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Anticonsumption as Tactical Response to Institutionalized Subordination: The Case of Materially Deprived Anticonsumers

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Abstract

Whereas most anticonsumption research focuses on middle- to upper-class consumers who reduce, avoid, or control consumption, this study analyzes anticonsumption among materially deprived consumers. Such an anticonsumption focus runs contrary to the conventional subordination of homeless people to the status of inferior and deficient, whose survival is dependent on social housing support and food charities. Findings from an ethnographic study in Australia show that materially deprived consumers avoid social housing and food charities as a tactical response against institutionalized subordination, which specialized homeless services reinforce. In this context, anticonsumption is thus not about projecting a self-affirming identity or generating a collective force to change consumer culture. Rather, anticonsumption among materially deprived consumers aims at overcoming institutionalized subordination and represents tactics of survival rather than strategies for illusionary emancipation.

Keywords

homelessness, anticonsumption, poverty, misrecognition, identity

Introduction

Anticonsumption research has led several marketing scholars to examine why consumers consciously control, reduce, and/or avoid consuming certain goods, brands, services, practices, or lifestyles (Chatzidakis and Lee 2012; Cherrier 2009; Kozinets, Handelman, and Lee 2010; Lee, Cherrier, and Belk 2013; Lee et al. 2011; Zavestoski 2002). Notably absent from this area of inquiry are impoverished and materially deprived consumers. Prior research has focused on consumers who voluntarily reduce and limit material consumption to affirm satisfaction received through nonmaterial aspects of life (Cherrier 2009), who avoid exchanges with hegemonic brands to minimize dependence on corporate entities (Cromie and Ewing 2009), and who control daily consumption to cultivate a more authentic self (Cherrier, Black, and Lee 2011). In general, these studies portray anticonsumption as a prerogative of middle- and upper-class consumers empowered to cultivate a self-affirming identity and/or exert pressure on consumer culture to follow suit, ignoring most individuals at the economic margins of society. Thus, previous research has failed to consider billions of material-deprived consumers, limiting inquiry to those who can "afford" anticonsumption actions and attitudes.

Yet studies have shown that materially deprived consumers—in particular, homeless people typified by a lack of material possessions and adequate shelter (Hill 2001), perform anticonsumption practices. Hill and Stamey (1990) recognized and documented homeless people who, despite the difficult and dangerous circumstances they routinely faced, rejected generosity from others, institutional charity, and the welfare system. Other studies have described how homeless people regain citizen rights and fight against a deviant label in part by developing subsistence strategies to survive on the streets and to remain independent of social and government services (Hill 2001; Hill and Stamey 1990; Osborne 2002; Snow and Anderson 1993; Somerville 1998). In his literature review, Hill (2001) reinforces that homeless consumers may take an active role in determining their life choices and refuse the consumption of certain goods. In particular, he notes that homeless people may reclaim a sense of self after building basic shelters or from scavenging rather than accepting provision of welfare benefits including goods and services.

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The research presented here is a first attempt to analyze anticonsumption among consumers who experience homelessness within the broader context of public policy. Questions pertinent to this study include: What are the manifestations—and, most importantly, the drivers of—anticonsumption for consumers living under conditions of extreme material deprivation? What do anticonsumption practices among homeless people reveal for public policy makers interested in social and/or distributive justice? To answer these questions, we open with an overview of the current literature on anticonsumption, highlighting various rationales of anticonsumption for materially affluent consumers. Of course, there are alternative perspectives that are not included here. For example, in an ethnographic study of the provider side of service provision to homeless teens living in downtown Portland, Oregon, Hill (2001) revealed the political and resource struggles that occurred in the development of a plan to deal with this problem. While there are stark differences between their perspectives and those of the individuals investigated in this study, we have decided to limit our results and discussion to the homeless themselves.

The next section provides relevant homelessness literature as well as an examination of public policy debates. After describing the ethnographic work, findings show that homeless people perform anticonsumption mostly in the forms of avoiding social housing and food assistance. The analysis demonstrates that this form of anticonsumption is not necessarily about constructing new identities (green, alternative, or activist) and/or changing corporate practices deemed wasteful, unethical, or hazardous (Cherrier 2009; Iyer and Muncy 2009). By avoiding shelter and/or food donations, materially deprived consumers engage in actions they are not supposed to participate in and impose new understandings of what a homeless person can do.

The overall effect is to expose identity misrecognition of homeless and poor people as passive receivers, placeless, and "other," conceptions that are institutionalized, in part, through specialized homeless services, regardless of providers' intent (Hill 2001). Our concluding remarks note the ways in which anticonsumption can carry symbolic and cultural significance for participants because it represents behavior, and thus an identification, that is rendered unthinkable by institutions that perpetuate, consciously or unconsciously, subordination of materially deprived consumers to the status of inferior and deficient. We close with anticonsumption and public policy implications and offer options for future research.

Anticonsumption

Commonly defined as the "resistance to, distaste of, or even resentment or rejection" of consumption (Zavestoski 2002, p. 121), anticonsumption is both an activity and attitude (Cherrier 2009). It is an activity that ranges from avoiding, reducing, or controlling what, how much, and when to consume and an attitude that declines to be resigned to the logic of the marketplace (Chatzidakis and Lee 2012; Cherrier 2009; Kozinets, Handelman, and Lee 2010; Lee, Cherrier, and Belk 2013; Lee et al. 2011; Zavestoski 2002).

Recent work has raised certain boundaries to anticonsumption, asserting that anticonsumption refers only to consciously articulated behaviors informed by reasoned thoughts and directed toward intended goals and purposes opposing consumption (Chatzidakis and Lee 2012). In this formulation, anticonsumption differs from unintentional nonconsumption, accidental nonchoices, or random acts. Considering anticonsumption as a mindful and intended behavior, scholars have discussed various drivers for consumers to avoid selected products/brands or to reject general modes of being and ways of life (Chatzidakis and Lee 2012; Iyer and Muncy 2009; Kozinets et al. 2010).

Anticonsumption can arise from individual concerns linked to happiness, personal values and aspirations, and desired selves (Black and Cherrier 2010; Cherrier 2009; Iyer and Muncy 2009). Self-motivated anticonsumption is the result of a personal decision planned for the construction of a biography for which only the self is responsible. By controlling, avoiding, or reducing consumption, self-motivated anticonsumers intend to elaborate a more authentic, self-affirming, and self-generated persona against the dominant ideology of consumption. Self-motivated anticonsumption has been highlighted in studies on simple living (Cherrier and Murray 2007), temporal clothing abstinence (Cherrier 2016), or identity brand avoidance (Lee, Motion, and Conroy 2009).

