to engage with one another and with guests in ways that can prompt them to question the premises of neoliberal policy-making (Gathje 2006, 84). The environment that Open Door fosters around its service work can thus be productive of a broader political consciousness that poses a strong challenge to neoliberal narratives and advocates a collective vision of responsibility for one another's survival.

I propose that these challenges to the subjectifications of homeless people that justify neoliberal policy-making create a geographically and temporally unique form of Catholic Worker **personalism** at Open Door. In keeping with the theology of spiritually immutable and socio-historically situated human dignity and "destiny" shaped by Emmanuel Mounier and embraced by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin as a foundation of the Catholic Worker movement, this Open Door personalism insists upon a shared dignity among all individuals while also critiquing political economic contexts that threaten each person's wellbeing (Zwick and Zwick 2005). This perspective is politically vital because of its attention to individual subjectivity that emphasizes "the value of the person" rather than the market usefulness of the neoliberal subject, the latter of which too easily allows the exclusion or punishment of those who fall outside its narrowly defined boundaries (Zwick and Zwick 2005, 99, Del Casino and Jocoy 2008, Mitchell 2003, Smith 1996, Larner 2000, Bondi 2005, Guthman 2006, Kanna 2010). As I later argue in further detail, Open Door's personalism, as filtered through Mounier and the Catholic Workers, becomes a theologically driven tool by which to craft an agile political economic critique of capitalist structures within the experiences of survival-based service work. I refer to residents' and volunteers' approach as a form of personalism first because of Open Door's ties to that strand of

thought as a Catholic Worker community, which the previous chapter detailed. While the philosophy of personalism is broad and has several 'schools', I conceive Open Door residents' and volunteers' personalism as the iteration that has been most closely linked to Mounier and the Catholic Worker movement. I suggest a version shaped by the people and circumstances I outline in this chapter that is contemporary, shaped by heterogeneous influences, and bound together by a focus on the dignity of each person within his or her social context. In its exposition of residents' and volunteers' personalist analyses, this section demonstrates how the work of providing for those people's survival needs in a context of “abandonment” can be an essential, central site from which an emancipatory political praxis can form (Gilmore 2007).

The personalist analysis of homelessness that emerges through Open Door's survival-based service work is a crucial part of such a praxis because the structures of neoliberalism which Open Door protests hinge upon certain conceptions of individual subjectivity. For example, the answers to questions of who is and is not able to survive are shaped by the strictures of neoliberal frameworks. As Chapter Three details, neoliberal subjects are meant to be rational, autonomous, and market-oriented decision-makers (Larner 2000, Bondi 2005, Guthman 2006, Kanna 2010). People like the homeless, who are unsuccessful according to this schema, find themselves with limited access to their survival needs. Personalist philosophy frames individuals as spiritually significant beyond their membership in a collectivity, but insists on a different treatment of individual subjectivity. While personalism does not lay out a specific policy framework, its “method” is to strive for living conditions in which the dignity of each person is the most important factor (Zwick and Zwick 2005). As Mounier noted, in a personalist society “'Love would be the primary tie and not any constraint or any economic or ‘vital’ interest

or any extrinsic apparatus'" (Zwick and Zwick 2005, 112). I argue that Open Door residents' and volunteers' iteration of personalism, informed as it is by lived experiences of "actually existing neoliberalism," provides a powerful replacement for the neoliberal individualism that so strongly informs discourses about homelessness and other nodes of extreme marginality (Brenner and Theodore 2002).

This chapter considers the same politics that shape the contemporary realities in Atlanta and elsewhere wherein widespread homelessness is accepted as inevitable, but examines how some volunteers and residents confront those politics on the scale of interpersonal relationships formed through survival-based service work at Open Door. In this chapter, I first discuss some of the key race and class inequalities that are embedded in Open Door life. The purpose of this discussion is to demonstrate that intra-community relations at Open Door are complex, and to ensure that this chapter does not frame the community as utopian, simple or easy. Most of this chapter, though, is devoted to laying out the instances that elucidate survival-based service work at Open Door as a site for drawing out a personalist challenge to the oppressive ideologies that help to maintain homelessness. In addition, the previous chapter discussed what I call Open Door's liberationist theo-politics, which has been shaped by leaders as the community's guiding approach to its work. In contrast, this chapter explains how Open Door residents and volunteers – those who have *not* played leading roles in the community's formation and development over three decades – use the site of Open Door's survival-based service work to craft what I call a contemporary version of personalism. While the previous chapter showed how Open Door leaders theologically place survival-based service work at the center of their politics, this one demonstrates the personalist politics of service work through grounded analysis of participants'

interview comments and day-to-day interactions. While the carefully crafted liberationist theo-politics of Open Door leaders is key to the community's work, the 'everyday' politics of service work is equally crucial to understanding the role of survival-based service work at the Open Door Community.

Broadly, this chapter does not focus on arguing that this work prompts Open Door residents and volunteers to participate in or organize instances of direct action. Instead, this chapter aims to bring out the personalist analyses that emerge from the everyday relations of Open Door's survival-based service work. There are two primary reasons for this. Firstly, the personalist analyses that I elucidate here are the most clearly evident and consistent form of politics that emerges from Open Door's soup kitchens. Numerous Open Door residents, volunteers, and guests have taken part in the community's direct actions, as well as other protest activities attended but not organized by Open Door (Field notes 2011). Open Door leaders like Eduard once aimed to mobilize homeless guests as key organizers against the conditions of homelessness in Atlanta; while the presence of homeless leaders has been scarce, many guests and non-homeless resident and volunteer allies have participated in direct actions since the community's formation. During the time period in which I did this research, however, I found an 'everyday' politics of survival-based service work to be a much more prominent element of Open Door life. Secondly, this chapter does not make an argument centered around direct action simply because Open Door's engagement in public protests – particularly around homelessness - is relatively limited at this point in the community's history. This made it untenable to make substantive claims about links between Open Door's survival-based service work and any large-scale mobilization of homeless guests, residents and volunteers to instances of direct action.

