"Looking a gift horse in the mouth": Residential Immobility and the Silent Discipline of Public Housing as Charity in British Columbia

by

Matthew Eric Davies
B.A., University of Victoria, 2009

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Anthropology

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Abstract

In the Spring of 2011, I conducted 12 interviews with public housing tenants in Victoria, British Columbia. This research became the focus of my MA thesis research in anthropology. Both BC Housing's directly managed buildings and non-profit housing were included. My thesis aims to understand the motivations of tenants who desire to leave public housing and to situate these motivations within the framework of "push" and "pull" factors. In other words, to understand whether the desire to leave public housing stemmed from within the housing system (push) or outside of it (pull). All participants reported push factors, though a few had been pushed from unsatisfactory public housing into satisfactory public housing. However, most participants felt stuck as they did not have the resources to pay for unaffordable market housing. The dissatisfaction they faced in public housing stemmed from problems with management/staff, problems with neighbours, and problems with the physical condition of housing. Many participants expressed fear that they would lose their housing if they expressed their rights as tenants or made complaints about the issues they faced. Complaints that were brought forward were seen as being ignored. In order to understand the frustration and fear participants experienced, I explore the idea of social assistance as "charity", which has its beginnings in the English Poor Laws, and what effect this has on the recipients. Social assistance as charity, including public housing, is given as a sort of "gift". I argue that in this framework, a gift should be accepted willingly and not questioned. This acts to silence complaints and plays off of common notions about who are the deserving poor and undeserving poor.
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Acknowledgments

Nothing is accomplished alone. The list of those I wish to thank is extensive. If I miss anyone, I apologize but know that you've helped me along the way.

To my participants: Thank you for opening your homes to me and talking about your lives and experiences. I have great respect for your strength and I truly hope this thesis does our conversations justice. Thank you for participating and making this possible.

To my supervisory committee: Thank you for your support over this complicated and trying process. Margo, thank you for your insightful comments, support, and guidance. Your commitment to social justice has inspired this research and shaped the way I view issues of poverty in our own community. The knowledge you've given me is invaluable. Hulya, thank you for being my mentor since the early days of undergrad. You've been a constant source of inspiration and reminder to think deeply and examine our own world and lives. You live the ethics that most only talk about. I still remember the first comment you left on one of my assignments: "Good but not brilliant". You've always pushed me and balanced constructive criticism with encouragement. Thank you for all the opportunities you've given me over the years and always believing in me. You kept me in anthropology and your classes were always the most inspirational, creative, democratic, useful and inspiring.

To my fellow students: Thank you for your support, encouragement, commiseration, and wise words through-out this process. Specifically, Jen, Julia, Sarah, Susannah, Julie-Anne, Jess, Adam, and Katie. You have all become wonderful friends. Thank you Jen and Julia for all those long days (and nights) in the grad bunker. And thank you Jen for becoming something more. I love you.

To my friends and family: Thank you for your support, encouragement and taking me away from the academic world. School isn't everything and you helped keep me sane and grounded. I love you all and thank you for bringing me on so many adventures. Specifically, thank you Tamara, Andre, Selina, Julie, Rose, Nick, Dillon, Jess, Jacklyn, Dave, Mike, and Tracey. You are all wonderful and given me so much joy. Thanks Mimine for teaching me to forgot about everything and just nap. You are a fluffy inspiration.

To My Parents Myrna and Peter: Thank you for your constant support, love and wise words. I would not have made it without your love and generosity. I could not ask for better parents. Thank you for all you done over the years and always getting me through difficult times.

To the Ministry of Social Development & Housing and BC Housing: Thank you for making this research possible. Thank you Cecile Lacombe and Rebecca Signer for taking me on as a student researcher. I hope this work contributes to the good work that you are doing.
Chapter 1: Introduction & Context

In this chapter, I start by explaining the history of my current thesis research and how it replaced a different project that I had originally proposed. I look at where the idea for this research came from and how it came to be the topic of my current research. After this, I look at the impetus for this research and why it is important. I use social housing in the United Kingdom as a comparative context as there are enough similarities to be useful but I also explain the importance of researching specifically in the Canadian context. Next, I start to explain the basis of my research as well as some of its limitations. My literature review, then, explores ideas of residential mobility in both the private market and social housing. Social housing provides a more useful comparative context but both are useful for understanding the results of this research. Finally, I explore the context of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, which is the locale that this research took place in. This context includes the costs of renting in the private market, how (un)affordable the private market is, what public housing provides as well as comparing this data to social assistance rates and the minimum wage. This is to build a context that examines what is available for low-income renters, including public housing, and why some are excluded from this. Overall, this allows a comparison of private market rentals to public housing.

Background to Research Project

In the fall of 2009, I took a graduate studies class on housing and homelessness taught by Margo Matwychuk, Bernadette Pauly, and Cecile Lacombe. A requirement of the class was to undertake a research project with a mentor from the Ministry of Housing and Social Development. My proposed thesis work at the time was in the area of food security and community gardening. For this reason, I choose a project working with Rebecca Siggner to conduct a survey of food security initiatives in BC Housing's directly managed public housing buildings. The project looked at initiatives such as community kitchens, community gardens, and meal programs to gain an idea of what food security
initiatives existed at these buildings. A survey was sent to the managers of all directly managed buildings in BC. They were asked to identify the food security initiatives as well as how often they were used by tenants. Both a report and a presentation were prepared from this survey. All the students from the class presented their projects to Ministry of Housing and Social Development. My report and presentation were well received and in December 2009 Joaquin Trapero, who helped organize the collaboration between UVic and the Ministry, approached me about extending this collaboration.