Research has also shown that societally motivated anticonsumption is grounded in a collective desire to make a difference and contest the dominating power of consumer culture (Hollenbeck and Zinkhan 2010; Izberk-Bilgin 2010). Societally motivated anticonsumers aim to affect the success and failure of products, brands, firms, and policies considered wasteful, unethical, or hazardous (Hollenbeck and Zinkhan, 2010; Iyer and Muncy 2009; Izberk-Bilgin 2010). Societally motivated anticonsumption includes boycotting (Klein, Smith, and John 2004), moral brand avoidance (Lee et al. 2009), and Carrotmob (a campaign whereby people spend money to support a business, and that business does what those people want) (Hutter and Hoffmann 2013).

Scholars have also noted that personal interest and societal concerns can simultaneously motivate anticonsumption (Cherrier 2009). Portwood-Stacer (2012) explains that anticonsumption is energized by a multiplicity of interrelated concerns, with each driver playing different roles depending on the degree of consciousness on the part of the anticonsumer. She identifies individual (immediate personal benefits), moral (integrity to one's values), activist (changes to consumer culture and ideology), identificatory (material expression of one's identity), and social (achieving solidarity and belonging to a community) concerns driving anticonsumption.

This review points to a few suggestions valuable for our data collection and analysis. However, we also anticipate that anticonsuming under conditions of extreme material deprivations may reveal unforeseen drivers and manifestations of anticonsumption. We next turn to the scholarship on homelessness in

the context of public policy to demonstrate the benefits of studying anticonsumption from the perspectives and experiences of homeless people.

Homelessness as a Public Policy and Marketing Concern

Homelessness involves more than not having a home and being without traditionally adequate shelter (Hill and Stamey 1990). It includes housing hardships in which individuals in crisis live in temporary or medium-/long-term supported accommodations (Chamberlain 2014; Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1992). Causes of homelessness are diverse and complex, and they include mental and physical illness, drug and alcohol problems, economic downturns, and gaps in the social welfare system (Hill 1991; Reed and Hill 1998). They also encompass poor decision making and insufficient affordable housing (Barrios, Piacentini, and Salciuviene 2012). Ultimately, consequences of homelessness are detrimental at both societal and individual levels. People living under such conditions feel marginalized, vulnerable, and voiceless and often are distressed, are anxious, and suffer from inadequate and limited access to nutritious foods (Booth 2006; Hill 1991, 1994, 1995).

Governmental interventions have historically focused on providing conditional social welfare and housing services, with the aim of changing the behavior of people who are poor and move them from welfare to work (Parsell and Marston 2016). Scholars, however, note that state interventions have become less generous and discuss strategies of the state to compel community bodies to redress "the imbalance between private affluence and public poverty" without pursuing policies aimed at wealth redistribution (Jessop 2002, p. 463; Lawrence, Richards, and Lyons 2013; Parsell and Marston 2016). One consequence is the rise of nonprofit and social enterprises that aim to fill gaps in coverage left by various levels of government (Holifield 2007).

Numerous specialized homeless services exist. Many provide accommodations in the form of crisis services, transitional homeless accommodations, and conditional long-term supportive housing (Parsell 2016; Parsell and Marston 2016). Others focus on food insecurity, providing meals through drop-in services, subsidized meal programs, and food banks (Crawford et al. 2014, 2015; Doljanin and Olaris 2004; Midgley 2013). One illustration is OzHarvest, Australia's largest food rescue charity that collects food from caterers, offices, restaurants, and cafes and distributes them to homeless people. To further improve food security for the homeless, alternative food distribution methods have advanced involving community gardens (Christensen 2012) and community or soup kitchens (Lawrence, Richards, and Lyons 2013). These programs operate in both urban and rural areas but are often limited, small-scale, and dependent on partnerships with local organizations including churches and welfare services. Many soup kitchens are, for example, in neighborhood centers and receive support from organizations or schools with appropriate facilities.

Against the backdrop of divestment in social welfare and the rise of nonprofit and social enterprises, homelessness is a continuing and important public policy dilemma that has defied easy solutions within individualistic nations that value personal responsibility over public accountability (Hill 2001). Take Australia as an example: census data report 89,728 homeless in 2006 and more than 105,200 in 2011, marking a 17% increase over this period (Chamberlain 2014). In addition, the United Nations Development Program (2016) reports 633,000 homeless in the United States and 284,000 homeless in Germany in 2012. Globally, 334 people out of every million are homeless as a result of natural disasters. Critiques often refer to the distant nature of specialized homeless services, whereby service providers tend to lend support as they see appropriate, without consistent discussions or collaborations with homeless people. As a result, these services efface the diversity of circumstances and the consumption behaviors of homeless consumers as well as the rationales and structural conditions behind their choices and preferences.

Young (2011) captures these critiques and emphasizes the need to step outside of dominant ideologies and practices to elucidate previously hidden knowledge on homeless people. This, we argue, requires considering practices of anticonsumption among homeless people. We believe that understanding homeless people's rationales to avoid consuming specialized services will provide valuable insights to public policy makers, highlighting hidden knowledge of homelessness. This study examines anticonsumption behaviors of homeless people at ethnographic sites in Australia. Findings provide novel insights about homeless people who refuse to be resigned to social institutions that perpetuate the subordination of poor and homeless people to the status of inferior and deficient, with an emphasis on theoretical foundations of identity misrecognition, the impact of specialized services, and anticonsumption. We advance public policy implications that use a marketing-oriented framework involving public–private partnerships.

Methodological Considerations

To capture the various manifestations and motivations of anticonsumption practices embedded in their material conditions and variations of homelessness, this study uses in-depth interviews collected as part of an ethnographic project on homelessness carried out in Australia (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994; Kvale 1996, 2006). The study started with participatory observation in a community kitchen organized and managed solely by homeless people and thus independent from any charity organizations or governmental support. The immersion at the community kitchen included food pickups, food delivery, and food sharing in the company of homeless people, and it involved observations as well as sharing stories and discussing consumption experiences under conditions of homelessness. The time the first author spent at this community kitchen required her to part from previous beliefs and preconceptions of homelessness and become culturally astute and sensitive to the multiple experiences, subjectivities, and hopes of homeless

Table 1. Informants.