II. Leadership, white privilege, and the agentic site of service work at Open Door

The politics of leadership and authority at Open Door are not simple to sort through, given that people from dramatically different positionalities share residence in the community together. As well as tackling race and class disparities which mean that people of color from poor backgrounds make up the majority of homeless guests who become residents, those who have made long-term commitments to Open Door life must also craft an approach that is attentive to the addictions, trauma from poverty, the streets and prison, and other mental health concerns that many residents confront. As such, the most marginalized people do not tend to hold positions of direct leadership of Open Door's mission and daily life can be unclear (Gutierrez 1971, Gathje 2002). Over the years, Open Door founders and leaders have developed an approach wherein long-term residents, whether formerly homeless or more privileged, become "partners" in the community; out of this group, some elect to be on a "leadership team" that makes final decisions (Gathje 2006). There are a number of formerly homeless partners who have had the option to join the leadership team, but have elected not to do so. Then, shorter-term "resident volunteers" who electively come to Open Door have more authority than formerly homeless "residents" because of the former's more intentional commitment to community life, as well as what has been described as residents' need for time to themselves to recuperate from street life (Gathje 2006). This disparity between resident volunteers and residents can undoubtedly be problematic. As a resident was quoted as saying in Open Door biographer Peter Gathje's *Sharing the Bread of Life: Hospitality and Resistance at the Open Door Community*, "A new resident volunteer has more say than a guy from the streets who's lived here for over a year" (Gathje 2006, 87). Newly arrived residents, for example, often do not even have keys to the house. This philosophy on

authority at Open Door results in a scenario wherein most partners and resident volunteers are white people who come from substantially more privileged class backgrounds than most formerly homeless residents.

The prevalence of white privileged leaders at Open Door should be thought of not as an accident or coincidence, but as resulting from a “matrix” of intersecting sociopolitical factors (Collins [1990] 2000). For example, Eduard has persuasively argued that Open Door's ethos of 'downward mobility' plainly does not inspire in formerly homeless residents and volunteers, most of whom are men of color, the same desire to commit to long-term service and leadership as it does in white privileged community members. Similarly, the two young white interview participants (one of whom was a resident volunteer, the other a non-residential volunteer) most directly expressed enthusiasm for intentionally ‘living in community’ in the same manner as Open Door residents (Interviews with Benjamin and Gina, June/July 2011). These comments and observations underline the fact that living at Open Door is an affirmative choice for most white privileged residents, whereas it is often the only option or “the best they're gonna do” for underprivileged, mostly African American formerly homeless residents (Interview with Eduard, November 2011). Underprivileged volunteers, as opposed to residents, have usually made more agentic choices to be at Open Door. However, survival can still play a role for these volunteers, who may be trying to secure a residential position in the community or who may rely on Open Door for a twice-weekly hearty meal, regardless of what their other motivations may be to volunteer.

However, I argue that in spite of these unequal relations that can indeed reflect what Eduard has called “the evil and oppression outside,” the structure of service work at Open Door

grants more relative agency and equality to residents and volunteers than do other aspects of community life (Gathje 2006, 84). While authority is controversially uneven in parts of the community's decision-making processes, Open Door's service work fosters and nurtures personalist analyses from residents and volunteers from all positionalities which serve as affirmative alternatives to the ideologies that typically strip African American, poor, and formerly homeless men of their humanity (Gathje 2006, 84). Service work at Open Door, which is itself based on the personalist philosophies of Mounier and formative Catholic Worker communities, is a site from which volunteers and residents of all positionalities can put forth their own analyses, which I argue are contemporary forms of personalism based on the visceral lived experiences of "actually existing neoliberalism" (Brenner and Theodore 2002). In short, the scale of interpersonal relationships in Open Door's service work can be productive of personalist interpretations that robustly contest some of the key narratives that justify the neoliberal policy practices, especially those around homelessness, which Open Door leaders, residents and volunteers strive to overcome. The tensions that arise from intra-house politics outside of the community's structured service work can certainly also be productive of such analyses. However, in this section I argue that the site of Open Door's service work in particular provides a more level ground from which those tensions can be incorporated into powerful alternative forms of subjectivity.

Indeed, the shared experiences of survival-based service work at Open Door specifically provide a site for a rich personalist analysis to emerge. There are three ways in particular in which Open Door's soup kitchens are structured that facilitate the production of such an approach. First, the boundaries between volunteers and guests at Open Door are blurred in that

guests can become soup kitchen volunteers relatively easily, and some become community residents. These ambiguous lines between 'helpers' and 'helped' at Open Door should not be underestimated. Although they cannot erase the inequalities between far more privileged volunteers and homeless guests, these blurred boundaries do create a certain degree of mobility for homeless guests through which guests have a chance to re-frame themselves as something other than recipients dependent upon the whims of a charitable organization. As I demonstrate later in this section, being on the 'helper' side of Open Door soup kitchens has prompted two formerly homeless men not only to counter the pervasive idea that, as homeless people, they were “hopeless” subjects, but also to reinforce the dignity of all people who remain on the streets (Del Casino and Jocoy 2008, 194).

Secondly, soup kitchen tasks are shared among volunteers in a way that leads to a certain leveling of inequalities that is less evident in other aspects of house life such as decision-making. This element of Open Door life, when considered alongside the blurred boundaries of 'helpers' and 'helped', creates an environment that places privileged and marginalized volunteers and residents on more even ground than some of them may have ever occupied. Indeed, all volunteers and residents are expected to contribute to service as fully as possible depending on their physical ability. This practice grants a relatively equitable allotment of agency and authority to a group of people who are often far from equal in the 'outside world', and to a group of residents who do not necessarily share equal decision-making power within Open Door residential life. This structure of soup kitchens can lead to tensions between volunteers and residents from divergent social positions. However, approaching service work from this place of relative evenness creates just enough room to be productive of a personalist politics which

critiques political economic contexts that residents and volunteers see as failures to the “common good” (Zwick and Zwick 2005).

Thirdly, the teaching sessions that take place before and after each soup kitchen create an environment that encourages such ideological contestations to take place. As I detailed in the previous chapter, Open Door leaders' teaching sessions put forth incisive critiques of the ideologies and structures of power that allow homelessness and extreme marginalization of a racialized underclass to persist in Atlanta and on a wider scale (Alexander [2010] 2012). At the same time, teaching sessions urge volunteers to consider those issues on the scale of interpersonal relationships, and particularly through the service work in which they engage at Open Door. During the teaching sessions that take place before soup kitchens, leaders ask volunteers to consider the morning's lessons as they serve. Then, during the sessions that occur after serving, volunteers are asked to reflect on their understandings of that lesson in the context of the work they have just done. Leaders therefore ask volunteers to make direct, immediate connections between the service work of soup kitchens and lessons that question the ideologies and structures that bring homeless guests to the community's front yard. Even if all volunteers and residents do not fully absorb the lessons of each teaching session, Open Door's pedagogical approach sets up a framework in which it is commonplace to question normative narratives about the causes of homelessness and the subjectivities of homeless people. This teaching approach creates ample space for volunteers and residents to do the same as they engage in service work.