This extended collaboration moved away from issues of food security to issues of residential mobility in the public housing system. I worked with Cecile Lacombe from the Ministry of Citizens Services. Cecile developed the main research questions that the Ministry wanted answered. The project was undertaken through UVic but in collaboration with the Ministry. This meant I had control over the results and publications as well as necessitating approval from the Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) at UVic. In the summer of 2011, I began the initial work for this project including my ethics application, interview questions, and literature review.

At this time, the residential mobility study was a side project that was only supposed to take roughly 120 hours of work to complete. I was still finishing class work and trying to get my own thesis project underway. Until the winter of 2011, I attempted to do both projects at once. This proved to be difficult and was complicated by my then supervisor fighting a tenure battle. It became quite apparent that I would not be able to do both projects at once and that my original thesis research was not working out the way I had hoped. The residential mobility project had already extended far beyond the initial hours allocated to it, and beyond the small grant that I was given to undertake it. In hindsight, 120 hours was not nearly enough time to complete an ethics application, develop interview questions, complete recruitment posters, recruit participants, complete 12 interviews, analyse interviews (without transcribing at the time), write a literature review, and complete a report. This was certainly not feasible while trying to do this at the same time I was attempting to get an entire MA thesis project
underway and trying to complete course work. For these reasons, in the winter of 2011, I decided to make the residential mobility project my thesis work and scrap my community gardening project. This meant expanding the methodological scope of this research using ethnographic methods in order to build a social, structural and historical context to the interviews that provide a better explanatory framework.

**Public Housing Research**

The impetus for this research sprang out of a very important gap in the current literature. There is very little research on why public housing\(^1\) tenants in Canada leave their suites. The questions I set out to answer were (1) why tenants wanted to or left their public housing suites, (2) were these moves driven by negative "push" factors or positive "pull" factors, (3) is public housing a stepping stone for other forms of tenures or opportunities, and (4) what do tenant perspectives tell us both about public housing and the private market? This research was then expanded to ask why participants were treated in the ways that they were.

There is a relatively small body of research on why tenants leave social housing out of the United Kingdom but this work needs to be replicated within the Canadian, and more specifically, British Columbian context. There exist many similarities in terms of economic and political systems between the UK and Canada but there are important differences. The literature from the UK provides a useful backdrop and research framing but it cannot be directly applied to this research context. There is a need for specific empirical data within the local context to make better informed policy decisions.

Early “tenancy breakdown”—defined as tenancies that end within one year of being established (Pawson et al. 2006: 1)—can be detrimental to tenants as social ties are broken and moving costs can

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\(^1\) Generally, public housing refers to housing directly owned by a government body while social housing refers to housing owned and operated by the not-for-profit sector. However, the two terms seem to be used interchangeably in much of the literature to refer to both directly owned government housing and not-for-profit housing. In BC, both directly managed housing and not-for-profit housing is generally referred to as public housing or subsidized housing. I use the term public housing when referring to BC or Canada but use social housing to refer to housing outside of these contexts as it is the most common usage.
be substantial. Early vacancies cost housing providers through such things as repairs, cleaning, disposal of garbage, and loss of rent from vacancies (Pawson & Munro 2010: 146-147). Knowing why tenants leave or wish to leave may help off-set physical, social, and monetary costs to both tenants and housing providers by making public housing a more stable tenure as well as improving tenant quality of life.

In order to gain the perspective of tenants themselves, I undertook a qualitative study. This method is preferable as it takes tenants perspectives as the basis for categorizing their experiences rather than using predetermined categories and asking tenants to fit their experiences into them. Ethnographic methods were used to contextualize the interviews providing historic, structural, and social data that allowed an expansion of the interpretation of the interviews and specifically sought to answer why participants were in the positions they were and why they were treated in specific ways. However, an important limitation did arise through this research. All of those who reported a desire to move had no specific plans to move within the 6 month time frame outlined in the recruitment letter. A few were on the waitlist to be transferred but had been there for an extended period of time and did not know when a move might occur. Most participants felt a strong sense of being stuck. They wished to leave but could not afford the move back into market housing and transferring public housing suites usually requires a lengthy stay on the wait list with no guarantee of gaining better housing. It should also be noted that if it were not for these participants, the desired number of 10-15 interviews would not have been met. These participants represent the best proxy to those who have left public housing. Who leaves and who stays may simply be a matter of having the resources to do so and may not be a result of a fundamental difference in experience. More research in this area is necessary to understand what other options are available and why or why not it is accessed. One way to do this would be to do exit interviews and surveys with tenants leaving their suites. Another method would be to track down former tenants to interview them as was done by Pawson & Munro (2010: 157). Importantly, the
participants in Pawson and Munro's (2010) study cited very similar reasons for leaving as did the participants in this study.

Another limitation with this research is that it may be biased towards those tenants who have issues with their housing situation. In this way, the negative push factors most often cited as the reasons why participants wished to leave may be exaggerated. Those that are stuck and are experiencing problems may have been more likely to respond to this research than those who were planning on leaving due to positive pull factors. Those that have left were not in a position to receive the recruitment letter at all. However, those that have already left for both positive and negative reasons would not have received the recruitment letter meaning both groups could have been excluded equally. We cannot assume that everyone who has left has done so for positive or negative reasons. This does indicate the need for a more targeted study that either directly recruits those who have given their notice to end their tenancies and/or tracking down those who have left public housing. Such a study would necessarily include those who have been given notices of eviction.

Despite its limitations this study highlights many issues that are likely experienced by those tenants who did not participate in the research. The reported issues were not fundamentally about specific interpersonal problems between participants and other tenants or participants and management/staff. Rather, they are problems that could very easily be experienced by other tenants as well. Complaints about poor physical condition, noise, overbearing rules, and crime represent more systemic issues. Importantly, there was no discrepancy between issues and problems reported in both BC Housing's directly managed buildings and those from the non-profit sector.