Pseudonym	Age (Years)	Gender	Living Situation	Stories of Homelessness
Adison	26	F	Two years living on the street with intermittent room sharing with friends/boyfriends.	Freelance writer. Cannot find a job. No relationship with parents/family members.
Jasmine	40	F	Two months living on the street. Recently found a rundown house, which she shares with other girls.	Left a well-paid job. Tries to find her purpose in life.
Lauren	38	F	One year living on the street/park. Tried government housing but prefers sleeping in the park.	Left husband. No job.
Irvin	21	M	Three years homeless, sleeps in friends' home, in the park, in shared houses depending on circumstances.	No job.
Graham	28	M	Six months homeless. Find sleeping on the street or in the park life enriching.	Left school, parents, and hometown. No job, lives day by day.
Sandrine	50	F	Two weeks homeless. She fears sleeping with unknown strangers in a shared accommodation and rejects restriction imposed in housing services.	Left home because of domestic violence. No job, no friends.
Isabella	17	F	Two years. Sleeps with friends under a bridge. Rejects charity associated with religious institutions.	No family, no job. Used to be on drugs.
Emile	54	M	Three years homeless. He attends first-aid services provided by a charity when in pain, sleeps in the park.	Left army and got cancer.
Charles	43	M	Five years on the street. Sleeps in the park or hidden places in the city.	Got out of prison, cannot find a job.
Romeo	52	M	Two months homeless.	Divorced, got sick, lost his job.
Marius	47	M	Sleeps in a park for several years. Unsure how many years.	Took drugs, stopped but cannot get a job.
Justin	56	M	Lives with his wife and two children in a small shared home.	Jobless and in difficult marital situation.

Notes: F = female; M = male.

people. Adopting a nonjudgmental openness to causes, experiences, and consequences of homelessness while participating in daily activities of a community kitchen allowed for the establishment of trust with homeless people. In addition, the individuals at the community kitchen recommended other people for interviews, allowing access to a hidden population through snowball technique (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981).

The interviews as a supplement to participant observation took place at the community kitchen, outside on benches, or in the local park, where participants felt comfortable engaging in an audiotaped conversation (Kvale 1996). The first author informed participants that the audiotaped interviews would be transcribed verbatim and assured them of anonymity and confidentiality. None of the participants were financially compensated for their involvement in the study. The interviews were conversational and evolved around hopes and difficulties of being a homeless person, previous and current consumption patterns, and preferred forms of consumption under conditions of homelessness. Cognizant that interviews carry asymmetrical power (Kvale 2006), we gave careful attention to ensuring that the conversation represented a common search for knowledge. Discussions lasted between 30 and 90 minutes, allowing for thick descriptions of different facets of consumption across governmental and charity services as well as illuminating complexities of consumption and anticonsumption (Chatzidakis and Lee 2012).

The rich data presented here come from 20 interviews with 12 informants (repeat interviews were carried out with informants), which reached saturation as indicated by data replication and redundancy of data for theorizing anticonsumption under extreme material adversities. Our informants represent a wide range of backgrounds, ages, living situations, and experiences (see Table 1).

Given that our aim was to identify manifestations and drivers of anticonsumption among homeless people, the analysis focused on the various ways, procedures, moments, engagements, and understandings of homeless people when controlling, reducing, and/or avoiding consumption (Chatzidakis and Lee 2012; Cherrier 2009; Kozinets, Handelman, and Lee 2010; Lee, Cherrier, and Belk 2013; Lee et al. 2011; Zavestoski 2002). The analysis developed through iterative readings of elements of anticonsumption in the entire body of data, highlighting anticonsumption intersections with material conditions, cultural norms, adversities, other practices, and social networks (Arnold and Fischer 1994).

Homelessness and Anticonsumption

The analysis revealed two main targets of anticonsumption among homeless people: social housing and food assistance services. However, unlike brand avoiders (Lee, Motion, and Conroy 2009) or boycotters (Klein, Smith, and John 2004), who operate from a position of consumer power when avoiding consumption of selected brands or products (Shaw, Newholm, and Dickinson 2006), materially deprived consumers' anticonsumption arises from an absence of power. The anticonsumption practices we identified were sporadic and unpredictable and did not show intentions of defeating those in power.

Under extreme conditions of adversity, and in relation to issues of safety and health, materially deprived consumers often described their unwilled consumption of food donations or social housing services. Participants clearly expressed the need to consume warm food from charity donations or spend the night in crisis accommodation during the hardship of winter or when sick and threatened. Jasmine further explained that the choice to anticonsume is contingent on both personal circumstances and structural conditions. She described having to consume food donations once a week "because they serve hot food and it's hard to find food on Saturday." Many also discussed the necessity to access first aid provided by the council or housing services when sick or injured. Yet when the situation afforded opportunities to avoid social housing and/or food charities, homeless people often opted to anticonsume, thereby revealing issues with specialized homeless services.

Our analysis reveals that anticonsumption among homeless people represents a tactical response against institutionalized subordination. Findings reveal that homeless people suffer identity misrecognition, which subordinates them to the status of inferior and deficient. We note identity misrecognition in the form of passive receivers, placeless, and otherness, which is institutionalized in part by specialized homeless services through vertical donations, forced mobility, and segregation. In this context, anticonsumption aims to reject institutionalized subordination. One consequence is the temporary redress of the identification of homeless people to the status of active participants who are local and have their own subjectivities (i.e., opinions and preferences; see Figure 1).

Identity Misrecognition

In this study, identity misrecognition does not represent the psychological suffering and/or coping strategies caused by deprivation of a previous identity (e.g., cancer patients who are abruptly robbed of health identity; Pavia and Mason 2004), nor does it represent negotiations of unwilled deformation of identity through aging (Barnhart and Peñaloza 2013). Work on contested identity also includes middle-class Turkish Muslim women who practice veiling (Sandikci and Ger 2010) or stay-at-home fathers (Coskuner-Balli and Thompson 2012), and this research has focused on individual responses to cultural representation of identity. Scholars note, for example, that some consumers develop coping management strategies (Adkins and Ozanne 2005), try to alter dominant cultural representations, or invest in subordinate forms of cultural capital (Coskuner-Balli and Thompson 2012).

In contrast to consumers working on the elaboration of new cultural representations, our informants developed anticonsumption tactics to reject subordination to a simplified group identity. Our data show that homeless consumers recognize the individual as well as collective nature of their experiences, needs, and desires. They were not working on a distorted group identity to redress. Instead, they rejected the group identification they had come to inhabit that overshadows who they are as distinct individuals. Our data reveal that homeless people, because they cannot afford permanent shelter, are outside the dominant ideology of consumption and its attendant autonomy, responsibility, and self-determination (e.g., Bhattacharjee, Berger, and Menon 2014). Homeless people must manage their status as deficient and inferior to homed consumers. Consequently, anticonsumption among materially deprived consumers is a claim for multiple positions, practices, subjectivities, experiences, beliefs, and biographies of homeless people.