III. Personalist analyses at Open Door

This section outlines three key ways in which the community's soup kitchens have created a site for Open Door residents and volunteers to craft a personalist approach. First, this

section discusses one African American formerly homeless resident's and one white formerly homeless volunteer's changing perspectives on the subjectivity of homeless people. Secondly, I show how two male African American volunteers, as well as one African American formerly homeless resident, have developed affective relationships with the Open Door Community's homeless guests that affirm a sense of personalist communalism with them.

a. How formerly homeless volunteers and residents put forth a personalist approach through survival-based service work at Open Door

Participating in Open Door's survival-based service work has provided a site from which some formerly homeless volunteers and residents can articulate a personalist analysis that falls outside the boundaries of the individualistic subjectivities assigned to them as formerly homeless people. I use the interview and field note reflections of two men who have been homeless to argue that their participation in Open Door's survival-based service work has allowed them to at least begin to challenge the marginalizing subjectivities that have been ascribed to them in a matrix of intersecting oppressions (Collins [1990] 2000). I then claim that these two participants expressed a sense of communality with Open Door guests, who unlike them are still homeless, that contests the premise of a neoliberal subject altogether, whether an empowered or unruly one (Del Casino and Jocoy 2008, Mitchell 2003, Smith 1996, Larner 2000, Bondi 2005, Guthman 2006,Kanna 2010). This analysis further places survival-based service work as potentially productive of an emancipatory politics that tends to only be associated with more explicitly outlined acts of political resistance like direct action.

An interview with Steve, a white man in his late sixties who was homeless for about twenty-three years, showed how the experiences of doing survival-based service work at Open Door can be a site for a personalistic alternative to individualistic neoliberal subjectivities. After five years as an Open Door Community soup kitchen guest, Steve is now housed and has been a reliable volunteer for two years. Isolated by the concurrent deaths of his partner, parents and many friends in the 1980s, Steve said that his addiction persisted partly because he "didn't have anybody to be responsible to," and that forming relationships in which he felt needed was key to his successful recovery (Interview with Steve, August 2011). He discussed how volunteering at Open Door was a consequential step in his recovery from addiction, noting that

> "I already knew about Open Door cause I was using them to eat, and I found that [volunteering] really helped my [recovery] program, gave me something to do besides drugs, and seeing other people, seeing myself out there . . . I think I ended up getting the same pleasure out of volunteering that I was trying to get from drugs." (Interview with Steve, August 2011)

At a later teaching session, Steve described service work at Open Door as having given "purpose" to his life (Field notes 2012). These comments indicate that for Steve, becoming a volunteer at Open Door helped him to challenge neoliberal subjectivities that characterize homeless people as "hopeless" (Del Casino and Jocoy 2008, 194). This challenge is meaningful in itself, given that those subjectifications form a basis for policies which Open Door has struggled against for years - those that aim to increasingly monitor and contain such "hopeless" people rather than accord them full humanity (Del Casino and Jocoy 2008, 194).

However, Steve did not replace this subjectivity with an evangelically-tinged redemption narrative that would position him as a successful individualistic subject who has overcome his

own faults and thereby risen out of homelessness (Hackworth 2010). He rejected such individualism and instead situated his homeless past as both deeply personal *and* entrenched within a particular set of social conditions like “the disparity of income between the rich and the poor” (Interview with Steve, August 2011). Indeed, Steve cited an empathic relationship with homeless people, saying that “I think [because] of having a similar experience to what they’ve experienced out there, I really understand more of what they are going through, [and] have been through” (Interview with Steve, August 2011). At the same time, he critiqued individualistic analyses of homelessness for remaining ignorant of the conditions under which homeless people struggle that lie outside of their control. He said,

> “They [critics] don’t wanna have to look out their window. They want to pretend the homeless aren’t there. They would like them to either be in jail or in institutions so they don’t have to look at it and face the real problem that’s there. And they probably haven’t had any experience on their own to put themselves in that place either. So they figured, 'Well why can’t they be like me? You know. I’m supporting myself and … [homeless people] must be doing something wrong.'” (Interview with Steve, August 2011)

Steve's words show that his actual experiences of homelessness are meaningful to him, and provide a point of reference for him to feel communality with people who are presently homeless. However, his analysis is personalist precisely because he refuses to cast his own time on the streets as strictly individual to him, and instead insists on recognizing the structural causes of homelessness as the context for his and others' experiences.

Another formerly homeless community member at Open Door put forth a personalist analysis. Howard, a middle-aged African American man who was homeless only several months before our interview took place, talked about the benefits that he gets from living and working at Open Door. He said that

> "Oh, it just gives me great pride and joy to be a part of Open Door Community . . . [t]o see them come in [to soup kitchen]. . . and then they leave here smiling, happy, full." (Interview with Howard, June 2011)

The "pride and joy" that Howard feels as a resident and volunteer demonstrates a sense of personal worth that again challenges the neoliberal subjectivity of homeless people as "hopeless" and irresponsible (Del Casino and Jocoy 2008, 194). Like Steve, then, Howard derives a sense of accomplishment from survival-based service work at Open Door. However, he similarly refused to cast himself as an individualistic 'success story', instead positioning himself in close relation to people who are still homeless. Indeed, Howard expressed an affective relationship to the homeless people who come to the community's soup kitchens that negates a clean separation between himself as a 'helper' and them as the 'helped'. He noted that,

> "When they feel good, I feel good. That's just as I said a while ago. When they're hurting, I hurt with them, you know what I'm saying. It's like we, you know, we family here. Those are our friends out here." (Interview with Howard, June 2011)

As someone who crossed the line between volunteers and guests to be on the 'helping' side, Howard's sense of empathy with guests shows that he has not separated himself from them as a now-successful neoliberal subject. Moreover, he expressed that forming caring relationships with homeless guests is so important because doing so recognizes a dignity in them that most people with whom they interact on a day-to-day basis rarely acknowledge. Through Open Door's small-scale approach that prizes personal connections with guests, Howard said that "you honor a person and you gain the person's respect as well as their confidence in you" (Interview with Howard, June 2011). He emphasized that homeless people do not encounter this kind of treatment in most interpersonal interactions, including social service settings. Howard's attention to honor and respect assigns qualities to homeless guests that are counter to those found in

individualistic analyses of homelessness, whether a positive, ‘empowered’ subject or one who invites punishment, abandonment, or removal from the public sphere (Hackworth 2010, Del Casino and Jocoy 2008, Mitchell 1997, Mitchell 2003, Smith 1996). In those conceptions, the source of individuals' dignity resides in their ability to propel themselves into positions of economic success. I characterize Howard's comments as a personalist interpretation because of their suggestion that Open Door's homeless guests possess inherent worth that is not negated by their political economic positions as outcasts of contemporary capitalism.