**Literature Review**

In this section, I will outline the literature on residential mobility both within the private market and within the social housing systems. This literature tends to generalize over various contexts and locales to give an overall view of what the process of leaving one’s place of residence for another entails.
Comparing both the "normal" residential mobility pattern in the private market to that of social housing illuminates the different factors at play in both systems. The different constraints, motivations, and issues that influence mobility in both forms of tenure reveal important ideas about class and the social ideas underpinning each form of tenure.

Residential Mobility in General

Most contemporary literature on residential mobility started with reference to Rossi’s 1955 classic titled *Why Families Move* (Rossi 1980[1955]; Dieleman 2001). This, and most literature on residential mobility, does not directly deal with mobility within the public housing sector. It is useful, however, to briefly look at this literature in order to glean important insights that can be used in the study of public housing. The introduction to the second edition of Rossi’s work, printed in 1980, highlights the contributions he has made to the field of residential mobility. These contributions revolve primarily around identifying residential mobility as a process with regards to the interplay between the decision to move and finding a suitable place to live, and identifying how life-cycle events are related to mobility.

The process of moving involves the decision to move as well as finding a suitable new location. However, one does not necessarily follow the other (Dieleman 2001: 249; Rossi 1980: 24). The decision to move can arise out of finding a better place to live before any dissatisfaction is felt. Likewise, someone may not move despite severe dissatisfaction with their current residence if no better residence is found or it may force them to move to an undesirable location. Dire housing situations lead people to lower their standards or be willing to pay more to get out of their current situation (Dieleman 2001: 256). The process of moving is not a set of linear steps and involves a multitude of potential motivations and constraints. This is important for the current study as some participants reported a willingness to jump back into market housing despite not having better housing secured. They stated that they were willing to sacrifice things such as food and medicine to get out of public housing.
Though, it must be noted that no participants had any specific plans to move.

Rossi (1980: 33) noted that life-cycle events were a major source of mobility. He states that the most quoted sentence in his book is “[t]he findings of this study indicate the major function of mobility to be the process by which families adjust their housing to the housing needs that are generated by the shifts in family composition that accompany life cycle changes [p. 61]” (Rossi 1980: 35). Major events such as marriage, death, childbirth, separation, and employment/unemployment are major sources of mobility. This insight has been largely adopted by contemporary theorists of residential mobility through the study of the *life-course* (Dieleman 2001: 250, 260). Often times, life-course events put pressure on a household through growth (e.g. birth and partnership formation). A growing household experiences more pressure to move. Life-course studies focus on what a household needs and desires within their current position in life. As an example, young and old single tenants will most likely desire and need different kinds of accommodation despite both being labelled as “single” (Rossi 1980: 26). Life-course continues to be an important avenue of research in residential mobility including insight into different life-courses and the study of how they change over time. Beck (Kemp & Keoghan 2001: 33) notes that things such as increasing emphasis on individuality, insecurities in the labour market, and less emphasis on marriage have led to increased mobility with private rentals providing a sufficiently impermanent form of tenure that suits this new modality. Life-courses are ever changing and as they do, so will the mobility patterns they produce.

Rossi further shifted the focus from looking at aggregate patterns of residential movement to looking at micro-processes and characteristics of households. Specifically, he used psychology and social psychology to identify factors within households that led to mobility (Clark 1980: 9). Dieleman (2001: 251) notes there is a divide between European and US researchers in which the former tends to look at micro-processes while the latter looks at macro forces in order to create models. Looking at micro-processes, and focusing on qualitative methodology, is more useful for understanding the
motivations tenants have for leaving while looking at larger patterns and aggregate numbers helps to illuminate the context and constraints faced by tenants.

Dieleman (2001: 253-254) notes that household decision making is a complicated process. One important insight is that a household cannot be viewed as a singular unit led by one person. Rather, decisions are made by, or at least in reference to, other members of the household. Mobility may be reduced if parents are unwilling to up-root their children in a move. Moves often involve relocating to housing that is closer to a person's work place or to housing that reduces commute times (Clark et al. 2003). In dual income households, however, mobility is reduced as commute times must be balanced between people (Deding et al. 2009; Dieleman 2001: 254-255). What this highlights is the complexity of motivations and constraints that lead to a move. It is not as simple as matching a household to an ideal tenure as Rossi suggests. An ideal tenure may not exist nor will a household be united in its wants and needs or what it considers ideal. Stresses, constraints, and opportunities will put pressure on a household and either 'push' or 'pull' it out of its current location or lead to a dissolution of the household. More often than not, there are multiple motivations to move both from the 'push' and the 'pull' categories.

Residential Mobility within Public Housing

Little research is available on residential mobility within the public housing system in BC or Canada. Most literature on public housing in Canada revolves around such things as problems within the housing system and changes in who provides and funds public housing (Alvi et al. 2001; Dalton 2009; Hackworth & Moriah 2006). Silver (2011) argues that problems exist in social housing but that this form of tenure can provide good homes despite the stereotyped and stigmatized reputation it has. This stigmatization informs the discourse that helps shut down social housing in favour of private for profit redevelopment or mixed income development that lowers the overall number of subsidized units available. He argues that problems associated with social housing exist largely due to structural
inequalities, deindustrialization, the market’s failure to create affordable rental housing, suburbanization, and neoliberal economic policy. This body of literature can help inform the context of residential mobility but it does not directly deal with tenant's perspectives on why they move. Because of this literature gap, it is necessary to look to another context for comparison and research framing.