Passive receiver. Under the dominant ideology of consumption that focuses on one's ability to work, pay taxes, and shop, homeless people unable to afford shelter and/or food are not only constituted outside the status of consumer but also subordinated to *less* than a consumer. Bauman (1998) mentions that society engages its members on the basis of their capacity to consume. The poor are thus perceived as "flawed consumers"—that is, they are "socially defined, and self-defined, first and foremost as blemished, defective, faulty and deficient—in other words, inadequate—consumers" (Bauman 1998, p. 38). Our participants communicated their subordination to this status as passive receivers with feelings of shame and exclusion, and they experienced it as debilitating one's skills and capacities to act and participate in society.

Thus, in many narratives, homeless people distanced themselves from this normative stance, highlighting homelessness as consequences of a passive and failing self (Anderson 2003). For example, Charles, who had been living on the streets for five years at the time of the study, was well aware of stereotypes and normative beliefs of homeless people as useless and beggars: "People say that we're all drug addicts or alcoholics or we're dangerous to the society, but not all of us are." Clear in Charles's narratives is the stigma imposed on the homeless population as a single, simplified group identification, which denies the multiplicity and complexity of each homeless person's life. Charles is not only cognizant of cultural and normative depreciation of homeless people into single group identification, but he also raises issues of demeaning representation. Yet, Charles reacts against identity misrecognition: "I don't ask people for money. I'd rather just get my own food and look after myself." Thus, Charles is not a passive receiver. His behavior recasts homeless people with capacity to produce their own resources.

Narratives also demonstrate homeless people's skills and capacity to contribute to the community, the local environment, and society, which also rejects identity misrecognition of homeless people as passive receivers. For example, Jasmine displaces the perception that homeless people passively receive food donations and explains her needs, desires, and capacity to participate actively in reciprocal exchange:

> All the people who go there [name of food donation organization], I am not like them. I feel sad and, yeah, sad and like useless when I go there and it's not like people are not friendly or anything; but it's like you get your food, a few smiles and get out. . . . And then what, I get no purpose, nothing. I'm more than that. I got a child

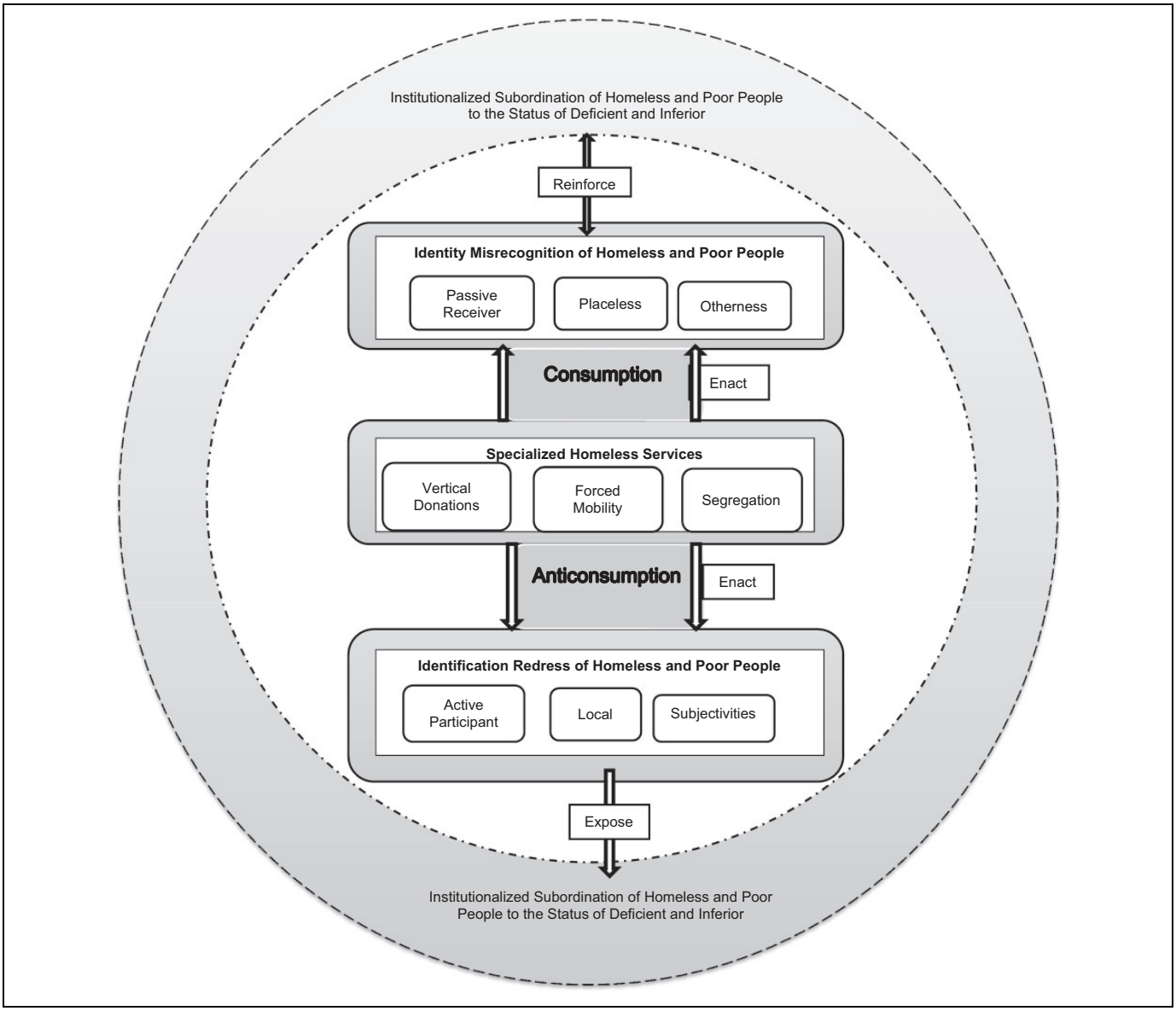

Figure 1. Materially Deprived Consumers and Anticonsumption.

> who's 23 and I have so much love to give and I am there I can't give anything like, it's like nobody needs me, the food is okay but I can do more than that you know. I need to give love.

There are two aspects worthy of highlighting from Jasmine's description. Food donation services reinforce subordination to the status of passive receivers, and they are compelled by identity misrecognition of homeless people as passive receivers. To counter such identities, Jasmine explains a strong desire to participate rather than to receive. Jasmine clarifies how passively receiving food with myriad others promotes feelings of worthlessness because receiving excludes possibilities for reciprocal exchange.