Open Door's personalism is in part constructed according to shared experiences of homelessness and marginalized class status, as Steve's and Howard's narratives show. Their reflections are examples of the ways that Open Door service work, framed as it is through the theo-political lens of teaching sessions, can first subvert a pervasive idea of homeless people as useless to society (Del Casino and Jocoy 2008, Mitchell 1997, Mitchell 2003). Rather than put forth stories about individualistic personal empowerment or success, these volunteers have been able to develop perspectives that are very different from framings of homeless people as failed neoliberal subjects who are responsible for the bad situations in which they have found themselves. Steve and Howard have begun to claim forms of agency that re-position them as capable of being active, welcome participants in a community in which they feel proud to be members. Steve, for example, demonstrates a form of personalism in which he recognizes the dignity and worth in *himself* as a formerly homeless person. Instead of distancing himself from people who are still homeless, though, he speaks to the harsh structural conditions of homelessness that those people must face. Howard expresses a sense of his own dignity gained from participating in Open Door survival-based service work, too, and also indicates that part of

challenging his own subjectification as a formerly homeless person stems from affective relationships with Open Door's guests, people who are still homeless. They therefore recognize a personalist dignity in homeless guests even though they are no longer homeless themselves. This interpretation of Steve's and Howard's reflections suggests that, given their already marginalized status as people who are or have been vulnerable to homelessness, their perspectives on service work at Open Door contain a liberating potential (Field notes 2012).

In *Sweet Charity? Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement* (1999), Janet Poppendieck suggests that those who receive the most benefit from emergency food organizations are the volunteers who gain a sense of community and fulfillment from their participation. Poppendieck rightly problematizes this scenario in which the 'helpers' in emergency food receive greater benefits than the food-insecure people whom pantries and soup kitchens are meant to help. At Open Door, however, the blurring of boundaries between the helpers and helped has consequences that are more productive of a liberating politics than the situation that Poppendieck outlines. Given that homeless guests can easily cross the dividing line and become soup kitchen volunteers, their experiences in that 'helping' position can actually contest pervasive ideas that characterize them as failed neoliberal subjects. This is not to suggest that all homeless people simply need to become 'empowered' through service work in order to shake off those meanings with which they are so often associated, or to remedy the materialities of their lives as un-housed people. That discourse of individual empowerment tends to fit too cleanly with the punitive policymaking that has been enacted upon people who do *not* attain personal empowerment, as I discussed at length in Chapter Three. Instead, their reflections suggest a personalism that rejects the neoliberal homeless subject in favor of an analysis that is

attentive to the dignity of individuals within their social contexts. In this way, survival-based service work at Open Door becomes a site from which to re-write the narratives of neoliberalism, which have real effects on the structures of people like Steve's and Howard's lives.

The structure of Open Door service work both implicitly and explicitly makes space to support these kinds of personal and political analyses. First, the blurred boundaries between 'helpers' and 'helped' that make it quite easy for soup kitchen guests to become volunteers critically support Steve's and Howard's personalist approaches. Then, the fact that leaders delineate soup kitchen tasks in a relatively equitable way further establishes a framework from which these personalist perspectives can emerge. This approach to service tasks makes it so that even volunteers who are still homeless when they begin volunteering are able to make more or less equally affirmative contributions to Open Door's service work as other, more privileged residents and volunteers. If there is space for homeless African American men to make similarly salient contributions to Open Door's service as young white seminary students, then the vastly *un*equal values that otherwise get attached to their identities can begin to be eroded at least within that small pocket of time in which soup kitchens take place. Finally, the teaching sessions that are an integral part of each soup kitchen create a political environment that helps to manifest these personalist analyses. Given that leaders and participants put forth political arguments that deeply question the legitimacy of neoliberal subjectivities assigned to homeless people, teaching sessions are firmly supportive of people like Steve's and Howard's analyses that affirm their own worth and purpose as well as that of people who remain homeless.

b. Personalist analyses from volunteers who have not been homeless

In this section I demonstrate that, within the fuzzy boundaries of Open Door's survival-based service work, two African American male volunteers have developed close relationships with homeless guests that run counter to often entrenched lines of division between 'helpers' and 'helped' in nonprofit organizations' service work (Incite! 2007, Poppendieck 1999). As I argue here, these close, often explicitly politically engaged relationships further contest neoliberal subjectivities of homeless people that are used to justify their "abandonment," and put forth a contemporary personalist analysis instead (Gilmore 2007).

Victor, a young African American barber from Ohio who cuts homeless guests' hair as part of Open Door's shower services, articulated a complex perspective that is attentive both to the agency of individual people and to the political economic context that has created and perpetuated homelessness. I argue that Victor shapes a personalist analysis that is based on empathy with homeless guests as well as a sharp understanding of the conditions of their lives. First framing the value of his service work at Open Door as a vehicle for raising homeless men's self-esteem, he emphasized the importance of "being there to offer food to people if they need their food, [to] offer encouragement to people" and echoed a comment Eduard made to him that his volunteer haircutting "makes [guests] feel better when they go out to work, [because] they have themselves looking presentable" (Interview with Victor, June 2011). When I asked if this kindness towards homeless guests helps them with the problems in their lives, he said that "I believe the help comes from the individual themselves . . . it activates what's already in you. But I believe the person themself makes that change" (Interview with Victor, June 2011). Victor's initial interview comments therefore demonstrated a focus on individualism and self help.

Melissa Harris-Lacewell has noted that “[h]istorically, black political thought has also included more individualist notions of self-reliance . . . such that each person is responsible for his or her own success and failings,” an analysis which suggests precedence in black political thought for Victor's focus on self help (Harris-Lacewell 2004, 87).

However, further parts of his interview urge a more complex analysis than one that frames Victor simply as a neoliberal individualist. Instead, he demonstrated an attention to the structural causes of homelessness that is quite incompatible with punitive individualism. When I asked Victor what he thought the causes of homelessness are in Atlanta, for example, he mentioned class disparities, unjust policies for Georgia ex-prisoners, inadequate job opportunities, and racial profiling by police in the city. He said that the causes of homelessness are “a combination of both” individual and structural factors (Interview with Victor, June 2011). Indeed, Victor said that in his own life he has become aware of the ways that such structures could affect him, and that he has come to believe it necessary to be “proactive” as an individual to “combat that type of thing” (Interview with Victor, June 2011). He did not mention racism or class immobility as specific struggles that have impacted his life, but said that his experiences have convinced him that to resolve problems like homelessness, “a change of the way people look at themselves, their self-esteem” is necessary (Interview with Victor, June 2011). While wider society needs to value all people more, those who face disadvantages “need to be equipped and be made knowledgeable [about] what could be a vice for them or what could be a problem for them” (Interview with Victor, June 2011). His perspective on self-help, he said, partly draws from Frederick Douglass’s attention to

> "being able to let a man - help a man liberate himself, I think that's what he said, to help one to liberate themselves. You know he was all about making sure someone who was in a slave state of mind or bondage state of mind become liberated." (Interview with Victor, June 2011)

In this light, Victor's perspective that part of a solution to ending homelessness lies in "a change of the way people look at themselves, their self-esteem" should not be dismissed as simply part of a problematic discourse of neoliberal subjectivity or as a form of internalized oppression (Interview with Victor, June 2011).