The UK has an extensive social housing system making it a major focus of literature on residential mobility. The social housing sector has undergone large scale changes, during and beyond the Thatcher era, through programs such as Right to Buy and the selling off of social housing to the not-for-profit charity sector (Ham et al. 2010; Murie 2009; Pawson 2006). The post-Thatcher literature will be the focus of this review as it is the most up-to-date and because of similarities in structural changes between Canada and the UK (e.g. transferring large portions of publically owned social housing to the not-for-profit sector). It must be noted that flows into and out of social housing differ regionally in the UK (Ham et al. 2010: 3) with the north experiencing declines in social housing tenancies leading to a large number of vacancies (Pawson & Munro 2010: 149; Bramley & Pawson 2002). This changes the dynamic of residential mobility through the ease with which tenants can switch units.

Burrows (1999), using data from the Survey of English Housing (SEH) from 1993/94, shows that social housing within England is becoming poorer through the process of “residualisation”. Those that are staying in social housing and those that are entering it from other forms of tenure tend to be lower-income. This has led to an overall change in the characteristics of the social rented sector in England. Importantly, Burrows (1999: 30) shows that more people move from private rentals into social housing than from social housing into private rentals with 33,000 exiting social housing and 67,000 entering it. Similarly, 44,000 left owner occupation for social housing and 35,000 left social housing for owner occupation. Out of newly founded households, 131,000 were within social housing, 218,000 were in private rentals, and 206,000 were owner occupation. Residential mobility within the
social housing system was also shown to be increasing. Burrows (1999: 30-31) states that this is due to a younger demographic entering social housing as elderly tenants die.

Kemp and Keoghan (2001) found a similar pattern using interviews in the SEH from 1995/96. They (Kemp and Keoghan 2001: 25) reviewed interviews from those who left social housing for private rentals and those who left private rentals to social housing. Overall, there were 126 households that left private rentals for social housing and 55 households that left social housing for private rentals.² Importantly, this method revealed many of the motivations tenants had for leaving. The purpose of this study was to reveal the push and pull factors for both groups. The biggest reasons given by tenants for exiting social housing into the private rented sector was finding a better neighbourhood (28%), finding a better dwelling (26%), divorce/separation (28%), and other personal reasons (22%). Tenants moving from the private rented sector to social housing listed better dwelling (22%), other personal reasons (21%), asked to leave by landlord (17%), and other (12%) as the biggest reasons for leaving (Kemp and Keoghan 2001: 29). One important issue that arises is what mobility reveals about different forms of tenure. For instance, private rentals are a common option when a divorce or separation occurs. This may be due to lower wait times in that sector, less rigid or formal selection process, and less concentration in fewer areas than is the case for social housing. Importantly, this article does not reveal whether such moves are positive moves in terms of quality and cost of private housing and whether both people from the divorced couple move to new housing.

Kemp and Keoghan (2001: 34) note that many leaving social housing did not do so because of a so called “falling out” of the tenure. By this they mean that the tenants were not forced out of their tenancies. Rather, they state that ex-social housing tenants choose to move to find better

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² It is important to note that both Burrows (1999) and Kemp and Keoghan (2001) state that the social rented sector is shrinking yet they both show that more people are moving into social housing than out of it. This obvious contradiction is not explained outright, though it does seem possible that the increasing flow can be explained by new tenants filling up already vacant, and largely undesirable, units and through filling units of deceased tenants. This fits with the idea of residualisation as the social rented sector becomes poorer and younger as tenants are concentrated in deindustrialized areas. This is supported by Pawson & Munro (2010: 149) who note there is an oversupply of social housing in poorer areas. This is particularly problematic in the north which has experienced depopulation due to industrial breakdown (Pawson & Munro 2010: 152).
neighbourhoods and better accommodation, categorizing them as pull factors. The private rented sector is more suitable for this as it is diffused throughout cities while social housing tends to be concentrated in estates in certain areas. However, to put these moves in wholly positive terms is short sighted.

Residential mobility is driven by both push and pull factors. Leaving the social rented sector due to poor or unsuitable housing or to escape a bad neighbourhood should be described as a push factor to more accurately capture the motivations of tenants. It seems an obvious point that if one’s current housing situation is undesirable that more desirable housing will be sought. To say the new housing was the motivation for moving seems inaccurate. Recognizing the interplay of these ideas helps us to understand the motivations and constraints faced by tenants. It also forces us to re-examine the notion of choice. Are tenants choosing better housing or being forced to find better housing? Recognizing this has important policy implications as it shows that work can be done within both sectors especially considering that more people move from private rentals to social housing than the other way.

Pawson & Munro (2010) takes up this consideration stating that

There was very little sense in ex-tenants’ accounts that their GHA tenancy termination represented a carefully considered decision to move to a preferred location. Instead, what shines through their stories is a sense of a struggle to find a way of establishing a tenancy, and a home, that fulfilled even the most basic needs for comfort and security. In the terminology of the residential mobility literature, such moves while not exactly ‘forced’ moves, are certainly described by the ex-tenants as the consequence of ‘push’ factors away from the current situation, rather than ‘pull’ factors towards something better (160).

They identify three main hypotheses found in the literature that are said to lead to tenants moving ‘prematurely’ from their social housing suites. These hypotheses are: (1) market failure, (2) individual vulnerability, and (3) social landlords’ managerial practices (Pawson & Munro 2010: 149-150). Market failure refers to depopulation, deindustrialization, lack of jobs, and in some areas, “the plentiful supply of affordable private-sector housing” (Pawson & Munro 2010: 149) which has led to a large number of
vacancies within social housing as well as more mobility within it as housing conditions tend to be poor and there is little problem finding accommodation on short notice. Individual vulnerability refers to characteristics of tenants that may contribute to tenancy breakdown. These characteristics are factors such as a history of homelessness, exiting military service, prison, or another “background in institutional accommodation,” youth, and recently arrived refugee status (Pawson & Munro 2010: 149-150). Lastly, managerial practices revolve around things such as maintenance, resolving anti-social behaviour, maintaining common areas, and making sure suites are in good condition when they are rented (Pawson & Munro 2010: 150). How social landlords address these matters helps determine mobility of tenants.