Placeless. Homeless people are often described using the terms transients or drifters and suffer conditions of placelessness (Kawash 1998). Homeless people "don't really live anywhere" (VanderStaay 1992, p. 70), and Hombs and Snyder (1986) describe homelessness as a forced march to nowhere. Situations of placelessness are linked to structural conditions, shifting the homeless body into the background of social life (Kawash 1998). We know, for example, of police harassment protecting public spaces against the "troubling" materiality of the homeless body (Kawash 1998). Scholars also note legislation and structural conditions excluding homeless people from shopping centers or libraries (Hodgetts et al. 2008). Implementation of antihomeless architectural design and oppressive urban planning are also powerful structural features promoting the invisibility of homeless people in public spaces (Kawash 1998).

All participants were negatively affected by overtly structured features of social oppression and explained their tiredness

of walking and being constantly on the move, the stress and frustration to find a place to sleep, and the violence and dangers linked to living on the streets. The torment of living outside with no place to be or go is clear in VanderStaay's (1992) book, *Street Lives*: "Homeless people with nowhere to go are often forced to spend their day getting there. Walking, remaining upright, and endlessly waiting become all-consuming tasks, full-time work" (p. 2).

Although recipients are often victims of structurally conditioned placelessness, the narratives were, nonetheless, filled with stories and details of notions of place, rootedness, and belonging. Contrary to the status of placeless—commonly defined as lacking a fixed location—materially deprived consumers who participated in this study expressed a strong attachment to their locality. Participants described the city in term of rootedness and connectedness. The city is "where I'm from, where I belong, it's what I know." For Emile, the city represents a biographical continuity between prehomelessness and conditions of homelessness. Other participants described a strong affective attachment to the city, akin to a home as locus of safety, autonomy, and continuity (Marcus 2006; Parsell 2015; Saatcioglu and Ozanne 2013). For Marius, Isabella, Irvin, and Romeo, being roofless does not equate to being "home-less." Rather, living on the streets of the city, as opposed to being displaced to suburbs or elsewhere, enables them to maintain an alternative sense of rootedness, belonging, and power. They explain, "I would not want to move out of the city; here it's where I feel at home" (Marius); "It's good, the city, like I know the city but I do not know anything really outside, it's very good for me" (Isabella); "This is the middle of the city, there are a lot of social problems here, but it's okay, you're not alone here" (Irvin); or "The city is important, there are people, food, I can sleep in the park there. I cannot travel outside of the city, I don't know these places, it's too far, I can't walk much, but here I know, it's where I am" (Romeo).

Otherness. Becoming "home-less" is often made meaningful through the binary opposition of home versus no home, which automatically divides the homed versus the home-less. The homed subject is everyone in society, the homeless is a "body" abstracted from anything else about the person, a kind of corporeal representation of the failed promises of progress and prosperities (Kawash 1998). In fundamentally important ways, participants expose issues of identity misrecognition that subordinates homeless people to the status of "otherness," a thing that belongs to a subordinate category that is deprived of gender, age, race, and personal circumstances.

Participants repeatedly described systematically being "othered" when sitting on the streets with dirty clothes and unclean. Graham explained, "people look at you like an insect," and Romeo shared his being constantly gazed at with disdain. Women's narratives were particularly powerful in highlighting the burden of ascribed distinctiveness between homed and homeless, which denied their similarities with women in general. Adison reveals,

> I never really felt comfortable going there [food charity] when—well, it's [a] very sort of male-dominated sort of thing. And I also felt quite judged often. Like as a female, there was a lot of unwanted attention when all I wanted to come was to get food, but because most of them were men, it's sort of like I was [a] new thing as a woman, so if I do go there, I'd be sort of in and out, like as a woman I tend to feel uncomfortable hanging around there.

Adison's experience of food charities is indicative of documented concerns of homeless women (Hill 1991; Hill and Stamey 1990). Stories of food provision revealed that many food charities were run exclusively by men. This gender imbalance created an environment where some women felt less valued and more vulnerable than men: "There are just men, and a lot of women do not really wanna be surrounded by men all the time. It isn't really safe." The predominance of men in specialized services translated into Adison's actively rejecting charities and government-based organizations. Jasmine also emphasized that women have no voice in a male-dominated space and cannot express their gendered differences and related needs, tastes, and preferences. Jasmine discussed women having specific needs not only in terms of accessing good-quality nutrition but also in terms of exchanging emotions and experiences during food preparation and consumption: "Women are also mothers, carers, and we need care during menstruation" (Jasmine).

Specialized Services

Institutionalized subordination of homeless people to the status of deficient and inferior is embedded in the dominant ideology of consumption and reinforced by specialized homeless services in the form of vertical donations, forced mobility, and segregation. We expand on these in the following subsections.

Vertical donations. The narratives hint at uneven social relations between homeless people receiving food or shelter and people serving food or providing shelter. In the context of food donations and food assistance, the homeless are often represented as a passive body waiting to be served by donors in control of the time and place of donations (Doljanin and Olaris 2004; Midgley 2013). This concern was raised by many participants, who described their reluctance to lining up or queuing with strangers waiting to be served, placing them at a level of inferiority to the ones serving them. The hierarchical relation of donors/receivers is most explicit when Justin explained that food donation services are run by the privileged:

> People who speak for the homeless people aren't homeless. So at [name of organization] they come in from different places; that's not their experience that they're talking about. They're talking from a sense of privilege.

Justin's critique of the inadequacy of social services in understanding and "serving the poor" is because of the volunteers' privileged position, which has been raised in previous research on how social services have developed without

consulting homeless people (Hill 1994). For Justin, because the service is provided by individuals who have never been homeless, they often "have a blind eye turned to your circumstances." During a subsequent interview, Justin reinforces that social services fulfil their own hidden agendas: "They need people who are homeless so that they can justify their existence. If we weren't homeless, they wouldn't have a reason to exist."

In this context, Justin felt inclined to reject food donations as a political stand against uneven social relations and subordination to the status of passive victims dependent on others' generosity and time availability. Other informants opposed the status of passive victims in the context of faith-based organizations, as Isabella states: "There are churches that you can go to where they have free food, but then you have to go wait inside the church and I don't really wanna have to be affiliated with religion." Isabella's description expresses a desire to avoid religious establishments; such spaces are for Isabella a reminder of highly traumatic events she is struggling to forget. During unrecorded discussions, Isabella explains that avoiding food donations distributed in church is a necessary choice to maintain her mental well-being and desire to live. Yet because of their position of privilege, food assistance workers can impose faith-based spatiality without considering homeless people's own religious beliefs or allowing them to receive donations outside the establishment.