Rather, Victor's desire to participate in service work so as to raise the self-esteem of homeless guests, an overwhelming majority of whom are African American men, can be seen as an attempt on his part to combat the "societal pressures . . . [and] disadvantages" that they disproportionately face (Interview with Victor, June 2011). Michael Dawson (1994) has argued that many African American people develop complex political perspectives that are based not strictly on one political ideology, but on a combination of concepts. Melissa Harris-Lacewell (2003) has also suggested that there exist "intersections and textures in black political thought that defy neat categorization" (Harris-Lacewell 2004, xx). These insights from the critical race literature can be useful to understanding Victor's approach. However, I also argue that Victor expresses a personalist analysis that stems not from sharing the experiences of homelessness, but from an empathetic desire to help others based on a robust political economic analysis of homelessness in Atlanta. His analysis of his service work at Open Door is shaped by a solidarity that recognizes shared experiences of discrimination and that aims to help each homeless guest have the best chance at survival within the context of racialized political economic circumstances. I characterize this as a personalist approach because, first, Victor places strong emphasis on the dignity of individual homeless people through the way he describes his

barbering work at Open Door. At the same time, though, he is aware of the oppressive structural conditions, within which they struggle day-to-day, that preclude an “affirmation of the value” of homeless people (Zwick and Zwick 2005, 99).

Another regular volunteer, Charles, suggested a complex personalist analysis that pivots on his particularly close, casual relationships with Open Door’s homeless guests. Although Charles has been a soup kitchen volunteer for two years, he has been a part of Open Door’s wider community for nearly twenty years. As a stalwart Open Door soup kitchen volunteer who does a front-line task in the dining room, Charles has noticeably strong personal relationships with many Open Door guests; he and Victor were once reprimanded by another volunteer for spending too much time talking with guests, a criticism with which Open Door leaders and many other volunteers vehemently disagreed (Field notes 2011). Long before he ever became a volunteer, he told me, he used to spend time in Open Door’s front yard with soup kitchen guests simply for the purpose of socializing. He worked a night shift at an auto factory, and during the day he said that “I kinda meandered around the city and there was like that life, you know you could see that pulse. You know, something was going on here. You know. So I stopped and tried to feel my way around” (Interview with Charles, October 2011). Charles' self-identification as a socialist may help to explain why he was able to so readily cross the class boundaries between himself, a full-time factory employee with benefits and a pension, and Open Door's homeless guests. He advocates mass mobilization towards a socialist system in which “[y]ou'd be given the minimal” housing, saying that “if we go to a socialist system, I think the bigger problems that we have [around homelessness] would be taken care of” (Interview with Charles, October 2011). However, while Charles was the most outspoken advocate of socialism out of all people whom I

interviewed, he was also at the forefront of critiquing some of the individual choices that homeless people make. He said that homelessness may never cease to exist because, he believes, some people would not thrive under any political system. He quipped that

> "you got some people that . . . wouldn't work in a pie factory, if you gave them a job in a pie factory sampling pies whenever they wanted to, you know and that's just the reality." (Interview with Charles, October 2011)

Charles also talked about the 'trade-offs' that he says are made by homeless guests whom he knows. Even if they are employed, he said, they might choose to spend their inadequate wages on fashionable clothes instead of trying to secure stable housing. While Charles strongly advocates a socialist form of government, then, he also questions the behavior and personal choices of some homeless people with whom he has formed relationships.

Charles' affective relationships with guests formed through service work push the boundaries between 'helpers' and 'helped', and it may be because of this closeness that he feels able to critique his homeless friends' choices. However, the juxtaposition of Charles' critiques of individuals with whom he has these close relationships with his adherence to a socialist politics actually poses a profound challenge to neoliberal ideology. Although he clearly thinks that some homeless people make bad personal choices that might make their situations worse, he also believes that they still indisputably deserve access to housing, food, clothes, medical care, and other such necessities. His personal critiques of homeless people, which come from relationships far closer and more equitable that many 'helpers' establish with homeless guests, do not eclipse his socialist beliefs. Where neoliberal ideologies use such alleged personal flaws as justifications for denying people full access to their survival needs, Charles' politics refute this idea. Through his at first seemingly contradictory placement of frank individual criticism alongside a socialist

ethos, Charles is able to make a powerful statement about homeless people's entitlement to survival no matter how 'deserving' they are according to the exclusionary ideologies of neoliberal economic structures.

When taken in isolation, Charles' critiques of individual homeless people whom he knows seem to come close to blaming those people's personal faults for the situations in which they find themselves. However, it is precisely these complex, affective relationships with Open Door's homeless guests alongside his advocacy of socialism that makes his analysis a strongly personalist one. In his conviction that all people deserve to have equal access to the basics of life in spite of what may be their individual faults, Charles assigns a sense of dignity and worth to homeless people that is particularly impermeable specifically because of the unflattering ways in which he describes homeless guests' perceived flaws. Even the most irresponsible, unsympathetic homeless person, Charles' analysis implies, deserves to be valued enough to live in a house rather than behind the supermarket near Open Door where a number of homeless people have set up camp. This insistence upon the worth of all people, even in recognition of their worst qualities, is very much in line with personalist philosophy. Although Mounier and the original Catholic Workers did not advocate socialism because they saw it as impersonal bureaucracy, it is Charles' dual emphasis on interpersonal relationships with homeless people and a critical analysis of the contemporary context of "abandonment" in which they live that makes his approach nonetheless have strong common threads with Mounier's personalism (Gilmore 2007).