Pawson and Munro (2010) draw upon Glasgow Housing Association information and 50 interviews with tenants who left their GHA suites within 18 months of entering them to understand why ex-tenants left their suites early. Semi-structured interviews with ex-tenants were conducted to understand "ex-tenants' pathways into, experience within and process of leaving the tenancy” (Pawson & Munro 2010: 157). Their key findings using qualitative methods are that younger single people are more mobile, parents with children are less mobile, and that poor housing, bad neighbourhood conditions, and anti-social behaviour fuel mobility (Pawson & Munro 2010: 155-157). They note it is most often a multitude of factors that led tenants to leave. The most common reason given was the desire to escape anti-social behaviour, which was seen to be a major problem within the social housing system in the UK (Pawson et al. 2006; Pawson & Munro 2010; Flint 2004; Flint 2006), with other reasons revolving around an inability to secure furnishings, poor neighbourhood conditions, social isolation, poor housing conditions, and debt. Some felt that they had accepted offers in desperation or that they were not given enough information about a suite. These intersected with market failure, individual vulnerability, and poor landlord practices to create the conditions under which tenants suffer early tenancy breakdown (Pawson & Munro 2010: 157-160). Importantly, they state that tenancy
breakdown should not be seen as an issue faced only by formerly homeless individuals. In fact, they found that homeless individuals—who are given housing priority—were only marginally more likely to leave their tenancies earlier than those coming off the waiting list (Pawson & Munro 2010: 163). These results are similar to earlier studies (Pawson & Bramley 2000, Pawson et al. 2006).

The literature dealing directly with residential mobility within social housing, perhaps unsurprisingly, was more useful in describing and analyzing the results of the current study than the general literature on residential mobility. This is likely due to the perceptions of what social housing is and who it is supposed to serve. For example, those in social housing are less likely to be employed meaning that mobility due to reducing commute times and relocating for employment is lessened. However, this is not the full story. Decreasing stability within the job market and lower wages are in part what drives demand for social housing. Those who are most effected by market failure will be most in need of social housing. Unsurprisingly, poverty and market failure are implicated in the demand for social housing and therefore cannot be addressed as entirely separate issues.

**Research Context**

In the following I briefly outline the salient features of Victoria as a research context that relate to housing and poverty. The aim here is to build a context around what options exist for residents of Victoria and more specifically, for residents with limited incomes who are the intended users of public housing. This is to reveal the structural constraints faced by low-income renters both in the public housing system and the private market. It also allows a comparison of public housing to the private market in terms of affordability. To this end, I will first outline the cost of housing both in terms of home ownership and renting to show why public housing is often the only form of tenure that provides cheap(er) and likely better quality housing than what could be accessed in the private market for the same price, and why rental prices are high. I will then explore the concept of Core Housing Need and how this measure compares to average rents in Victoria and to the various forms of social assistance
(Income Assistance, Disability Assistance, Rental Assistance Program, Shelter Aid For Elderly Renters). This is to show what can be accessed in Victoria outside of the public housing system for those who are of low income and what that means in terms of quality of housing and quality of life.

**Victoria: Wealth and Poverty**

According to the 2011 Canadian Census (Statistics Canada 2011), the Victoria CMA (Census Metropolitan Area) is 696.15 square kilometers with a population 344,615. Victoria is generally seen as an aging city with the median age being 44.2. The Canadian median is 40.6 and British Columbia is 41.9. The median income for Victoria CMA was $77,820 in 2010 (Statistics Canada 2012). The average for BC was $66,970 in 2010 with Canada as a whole at $69,860 (Statistics Canada 2012a). According to the Realtors of Greater Victoria (2013), the average cost of a single family home over the past 6 months (as of May 2013) was $594,918. Over the same period the average condo price was $296,084 and a townhouse was $417,967. Private rental costs in Victoria are the second highest in the Province with Vancouver being first. As a comparison, the average rent for a two bedroom suite in the Nanaimo CA is $800 per month, just over $1100 in the Victoria CMA, and just over $1200 in the Vancouver CMA (CMHC 2012).

The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation define "core housing need" as follows:

A household is said to be in core housing need if its housing falls below at least one of the adequacy, affordability or suitability, standards and it would have to spend 30% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable (meets all three housing standards). (CMHC 2010)

Using this definition, 27% of renters in Greater Victoria are in core housing need. This is slightly below the average of the province which is 29.2%. There exists a discrepancy between owners and renters with 27% of renters and 5.6% of owners being in core housing need (Pauly 2012: 13; Pauly et al 2013: 19). The data for both Victoria and the Province at large illustrates the need for further affordable
housing measures across the province considering the high number of households in core housing need.

Further discussion of the rental market in Victoria is taken up in detail below.

Food represents another major cost that contributes to the high cost of living in Victoria. The Dieticians of Canada (2011: 3) note that 7.7% of British Columbians are food insecure. The effects of food insecurity are negatively associated with learning outcomes and physical and mental health.