Vertical donations were explicit in food donation services. Participants explained standardized services that failed to recognize subjective differences and without providing homeless people that ability to comment about how services meet their personal needs. In particular, many participants raised concerns regarding nutrient-poor foods and low amounts of fresh fruits and vegetables. Emile explains, "[Name of organization] give food for people like me, they just make white bread, put some butter, put ham and cheese—no real veggie or anything. So you sort of need the veggie to keep the vitamins up for your immune system." The absence of healthy food is extremely serious given the particular circumstances of the everyday struggles of homeless people (such as sleeping on the street, frequently being exposed to cold winter nights, rain, wind, or torturous heat). Graham emphasizes that getting nutritious food is crucial to the homeless body:

> For street people, you really need healthy food 'cause people get sick, and if you get sick, it's like we got nothing, you take away all we got; if you get sick, you cannot walk and you cannot get food, life is hard, and so getting healthy food and get[ting] healthy is important 'cause people get sick. They're not eating enough good food.

Graham and Emile's descriptions of donated food with little or no nutritional value is embedded in the idea of providing immediate relief from hunger. This perspective resonates with the current political focus on food security, achieved when people have access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient foods that allow them to lead active and healthy lives (Food and Agricultural Organization 2009; Lawrence, Richards, and Lyons 2013). While having access to sufficient and safe nutrition is a crucial, on-the-ground reality of homeless people who struggle with street hardships and fragile bodies, an overriding emphasis is a more cultural perspective on food. This suggests that the broader sociocultural value of food consumption lies in expressions of taste, preferences, social connections, and nurturing (Block et al. 2011), which played a critical role in anticonsumption of food assistance services.

Forced mobility. Many homeless people who participated in these studies were rejecting homeless services—in particular, housing services located at the border of the city. These services imposed an unwanted distance from a city that matters to them in terms of feeling rooted and connected. Forced mobility embedded in specialized services was also linked to the ways shelters were run and operated under strict rules, as Adison notes:

> I do not go there [social housing], I went to one, and there are a lot of mothers with kids there; 8:30, they wake you up. You can have breakfast there, but you have to find your own lunch; 11:30 to 3:00 you gotta get out and take all your stuff. You had to come back at 4:00 to eat tea; 5:00 curfew, shut and no one is let out; 8:30, lights are out, go to bed. But what am I gonna do outside for like four hours, and what I do if they don't want me that day? And the location, you know, it's not in the city, there's nothing around.

After losing her parents, Adison, a freelance writer, experienced successive shelters, women's refuges, and other accommodations for two years. In her descriptions of a women's shelter, the service imposes a forced mobility, which reinforces identity misrecognition of homeless people as placeless. Due, in part, to forced mobility, homeless people are constantly on the move, picking up their belongings until the next shelter or until the accommodation reopens. It brings the torment of being on the street with no place to be or go (Zawash 1998), walking without a destination, and waiting for the shelter to reopen. The adversities associated with forced mobility are again explained in VanderStaay's *Street Lives* (1992) as "homeless people with nowhere to go" (p. 2).

Segregation. Analysis of the data shows that food charities, governmental food assistance services, and housing services tended to cast homeless people into groups and establish boundaries between ones in need and others on the basis of looks and cleanliness, as Gerald explains: "In [name of organization], it's a government-based society which creates a lot of boundaries. . . . I don't wanna get bounded to what I am supposed to be or look like." Gerald charges specialized homeless services of replicating and reinforcing an oversimplified representation of homelessness that unifies homeless people into stereotypical categories on the basis of normative codes of appearance. While these codes may be rooted in material realities of poverty and homelessness (Hill and Stamey 1990), they nevertheless reify homeless people to the status of

otherness that inherently overrides all else about them as people, from basic attributes such as gender to peoples' complex and multifaceted biographies. Emile expounds, "Just because of the way I look on the outside, people judge me. When I look a bit rough, they treat me different. And then, the next day I've turned up in the full army uniform on with my medals and they treat me different." Segregation based on looks obstructs the material realities of homeless people's everyday struggles. In other words, just because Emile dresses "different" does not erase the everyday reality of poverty and insecurity.

Specific to narratives of food assistance anticonsumption, segregation not only reinforces the marginal position of homeless people in society but also has the effect of limiting the potential for homeless people to express food beliefs, such as vegetarianism, and individual tastes and preferences. Irvin names food assistance programs "food for the homeless people." When prompted on the meaning of "homeless food," he articulates that homeless people are given food that "is not the same as what everyone eats." For him, "homeless food" not only is low quality and standardized but also subordinates the homeless person to an incompetent and inexperienced hungry body incapable of food appreciation, tastes, and preferences.

Segregation also means an abstraction to personal circumstances and inequitable treatment. For example, Charles feels that specialized services operate from a position of privilege, do not comprehend dangers associated with being and living homeless, and consider all homeless as the same. Consider his remarks:

> I've been on the street now for nearly five years 'cause all the governments wants to give me is a boarding house or something like that, and it's dangerous in the boarding house. I don't want a boarding house. Like there might be 30 people to 50 people sleeping in one house with a room each. Like a motel. And people are on drugs, people just got out of jail. People don't care about other people. They kick their doors in, and stab them, and they hurt them. They rob them.

Charles describes some of the most fundamental and undeniable concerns for individuals who experience homelessness, that of safety and survival (Chamberlain 2014; Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1992; Hill and Stamey 1990). Although daily violence and other dangers are direct consequences of being roofless and living on the streets, finding a roof for the night through social housing services does not necessarily eliminate hazards. Charles associates the probability of offense in a context of social housing, with a lack of control over "the others"—how many and who can come to live in the same home. His fear of these others resonates with his childhood experience of growing up in an abusive family and echoes accounts of mistrust and distancing from individuals on drugs.

Anticonsumption

Anticonsumption among homeless people stands in sharp contrast to conventional wisdom that homeless people are passive receivers—placeless others—whose survival is dependent on social support and charities. Avoiding specialized homeless services not only opposes institutionalized subordination to the status of deficient and inferior but also leads to development of innovative tactics of self-feeding and self-sheltering among the homeless as active participants in their lives.

Active participant. For most of these men and women, homelessness means a shift in their daily realities. Yet instead of accepting a cultural identification of homeless people are hungry receivers waiting to be fed, participants claimed the right to access tasteful, enjoyable, and social food consumption practices (Booth 2006). Findings reveal a wide array of creative practices for food provision. As Charles presents:

> Instead of just getting food from [organization], we gather it and we give it to everybody. We share it to everybody and we socialize and we get together and we have dinner, proper dinner instead of just bread and cakes. You can't live off of that.