Victor and Charles have each crafted their own response to the visceral experiences of working directly with homeless people at Open Door. While Victor sees himself as a "catalyst"

for helping homeless guests regain self-esteem and agentically get themselves out of homelessness, Charles forms affective relationships wherein he feels free to criticize homeless guests' personal choices (Interview with Victor, June 2011). While these interpretations may seem problematic on their own, Victor and Charles both revealed wider perspectives that situate individual subjectivity within agile political economic analyses. As they respond to the messy realities of direct contact with homeless people that Open Door's survival-based service work entails, Victor and Charles come forth with conceptualizations that are also complicated. However, these are also ultimately personalist, in that their analyses of homelessness rest on critiques of the structures that prevent homeless people from being accorded the dignity of better life conditions. Victor and Charles may certainly have carried similar perspectives before they became volunteers at Open Door, and I do not suggest a directly causal relationship between Open Door's survival-based service work and these personalist approaches. Nonetheless, the structure of soup kitchens is such that it can foster and support the kind of nuanced analyses that Victor and Charles put forth. Indeed, the character of Open Door's service work is such that intensive engagement with individual homeless guests is an everyday occurrence. This kind of work unsurprisingly elicits complex reflections on individual subjectivity from residents and volunteers, as Victor's and Charles' comments demonstrate. At the same time, teaching sessions actively encourage residents and volunteers to consider those interpersonal experiences within the context of political economic structures. In this way, Open Door's soup kitchens become a supportive site for the personalist analyses that Victor and Charles have developed as volunteers.

IV. Conclusions: Personalism and radical politics

The significance of these residents' and volunteers' personalist approach is that it helps to craft an argument for survival-based service work, taking place as it does on the scale of 'everyday' relationships, as a site for a resistant politics. Furthermore, it elucidates the unique theo-political positions from which the Open Door Community approaches the realities of homelessness as a left-oriented faith-based organization. The key theoretical contribution of personalism at Open Door is that it provides a way to conceptualize individual subjectivity that is missing from critiques of neoliberalism and its practices of governmentality, or subject-making. While those accounts roundly critique the autonomous, market-centric, decision-making neoliberal subject, they do not tend to propose alternatives to these framings of people who experience the realities of "actually existing" neoliberalism (Brenner and Theodore 2002). These accounts often implicitly suggest a conception according to which individuals should be entitled to the resources that have been systematically taken away from them through anti-welfare policy programs, but they rarely articulate the boundaries and textures of this positioning of individuals. I argue that it is crucial to tackle these thorny issues of individual subjectivity, and that personalism as expressed at Open Door provides just one instance of a philosophy that gives attention to the individual in a manner that is a contestation of neoliberal norms. Based on an idea of the individual that is more than materialist and that places the unassailable value of each person at the forefront of its method, personalism suggests a starting point from which to reshape the assumptions about individual subjectivity that form a backbone of neoliberal practices (Zwick and Zwick 2005).

This chapter has proposed that service work at Open Door is productive of a personalist politics that counters neoliberal subjectivities of homeless and other extremely marginalized people. As Jason Hackworth has argued in *The Neoliberal City* (2007), changing the narratives that position neoliberal governance and ideologies as natural or inevitable is crucial work. While the literature on neoliberalism and the nonprofit industrial complex tends to associate that task with more traditional forms of resistance, survival-based service work at Open Door has played a crucial role in changing the narrative for some of its most marginalized community members. Indeed, one of the most harmful parts of the trajectory of neoliberal policy moves over the past several decades has been a fundamental shift away from the idea that states should take substantial responsibility for the social welfare of citizens and residents. While that once-prevalent idea did not stop states from upholding the undeniably unequal and racist structures of capitalism, the systematic steps away from that Keynesian ideology in the past several decades have had disastrous consequences for low-income people. Along with that ideological change around the role of states in social welfare, a conceptualization of the poorest people as barely entitled to survival has become entrenched in the discourse around homelessness and other nodes of extreme marginality. Whether or not one advocates a return to something like a Keynesian welfare state or something different altogether, those who oppose the exclusion of so many people from the assurance of survival should be concerned with changing the subjectivities of individuals that justify these realities.

However, it is necessary to consider not just this reworking of individualistic subjectivities, but how personalism at Open Door relates to a broader radical politics that is challenging to neoliberalism. While residents' and volunteers' personalism serves as a moral

argument about the nature of capitalism that insists upon restoring human value in the face of hardened individualism, the precepts of personalism, even the particular strands put forth by Mounier and propagated by the Catholic Worker movement, do not necessarily stand alone as radical politics. As a non-materialist approach, personalism has been claimed by scholars from a broad range of political economic perspectives. In his *Capitalism and Christianity: The Possibility of Christian Personalism* (1999), for example, Richard C. Bayer makes a case for "a blend of Christian personalism and the profit-sharing capitalism that took hold in many parts of the U.S. in the 1990s" (Calkins 2000). At perhaps the other end of this spectrum, James Farrell argues in *The Spirit of the Sixties: The Making of Postwar Radicalism* (1997) that personalism was a guiding principle for most leftist social movements during that era, whether it was consciously adhered to or not. This personalism, he argues, included Mounier's influence on the Catholic Workers, but also encompassed Martin Luther King, Jr.'s adherence to an American school of personalism that emerged from Boston University (Rorabaugh 1997, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2009).

Instead of framing personalism as an always radical approach in itself, it is more useful to see personalism as it manifests at Open Door as a theo-political *tool* that residents and volunteers use to craft robust political economic critiques around their faith-grounded efforts to help homeless people survive on a day-to-day basis. The residents and volunteers discussed in this chapter simultaneously perceive an immutable dignity and worth in homeless guests, feel personally responsible for alleviating the harsh conditions of their lives, and recognize political economic circumstances that bring so many people to Open Door's front yard. Open Door leaders' carefully constructed liberationist theo-politics sets a site for residents and volunteers to

understand the structural failures of capitalism through their everyday encounters with homeless guests. The everyday practice of personalism, which is guided by this liberationist theo-politics as well as filtered through Mounier and the Catholic Workers, is then a tool that helps them to do the crucial work of bringing the experiences of survival-based service work into conversation with the radical critique that leaders, residents and volunteers have shaped through the past three decades. Indeed, it allows space for faith-motivated service work to foster such analyses.

The critiques developed at Open Door have led to direct actions and attempts to participate in mass mobilizations many times in the community's history, though less so in recent years. However, the primary objective of this thesis has been to question how Open Door leaders, residents and volunteers have negotiated the tensions – in their own perspectives and in the geographical literature – between survival-based service work and more explicit acts of political resistance, two practices that are often conceptually polarized. Attending to individuals' survival needs can seem distant from the kind of political mass mobilizations that would pose substantial challenges to capitalist structures. I have argued, though, that such survival-based service work at Open Door has become a site for fostering the kind of critiques that sustain radical praxis. While faith-based service work has been cited as often readily complicit with neoliberalism, the possibility of alliances of such work with a radical materialist political economy critique has rarely been explored (Hackworth 2010, 2012). The suggestion of personalism at Open Door, shaped by leaders' liberationist theo-politics, as a tool for working through radical politics in the context of faith-motivated service work is a complex positioning. However, it opens up space for a better understanding of faith-based organizations' potential contribution to what has been called a “politics of the possible,” as well as a more robust political economy literature (Guthman 2008, 1181).