Within the Vancouver Island Health authority, the price of a healthy diet for a four person family is $873.08 per month with the BC average being $868.43 (Dieticians of Canada 2011: 5). In 2012, the average cost of a healthy food basket in BC was $298.57/month and $305.92/month in 2013. Importantly, a single person in 2013 on disability assistance paying the median rent on a bachelor suite and purchasing a healthy food basket would have -$10.78 for other expenses. This number is -$337.55 for a single person on income assistance. Obviously these numbers do not add up showing how it is impossible to both rent and purchase healthy food for low-income people (Pauly et al 2013: 16).

For a two parent, two child family, the living wage is calculated at $18.07/hr with both parents earning this working 35 hours a week as of 2012 and $18.73 in 2013. The living wage is calculated as the amount necessary to keep a family out of core housing need (Community Social Planning Council 2013). A living wage is described as follows:

- Can adequately feed, clothe and shelter their household
- Can maintain the health of family members
- Can participate in activities that are an ordinary part of community life
- Can receive up to two weeks paid time off for illness annually
- Rents rather than owns their home
- Can own a car and uses public transit
- Cannot save for children’s education, to purchase a home, holidays or retirement
- Cannot service loan debts or credit card bills
- Cannot afford to care for an elderly relative or a disabled family member (Community Social Planning Council 2012: 2)
Currently, the minimum wage in British Columbia is $10.25 per hour which is $8.48 below the living wage for a family of four with each parent earning 18.73/hr. This highlights the drastic difference between what is considered a minimum wage and the reality of living expenses.

**Renting in Victoria**

Victoria is well known to have a high cost of living including rent. On top of this, the vacancy rate is relatively low and fluctuates with incoming and outgoing students. According to Canadian Housing and Mortgage Corporation data, in 2011 the vacancy rate for a bachelor apartment was 1.7%. In 2012 it was 1.3%. For a 1 bedroom, the vacancy rate was 2.5% in 2011 and 2.9% in 2012. In the City of Victoria, where much rental housing and services are located, vacancy rates are lower than other municipalities (Pauly et al 2013: 9,11). Average rent for a bachelor suite in 2011 was $644 and $669 in 2012. For a 1 bedroom average rent was $796 in 2011 and $809 in 2012 (CMHC 2012: 7-8). This data was compiled using the Victoria CMA. The Victoria CMA is a large and diverse region extending as far west as Jordan River and as far north as North Saanich as well as encompassing the Western Communities, the Victoria area, and Saanich (Statistics Canada 2011). Average rent and vacancy rates vary within these areas. The average rent for a 1 bedroom apartment by neighbourhood in the Greater Victoria area has Esquimalt as having the cheapest rent at $755 followed by the West Shore at $789, Sidney at $799, Oak Bay at $827, Saanich at $833, City of Victoria at $839, Cook St. Area at $862, and James Bay at $882 (CMHC 2012a: 3). Importantly, it is clear to see that rent is utterly unaffordable in Victoria for low-income renters. Income assistance only allocates $375/month for shelter.

Not all these areas are equally accessible by public transit nor located near essential services for low-income residents which are largely located in the City of Victoria (Pauly et al. 2012: 7) making living far outside of core areas more difficult. This data, too, is complicated by the fact that it only...

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3 The CMHC has data for not only apartment buildings but townhouses. There is not a significant difference in the cost of rentals. A bachelor suite in a townhouse in 2012 was averaged at $668/month and $808/month for a 1 bedroom. These are only a dollar less a month than apartment rentals.
considers private rentals that have 3 or more suites in a building (CMHC 2012: 2 footnote 2). Secondary suites in houses\(^4\), whether legal or not, contribute to the supply of rental housing but are not factored into the CMHC report on vacancy rates and average rent. The CMHC estimates that there are 19,347 secondary suites in the Victoria CMA. Considering there are 24,214 purpose built rental suites, secondary suites represent a large portion of the rental market (CMHC 2012a: 4). My intuition and talking with fellow renters suggests that the average rent in the CMHC data may be on the low side. Secondary suites are often seen as a form of affordable housing but this is not supported by research. Furthermore, secondary suites are a way for home owners to pay high cost mortgages. Considering the high cost of mortgages, this calls into question the assumption that secondary suites are affordable. The CMHC data alone shows that private rentals are unaffordable for those living on lower incomes. The quality of secondary suites is also potentially an issue.

For the participants I interviewed, even the average rent for a bachelor suite was too expensive. Rent geared to income in public housing sets rent at no more than 30% of a tenant’s income. The highest amount of income a participant reported, though not all gave exact amounts, was $1300. That means that they would be paying 51% of their income to pay for the average price of a bachelor suite in the Victoria CMA. None of the participants I interviewed lived in bachelor suites with most being in 1 bedroom suites. If the same calculation is done for the average one bedroom apartment in the Victoria CMA, someone making $1300\(^5\) a month would pay 62% of their income to rent with only $491 left for food, medication, and other costs of living. This is a major factor in why participants feel a sense of being stuck. It also demonstrates the necessity of a strong public housing system. The private market is utterly failing at providing affordable and good housing. The public housing system is far from perfect.

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\(^4\) Secondary suites are illegal in Oak Bay and Saanich yet these rentals make up a large body of rental housing, especially for students. In southern Saanich, secondary suites are being given a test run with Foul Bay Rd being the eastern boundary, View Royal the Western boundary, McKenzie avenue the north boundary, and the City of Victoria being the southern boundary (Saanich 2012).

\(^5\) Even full time employment (37hrs/week) at minimum wage ($10.25/hr) earns only $1525.90/month after taxes. This includes GST credit, BC Climate Action Tax Credit, BC Harmonized Sales Tax Credit, and Working Income Tax Benefit (Pauly et al 2013: 17).
but it is necessary. This is also important in showing why the participants I interviewed are upset.