In this excerpt, Charles discusses a creative and collective food provisioning practice in which homeless people gather perishable foods at the end of the market day from nearby businesses and redistribute them to those in need. In his narrative, active engagement of food rescue is discussed in terms of communal exchange through which homeless people are able to interact with business owners and employees, develop relations of trust, and have access to mainstream society rather than being segregated to the receiving end of charity donations. The analysis also reveals creative forms of scavenging practices developed and organized at particular times and places, indicating skills and local knowledge of where and when to scavenge. Justin and Emile described their engagement in the circulation of urban foods in terms of waste reduction:

> That food is gonna be wasted without us so better being used for a way that actually meets the human's needs today 'cause we all human. (Justin)
>
> There's a lot of poor people around and, at the same time, there's a lot of food being thrown away and what we do is stopping this waste and giving it way, like sharing between us and anyone who needs. (Emile)

Interestingly, while food scavenging and food rescue tend to be culturally taboo and socially unacceptable, these somewhat negative sociocultural frames were experienced as necessary platforms to communicate the capacities for homeless people to be active and integrated in cities as well as to produce their own resources. Such active engagement in food provision is exemplified by Food Not Bombs, a San Francisco–based group that engages in the collection of food waste and dumpster diving (Ferne and Mercer 2007; Glasser and Bridgman 1999). Food assistance avoidance is, for Irvin, a political stand against grouping homeless people into a category unworthy of "proper food," "gastronomy," and "food beliefs." It represents a tactical response against identity misrecognition operated and

reinforced by specialized services through vertical donations, forced mobility, and segregation.

Local. Scholars have described ideal homes as places that provide safety, autonomy, and a mirror to the self (Marcus 2006; Parsell 2015; Saatcioglu and Ozanne 2013). Likewise, Lauren, Sandrine, Adison, Charles and other homeless people's narratives drew on the symbol of ideal homes. For Sandrine, a home is not about "being told what to do and what not to do," and for Lauren, a home ought to be free of unnecessary rules. For Adison, a home should bring stability; for Charles, a home needs to protect material belongings from theft and provides autonomy and control. In their narratives, a home that is not safe, secure, stable, and free of unnecessary rules is not a home.

Observations reveal imaginative, nonnormative ways of recreating a sense of permanence and locality. For example, Sandrine explained sleeping in a particular spot in the park that is lighted, "because if I see or hear anyone at least there's light, at least I can see them, and know who they are." Moreover, it is close to the city center, "so I can get my food and come back here" and "the public toilets are right there." Another home-making tactic was to look like a man: "When I go to bed, I have to wear a hat—a beanie—and I put a blanket over my head. So just in case someone does go by, I hope they think I'm a guy. I always think, 'I hope they think I'm a guy,' and I always put socks on because girls are easy, if they see a girl, they'll think she's defenseless." These home-making tactics reject forced mobility rooted in temporary shelter and expose the homeless person as a local individual with capacity to build and maintain a sense of permanence in life through self-sheltering.

Subjectivities. The data show that anticonsumption as a tactical response to institutionalized subordination enables participants to express their biographies, individualities, tastes, and preferences. Evident from these narratives was the capacity for homeless women to express and respond to their specific needs, fears, and beliefs. For example, many homeless women opted to shelter together in groups of women, as Jasmine describes: "I have slept many times on the street but never alone. We always have people with me because there's safety in numbers. And we, women, have a [squat] that we've just started." Jasmine associates safety with companionship and deliberately creates a home with other women as a locus of safety but also control and autonomy from men's dominance and governmental directives, which she believes are "constructed by men."

Another example is Adison, who responds to her personal fears and physical and psychological needs by filling her daily life with chosen destinations and timely, self-established movements. Adison does not want anyone to see her sitting and waiting, "'cause I'm a female, I don't want any guys thinking that I'm sitting there and doing nothing. I don't want them to see, 'She's weak.' So I always walk and move so the guys think, 'She's strong, and she's hard to get to know so we won't touch her.' It's so hard for them to come up to me 'cause I have places to go." Adison's temporal rhythms include walking in the park, "doing some exercise," and getting her lunch by scavenging at different places, taking care never to visit the same locations twice. At 4 P.M., she volunteers at an organization run by other homeless people where she helps with food pickups and keeps the best food for herself. While Adison cannot eliminate the daily struggles and conditions of placelessness imposed by homelessness (VanderStaay 1992), she nevertheless regulates her own movements through appropriations of destinations as her locus of independence and freedom.

In narratives about independence and learning how to get food, take a shower, or find a place to sleep, interviewees discussed the possibilities to live and express subjectivities. For example, Charles detailed his knowledge: "I have a shower around the corner and I am stronger this way, I do things my way." Yet maintaining his independence has been demanding, and it requires physical abilities. Charles explained day-to-day difficulties of living on the streets and expressed future-oriented worries in terms of remaining physically able and healthy.

Anticonsumption and Public Policy Implications

This investigation is the first to account for materially deprived consumers in anticonsumption research. The analysis shows homeless people who actively reject utilitarian-focused consumption provided by social services and charity donations. These acts of anticonsumption are responses to institutionalized subordination. Anticonsumption among the materially deprived differs from middle- and upper-class anticonsumers as it exposes issues of identity misrecognition through which specialized homeless services operate. This anticonsumption functions within prevailing systems of codification, symbolic representations, and social norms embedded in the ideology of consumption (Cherrier, Szuba, and Özçağlar-Toulouse 2012). By rejecting homeless services and food charities, homeless people act counter to expectations and thus challenge the norms and cultural values that delineate and define group categories of homeless as the "-less." However, anticonsumption is not merely a rejection of encoded meanings and representations of the homeless and poor people, nor does it simply expose the negativity that arises from cultural representations of a stigmatized group identity and stereotypes. In the context of extreme material deprivation, anticonsumption serves as a tactical response against institutionalized subordination.

Our work contributes to anticonsumption as well as homelessness research. One implication is our challenge to current understandings of anticonsumption as antithesis to consumption. Prior work has stated that anticonsumption is "the abstention from consumption" (Hoffmann 2011, p. 1703), "literally means against consumption" (Lee et al. 2009, p. 145), or centers "on the reasons against consumption" (Chatzidakis and Lee 2013, p. 190). Our work resists a clean distinction between anticonsumption and consumption or between "having" and "being" (Cherrier and Murray 2007). Rather than pursuing illusionary escape from consumption, participants' anticonsumption served to expose identity misrecognition embedded in the

dominant ideology of consumption and through which specialized services operate.