Chapter Seven: Significance

I. Conclusions

A large body of scholarship has detailed the prevalence of neoliberalism, at once a policy approach, ideology and form of governmentality that favors privatization, free markets, and individualism. This thesis follows Leitner et al. and others' call to explore contestations of neoliberalism, as it outlines the politics that Open Door has developed in response to neoliberalized conditions of homelessness in Atlanta. Chapters Five and Six demonstrate how Open Door residents and volunteers contest the structures as well as individualistic subjectivities that perpetuate and justify neoliberal policymakers' “abandonment” of economically marginalized people like those who are homeless (Gilmore 2007). However, Open Door's status as a service organization prevents an easy reading of their anti-capitalist politics. The literature on the “shadow state” and “nonprofit industrial complex” elucidates how nonprofit service organizations have filled in the gaps left by widespread state withdrawal from domestic welfare responsibilities (Wolch 1990, Incite! 2007). What this scholarship lacks, however, is exploration of the potential for service organizations – and in this case, those that are faith-motivated – in forming liberatory political praxes and analyses.

The first research question of this thesis project asks how Open Door residents and volunteers negotiate the tensions, as outlined by this literature, between doing survival-based service work and building a potentially emancipatory political praxis. My analyses have shown

that, first, Open Door leaders have structured a philosophy that places service work at the center of political action, political knowledge-making, and daily practice. From the visceral experiences of doing survival-based service work, they argue, a radical politics can form. I have termed this a **liberationist theo-politics**, a name that refers to leaders' liberatory, faith-motivated goals of ending homelessness and, ultimately, undoing the capitalist structures that perpetuate its existence. Secondly, Chapter Six argues that at the site of service work, which is shaped by leaders' foundational liberationist theo-politics, residents and volunteers have developed a contemporary form of personalism that challenges the individualistic subjectivities used to prop up neoliberalism. This personalist approach is then a tool by which to situate a radical critique alongside the experiences of service work. While Chapter Five answers this research question by describing an overarching philosophy at Open Door that has primarily been constructed by the community's leaders, Chapter Six further examines the question via the everyday practices of survival-based service work at Open Door.

Christian faith plays a crucial role in Open Door's practices. This centrality of religious belief is why a second research question asks how their approach to service work and politics intersects with their status as a faith-based organization. What this thesis has shown is that, first, Christian faith as expressed through the gospel of Matthew fundamentally motivates Open Door's engagement with survival-based service work. Then, a deeper reading of founders' and leaders' influences shows that they have guided a theo-politics that weaves together aspects of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s teachings, Latin American liberation theology, and Catholic Worker thought to set a foundation for their work. These influences help them to form a faith-based praxis that is grounded in human experience. Secondly, the everyday personalist politics at Open

Door that Chapter Six outlines are also profoundly shaped by Christian beliefs, as filtered through Emmanuel Mounier and the Catholic Worker movement. Open Door's approach to service and politics is therefore shot through with a rich diversity of Christian thought and practice.

This project also makes theoretical contributions. This research began as an attempt to explore what Leitner, Peck and Sheppard term instances of "contesting neoliberalism"; where geographers like Mitchell (1997, 2003) have outlined the contours of homelessness in the 'neoliberal city', this thesis has examined how those conditions are challenged (Leitner et al. 2007, Hackworth 2007). One of this thesis's contributions to the literature on "contesting neoliberalism" is that it demonstrates the extent to which marginalized people's extensive survival needs can complicate a straightforward, direct action-only conception of resistant efforts (Leitner et al. 2007). Indeed, it is partly because their homeless guests are hungry and often in need of clothes and medical attention that the Open Door Community does not focus only on systemic advocacy or protest. Secondly, the thesis shows how faith-motivated efforts to provide for those immediate bodily needs can shape contestations of neoliberalism. While Hackworth suggests that Christian leftists like Catholic Workers are too small in number to be significant, I argue that they frame an approach to the politics of neoliberalism too potent to be overlooked.

This thesis also contributes to the literature, much of which emerges from geographers, on the "shadow state" and "nonprofit industrial complex" (Wolch 1990, Incite! 2007). According to this group of scholars, substantial systemic change is often at odds with practices of providing for marginalized people's survival needs. In contrast to the empirical examples used by Poppendieck (1999) and other scholars, however, Open Door has collectively crafted an

approach that allows service work to be a fruitful site for a challenging politics. While Open Door leaders have shaped a liberationist theo-politics that situates service work at the center of political action, knowledge-making and daily practice, a group of residents and volunteers put forth a contemporary Catholic Worker personalism that connects the experiences of service work to a critique of capitalist structures. Unlike the politics of the Christian missions that Hackworth (2010, 2012) cites, though, this politics at Open Door does not place blame on individuals for their lack of basic survival needs. Instead, it consistently critiques the structures of capitalism, particularly neoliberal policy practices. This repeatedly articulated perspective does the work of 'changing the narrative' of neoliberalism, which Hackworth as well as Leitner et al. have cited as crucial for "imagining alternative futures" (Hackworth 2007, Leitner et al. 2007). Through its demonstration of Open Door's liberationist theo-politics and the tool of personalism, this thesis's primary contribution to this literature is its suggestion of how a nonprofit organization uses a faith-based perspective to challenge the anti-welfare strictures in which it finds itself. This conclusion shows that there exist ways in which nonprofit service organizations can occupy spaces of "alterity," and further suggests the radical or progressive, rather than regressive, potential of faith-based groups (Wolch 1999).