Public housing is not a stepping stone into market housing. For my participants, public housing is their home and they will be there for the foreseeable future. They cannot move so they are stuck with the problems of living in public housing.

**Subsidized (Public) Housing and Government Assistance in BC**

BC Housing runs a number of programs and services that contribute to the housing landscape in BC and the Greater Victoria area. These programs are designed to provide British Columbians in core housing need with housing options other than market housing and to subsidize access to market housing. There are other programs outside of BC Housing that are not aimed specifically at housing, such as Old Age Security and Canadian Pension Plan, but I did not include these as they are not direct alternatives to market housing and to examine all of the potential social welfare programs in Canada would be a thesis in and of itself. These programs did, however, often contribute to the small incomes of my participants. In that way, they are very important and cannot be ignored. However, I will briefly examine BC Housing's and the Ministry of Social Development's programs and services that provide alternatives to market housing or make market housing more affordable. These programs are what many persons with low-incomes outside of the public housing system use to access the expensive private rental market in Victoria. This helps us to understand potential pathways out of public housing, alternatives to it, and also why participants feel stuck (e.g. inadequate social welfare systems and application rules).

I will start by examining the BC Housing website and the application forms to look at subsidized housing, RAP, and SAFER. Income Assistance is provided by the Ministry of Social Development making it necessary to examine their website as well as looking at supplemental information by the Legal Services Society (Kienzel 2010). It is important to note that this is a limited view and looks at formal rules and public information but does not examine how these rules are
navigated or negotiated by applicants, users, and service providers. What happens in practice is another matter. My research partially explains the practice of public housing but public housing as part of wider state social assistance is beyond the scope of this thesis. Here I examine subsidized housing, Rental Assistance Program (RAP), Shelter Aid For Elderly Renters (SAFER), and Income Assistance which is a Ministry of Social Development Program.

BC Housing's programs are aimed in particular at housing in-need British Columbians both through directly managed programs and providing funding to non-profits. The website states that "BC Housing serves those most in need, including:

- Individuals who are homeless
- Frail seniors and individuals with disabilities
- Aboriginal individuals and families
- Women and children at risk of violence
- Low-income seniors and families (BC Housing 2010)

Importantly, below this list, the website states,

These groups need more than a roof over their heads; they need housing with support services in order to lead healthier lives that allow them to participate more fully in their communities. Other households, whose housing problems stem solely from low income, are being helped through rental assistance programs in the private rental housing market, where most already live (BC Housing 2010).

It is important to note that the rental assistance programs are only offered to low-income families, seniors, and people with disabilities. Those that are not seen as having barriers to employment are not eligible for either the Rental Assistance Program (BC Housing 2010i) or Shelter Aid For Elderly Renters (BC Housing 2010j). This mirrors the policy of public housing in BC which excludes low-income people seen as employable, except in the case of low-income families. In this way, public housing is actually a form of supportive housing that serves only the disabled, the elderly, and low-income families. The rental programs that are supposed to help households "whose housing problems
stem solely from low income” serve the same client groups as public housing evidently leaving those that are just low-income to find other forms of relief. This will likely be in the form of income assistance which is outlined below.

**Subsidized Housing**

Under the subsidized housing tab, BC Housing states that subsidized housing serves families, 55+ seniors, people with disabilities, singles and couples who meet low-income requirements, and individuals who are Aboriginal (BC Housing 2010a). "Eligible groups" are further defined as:

- Families defined as a minimum of two people, including one dependent child
- Seniors defined as a single person age 55 and older, or a couple where at least one person is age 55 or older
- People with disabilities who can live independently and are in receipt of a recognized disability pension or are considered disabled for income tax purposes
- Single people and couples with low incomes who are homeless or at risk of homelessness (BC Housing 2010b)

Depending on where one lands on the website, the client information indicating who BC Housing serves is different, though it is narrowed and specified during the application processes and is summarized as, "BC Housing manages public housing units for low-income families, seniors and people with disabilities" (BC Housing 2010c). It is important to note the exclusion of low-income individuals without disabilities and the assumptions that come with such an exclusion.

If one falls within these client and eligible groups, they must meet other requirements that include having less than $100,000 in assets (BC Housing 2010d) and must earn below a certain income level. Income levels are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Bachelor</th>
<th>1 bedroom</th>
<th>2 bedroom</th>
<th>3 bedroom</th>
<th>4 bedroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbotsford</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>$28,000</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
<td>$46,000</td>
<td>$49,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>$34,000</td>
<td>$38,000</td>
<td>$46,500</td>
<td>$55,500</td>
<td>$57,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelowna</td>
<td>$26,000</td>
<td>$31,500</td>
<td>$39,000</td>
<td>$47,000</td>
<td>$51,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamloops</td>
<td>$26,500</td>
<td>$30,500</td>
<td>$36,500</td>
<td>$47,000</td>
<td>$51,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vernon</td>
<td>$23,000</td>
<td>$27,000</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
<td>$39,500</td>
<td>$43,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Income cut offs are calculated by average rent of a particular city without, presumably, exceeding 30% of household income to rent thereby putting that household in core housing need. BC Housing states that

Housing Income Limits represent the income required to pay the average market rent for an appropriately sized unit in the private market. Average rents are derived from CMHC's annual Rental Market Survey, done in the fall and released in the spring. The size of unit required by a household is governed by federal/provincial occupancy standards (BC Housing HILS 2013).