A second implication to anticonsumption research is the contention that anticonsumption can arise from experiences of institutionalized subordination. Previous work has identified personally and/or societally motivated anticonsumption (Iyer and Muncy 2009). However, the lack of concern for the material circumstances of anticonsumers excludes motivations linked to economic, social, and cultural worthlessness. Our work emphasizes issues of subordination connected to the ideology of consumption, which motivates consumers to develop tactics of anticonsumption. Through anticonsumption, homeless people respond to institutionalized subordination by rejecting identity misrecognition perpetuated and reinforced through specialized homeless services. Understanding anticonsumption as a response to institutional subordination calls for new research on excluded, vulnerable, marginalized, or stigmatized consumers and their tactics of anticonsumption to gain legitimacy in the marketplace.

Another implication is an understanding of anticonsumption as tactical rather than strategic. De Certeau (1984) describes tactics as the last resort of the weak, a trick or guileful ruse. Unlike strategies that are organized and elaborated from a place of power, "a tactic is determined by the absence of power" (p. 38). Our work demonstrates that under conditions of extreme material deprivation, anticonsumption may not always be an option and lacks permanence. Materially deprived consumers are thus consumers capable of seizing anticonsumption opportunities. Further research on anticonsumption may question various effects of strategic versus tactical anticonsumption practices on the self, society, and the ideology of consumption.

This study also has relevant public policy implications. In general, public policies on homelessness are either structural or individual in nature (Barrios, Piacentini, and Salciuviene 2012). From a structural perspective, homeless people are victims of broader unemployment rates, unaffordable and insufficient housing for low-income people, conservative fiscal plans, and welfare retrenchment. Accordingly, one way to reduce homelessness is to develop and market government-subsidized social welfare programs and services, which would offset free-market housing costs and respond to needs of the mentally and physically ill.

Exacerbating these policies is the individualistic perspective of the homeless as irresponsible people who have chosen passivity and illicit consumption such as drugs and alcohol. Therefore, any pledge to reduce homelessness is through a status quo lens that focuses on compelling individuals to change behavior, such as through stricter drug and alcohol regulations and conditional welfare (e.g., Chamberlain, Johnson, and Robinson [2014] for Australia; Schutt and Garrett [2013] for the United States). These perspectives, however, fail to consider the complexity of homelessness, suggesting that either approach is inadequate (Chamberlain, Johnson, and Robinson 2014).

In the context of the present study, homeless people experienced adversities beyond strict material constraints of food and housing. Their tactics of anticonsumption yield attention to cognitive and affective outcomes of broader cultural and social forces and structures that delimit and define homelessness. This shows that homelessness is not simply a social problem of material exclusion that can be solved through interventions built on providing material structures. Rather, homelessness is institutionalized in normative and cultural frames through the workings of various entities. These institutions, including specialized homeless services, need to be considered within sociocultural templates that guide their policies, codes, and practices.

Our findings call for public policy solutions that are harmonious with the needs and various subjectivities of homeless people as well as palatable to the larger public and policy makers. One way to frame this issue is within the consumption adequacy rubric that requires societies to provide a modicum of goods and services to their citizens regardless of their ability to afford them (see Martin and Hill 2012). This listing of products is designed to ensure not only survival but also the possibility of moving beyond subsistence living. It generally includes nutritious and sufficient food and water, clothing consistent with the environment and local tastes and customs, preventative and remedial healthcare, safe and secure housing, and opportunities for jobs and education. While they are each essential, it is the central areas of food and shelter that are important to this investigation.

This framework has allowed policy makers to understand the *what*, but it provides little guidance as to the *how*. The provision of services that lack either sufficiency in quantity and quality of foodstuffs/housing options or decency and dignity of delivery of these goods and services may meet the "letter" of consumption adequacy but not the "spirit" (i.e., its larger intent). As a consequence, this work would add another requirement to the provision of products to those citizens who cannot afford them but are essential to a reasonable quality of life: that homeless people be treated as consumers. To this end, government might work in concert with the private sector to organize intelligence, product features, and delivery strategies, as they would ordinarily do with more typical exchange relationships.

These public–private partnerships could be funded as required by consumer demand, and resources could be garnered from private organizations already working with this population, along with public funding that has been used for emergency and related services. Firms such as Philabundance in the Philadelphia market take on millions of pounds of various foods on an annual basis, distributing them to people in need throughout the region. It has tapped into supermarkets, caterers, and large firms that provide in-house food services to get foods and redistribute them to people in need in a dignified fashion. Their model is simple in theory but difficult in practice: find the best goods possible and give them to people in ways that mirror market exchanges in more affluent communities. Such partnerships, along with government support and open-minded policy reforms, will solve problems long festering in the most affluent countries in the world.

What also surfaced from the perspectives and experiences of anticonsumption among homeless people is the need to belong and be valued partners in social relations (Glasser and Bridgman 1999; Kawash 1998). While providing shelters and housing accommodations remains essential, the idea of a meaningful home, as a place of belonging, cannot be bound to pure material structures. Rather, a home is about establishing and maintaining a sense of self, an identity that is protected and can be negotiated (Hill 1991). Some shelter rules and politics cast homeless people as placeless and add another layer of exclusion and isolation. Furthermore, the suburban locations and middle-class volunteers amplify social inequalities and reproduce an excluded social world of homeless people. The ways in which governments and charity organizations can support homeless people's needs to belong and to be considered as consumers in exchange systems and as equitable partners in social relations require exploration. One way forward is to change the research focus from "why homeless people choose to not consume specialized homeless services" to "why the consumption of specialized homeless services does not happen."

Here, we find the concept of capabilities, as suggested by one of the reviewers, to be a useful alternative to a focus on material and economic wealth (Sen 2001). Sen (2001, p. 87) coins capability in terms of "the substantive freedoms he or she enjoys to lead the kind of life he or she has reason to value. In this perspective, poverty must be seen as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely lowness of incomes." The capability approach urges that when evaluating homelessness, policy makers should consider not just statistical definitions and metrics of homelessness but also the conditions of homelessness, the ways in which homelessness influences what each person has reason to value, and the opportunities and constraints homeless people face when trying to sustain what they value in life. For example, in the context of housing, our work shows that homeless people innovatively and creatively make a home, even under conditions of rooflessness. Whether these homes were in the park or in an abandoned shelter, they constitute an essential part to sustaining values of autonomy, stability, and dignity. With these marginalized forms of making a home come the need for urban planners and policy makers to reconsider what constitutes and defines a "home" in urban space. Consideration should also be given to the various economic, cultural, social, and political barriers that prevent homeless people from creating their homes.

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