The limitations of this project must also be noted. First, as a small case study, the claims of this project are limited; they outline only one instance of the politics of faith-motivated service work. Similarly, Open Door may be such an unusual subject of study that these findings cannot easily be generalized. Janet Poppendieck's insights in *Sweet Charity? Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement* (1999) are a useful guide through the limitations of this thesis, and how they stand alongside its contributions. Poppendieck argues that emergency food direct service

programs reinforce the anti-welfare strictures of neoliberalism, as these nonprofit organizations continue to take on the burden of work that does not even adequately fulfill the needs of the most economically marginalized people. She also notes that the idea of simply ceasing to provide for people's very real survival needs is unthinkable for most food pantry and soup kitchen employees and volunteers. This thesis has argued that at the Open Door Community, there is space to contest those strictures in several ways, even as residents and volunteers feel compelled to do faith-motivated service work. In her own conclusions, she recommends that emergency food programs take more action to foster political consciousness in their armies of well-meaning volunteers. In this suggestion, Poppendieck hints at the political potential of direct service work, which this thesis attempts to demonstrate. However, it is the wide empirical scope of Poppendieck's book that highlights the limitations of this thesis project. It may be hard to imagine that similar approaches to service and politics could be present at most of the organizations she describes. Funding, for example, is a key issue in the “nonprofit industrial complex,” given that it can prevent would-be agitating groups from putting their politics out in the open. Although Open Door has some large donors, this thesis has not been able to explain precisely how the community is financially enabled to consistently put forth its theo-politics (Open Door Community 2012). Furthermore, Poppendieck emphasizes that the large network of emergency food programs is not actually sufficient to meet the needs of hungry people. In the absence of significant political economic shifts, this thesis does not suggest how those needs might be met for large numbers of people. Because such day-to-day survival is a reality of life for so many people, this is also a limitation. When these issues of scale highlighted by Poppendieck come into consideration, then, the shortcomings of this project are apparent.

II. Future directions

The following narrative from my research at Open Door elucidates how, through a wider scope and with more time and resources, one might address the limitations of this project and further contribute to the research questions this thesis asks about the intersections between service, politics and faith. A final key consequence of Open Door's service work is the way that it has made space for homeless people who are also ex-offenders. The community welcomed Daniel, an African American man who had just been released from prison after a long sentence and who had been homeless for a period of several weeks before coming to Open Door, as a resident in June 2011. Many people in the community were eager to hear about the personal friendship that he claimed with Death Row inmate Troy Davis, for whom Open Door had long advocated until his execution in September of 2011. Daniel participated in the community's service work to the same degree as other residents as a consistent volunteer at soup kitchens, a Memorial Day barbeque and other events. Grilling hamburgers and ladling soup among a diverse group of volunteers, his history of homelessness and prison time did not make him an outcast as it would have in formal labor markets. His stigmatized past was not hidden, given that all new volunteers and residents are asked at their first soup kitchen to explain how they came to Open Door, but neither was it used to place him in a subordinate position as a volunteer. Instead, he was a welcomed participant in soup kitchens. At Open Door, Daniel was able to sidestep the stigma that is woven into daily life and work for ex-offenders, especially those with no home to which they might return. While his criminal convictions made him a member of a stigmatized racial "undercaste" who would forever have limited access to housing, jobs, benefits and possibly voting rights, his brief position as a part of the service community at Open Door served

to reject the parameters of this “New Jim Crow” reality that Michelle Alexander has outlined (Alexander [2010] 2012).After only a month as a resident, though, Daniel went missing. Having re-offended outside the community, he was quickly taken back into police custody.

A faith-based principle has guided Open Door's welcome of ex-offenders like Daniel, which Nelia elucidated as she explained how Daniel did not become an irredeemable criminal in her eyes after the complicated and painful events that led to his departure from Open Door and subsequent re-entry into the correctional system. She said in an interview,

> “[T]he thing that we [have] especially learned through [our work with Death Row prisoners] is that none of us are as bad as our worst hours. And all of us have goodness, all of us bear the image of God. So when we had Daniel here for just a time, and you know, what an incredible personality. And [he] took care of all the cars. That is Daniel! That is Daniel. But there’s also other parts of Daniel too.” (Interview with Nelia, July 2011)

Here, Nelia puts forth an idea that truly contradicts the criminal subjectivity that will be attached to Daniel for the rest of his life as at least a two-time offender who is also a low-income African American man. Because he faces the strictures of the racial caste system that Alexander suggests in *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* ([2010] 2012), survival activities will likely be a challenge for Daniel after his release. He will find it difficult to obtain housing and a job, and he may find himself unable to vote or in deep financial debt to the criminal justice system (Alexander [2010] 2012). The significance of Nelia's analysis in the context of these conditions is that it recognizes Daniel as a multifaceted person whose illegal actions ought not to mark him as a social outcast for the rest of his life. The criminal subjectivity that is used to justify the perpetual second class status of ex-offenders – a status that increases the numbers of people living on the streets – is contested in an analysis for which there seems to

exist scarce space in many places (Alexander [2010] 2012).

The realities of Daniel's life cannot be ignored in this discussion. After briefly living outside the direct control of a heavily racialized criminal justice system, he soon returned to a prison cell with another damning criminal incident on his record. As someone who would still have been subject to the standards of the “New Jim Crow” that prevent huge numbers of mostly African American ex-offenders from ever becoming social equals with 'respectable' white privileged people even if he had not re-offended, his life was not substantially changed for the better in the long term because of his residence at the Open Door Community (Alexander [2010] 2012). The fact that Nelia's words subvert the “New Jim Crow” does not change his concrete situation in any way, and that is a profoundly harsh reality (Alexander [2010] 2012). Nonetheless, it remains significant that Nelia's faith-motivated remarks, which are echoed by other leaders, residents and volunteers when discussing prison issues, make space for re-thinking such profoundly entrenched ideas about people who have committed crimes. Open Door leaders’ acceptance of Daniel as a resident showed the whole community that despite his stigmatized identity as an ex-offender, he was just as worthy and capable of participating in Open Door life as, for example, young white seminary students. As Nelia’s comments show, he became a real person with a range of good and bad qualities rather than someone who deserves to be relegated to second class status that would put him at risk for joblessness, homelessness, deep debt and many other issues for the remainder of his life.

These reflections on the everyday practices of remaking subjectivity for an ex-offender at Open Door could provoke a deeper exploration of the intersections of faith, class and race around the realities of the correctional system that would speak to the current limitations of this project.

The present state of mass incarceration is thickly interconnected with issues of poverty, including homelessness, and the perpetuation of widespread racial inequality outside of a small group who serve as 'exceptional' minority subjects. Nonprofit service organizations, including faith-based ones, are profoundly linked to the realities of the “New Jim Crow,” as formerly incarcerated men find themselves struggling to meet their survival needs and thus needing much help from those institutions. Interwoven with the strictures of neoliberalism and the “nonprofit industrial complex,” then, is this network of mass incarceration that systemically excludes so many black and Latino men from even the most basic neoliberalized opportunities to 'bootstrap' themselves out of poverty (Incite! 2007). This creates lifelong criminalized subjects whose stigmatization can be reinforced, or as I suggest in the narrative above, re-framed or resisted by the survival-based programs they are likely to encounter. Widening the scope of this project to consider this key structural issue as it is linked to homelessness and deep poverty could help to more richly address the nexus of research questions around service, politics and faith that I have asked in this thesis, and could suggest further important directions for future study.

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