When comparing average rents for a bachelor suite and 1 bedroom suite in the Victoria CMA to the income cut off levels, someone renting a bachelor suite at average rent and making the top income cut off, that person would pay 28.1% of their income to rent. Using the same calculation for a 1 bedroom suite, that person would be paying 28.5% of income to rent. This means that anyone making less than the maximum cut off would essentially be placed in core housing need and potentially in need of some kind of housing assistance. All participants in my study who reported an income made nowhere close to the maximum income level. What this measure shows is just how much income one has to earn to pay average rents without being in core housing need. Again, this is far out of the reach of the participants I interviewed and strongly contributes to their inability to move to market housing. It also highlights that those making minimum wage are far away from making a wage that would earn them an income at the cut off level placing them in core housing need. This, too, calls into question what is the minimum that the minimum wage is actually attaining.

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6 This is the information listed on the BC Housing website which is copyrighted to 2010. This is the most up-to-date information I can find on the website and is presumably the information that BC Housing uses. I took all BC Housing website information from the current website and did not access it through archive or other publications. Some of the copyright dates are several years old but are taken from the current website.
If an applicant for subsidized housing is a former tenant of BC Housing, they are given two additional criteria of being debt free with BC Housing and must not have had their tenancy with BC Housing ended for cause (BC Housing 2010f) with cause being defined under Section 47 of the Residential Tenancy Act (Residential Tenancy Act: Section 47).

Residency requirements for subsidized housing are as follows:

- Canadian citizens not under sponsorship
- Individuals lawfully admitted into Canada for permanent residence and not under sponsorship
- Refugees sponsored by the Government of Canada
- Individuals who have applied for refugee status
- Individuals for whom private sponsorship has broken down (BC Housing 2010l).

Factors for exclusion from BC Housing are listed as:

- Unsatisfactory tenancy history: anti-social activities and/or nuisance behaviours
- Debt to a subsidized housing provider in B.C.
- False or fraudulent information
- Failure to provide documents as requested
- Do not meet residency requirements
- Unable to live independently with supports
- No Income
- Do not meet defined household groups
- Deliberately worsened current housing situation (BC Housing 2010g).

Although the BC Housing website, at times, lists a relatively broad category of people that it serves, it is clear through the application process for subsidized housing and from the Types of subsidized housing (BC Housing 2010c) that it is low-income families, low-income seniors, and those with disabilities that BC Housing primarily serves. Wait times for subsidized housing are long with an admitted undersupply of housing and because of this, BC Housing states that "Wait times depend on the number of unit turnovers and the needs of other households applying for housing" (BC Housing
2010h: When will I receive an offer of housing?). This functionally puts more limits on who BC Housing serves and leaves many in core housing need without access to subsidized housing as they are labeled as undeserving. Pauly et al. (2012: 28) note that although subsidized housing is affordable, it is not an option given that the wait list was 1,545 people in 2012 and 1,477 in 2013 (Pauly et al 2013: 20). They go on to note that despite reduced rents, there are still problems of food insecurity in subsidized housing meaning that the cost of living is still not completely covered. This fits with the main conclusions of my research that showed many of my participants make cuts to food and medical budgets to pay for even reduced rents.

**A Brief History of Public Housing**

Public housing in Canada started in the 1930s and 1940s with legislation allowing for the building of low-income housing. Until the 1960s, there was little built and most post-WWII government investment in housing was to financial institutions, developers, and home owners. Post-war public housing was mostly aimed at "urban renewal" and ended-up concentrating poverty in urban centres while alleviating housing costs (Isitt 2008: 22). By 1988, there were 5000 public housing developments in Canada housing about 430,000 people in Ontario alone. However, this began to shift after this point when the federal government stopped building new housing, reduced investment, and eventually devolved all responsibility to provinces and municipalities (Purdy & Kwak 2007: 365). Purdy and Kwak state that

As in the United States, the prior decision to build relatively few subsidized units, shifts in tenant-selection policy, and declining political support for subsidized housing has led to housing projects’ becoming refuges of the very poor, the unemployed, those on social assistance, and single mothers; since the 1980s in cities such as Toronto, it has also become the home of many new immigrants (Purdy & Kwak 2007: 365).

In 1992 the federal government eliminated all funds for new non-market housing (Isitt 2008:25) and in 1996, the federal government transferred most responsibility to the provinces. Previously negotiated
funding agreements remained intact but will not be renewed when they expire (Prince 1998: 832).

In British Columbia from 1991 to 2001, the NDP encouraged non-profit delivery of social housing due to federal cuts. They aimed housing at "senior citizens, aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, and single-parent families" (Isitt 2008: 25). In 2001, under the new elected BC Liberal government, the Centre for Policy Alternatives documented both the decline of social assistance and social housing. The Woodward's department store, for example, which was supposed to be turned into social housing, had its funding withdrawn in 2002. Non-profits were urged to form partnerships with the private market in order to make up for lack of provincial funds (Isitt 2008: 26).

It was in this context and over concerns of the impacts of homelessness on business and tourism that the City of Victoria attempted to address homelessness. In 2007, the Task Force on Breaking the Cycle of Mental Illness, Addictions and Homelessness was formed and out of this, there was a pledge to build 1,550 new units of affordable housing by 2012 (Isitt 2008: 19-20). Isitt goes on to state that,

However, the initial zeal waned. A consensus emerged favouring “improved services” for the homeless, but there were few indications of a renewed commitment to a large-scale social housing program. Decision-makers appeared to be reluctant to invest the sums of public money required to eliminate homelessness in the Capital Region (Isitt 2008: 20)

In 2008, the Province "refurbished" 153 units which represents the biggest expansion in the Capital Region since 2001 but still does not come close to the 1,550 units outlined by the City of Victoria.

In 2013, there have been no new units of affordable housing created in the CRD and only 291 units new units have been added by BC Housing since 2009 (Pauly et al 2013: 29). Given the extent of homelessness, the long wait list for public housing, and the long wait times reported by participants, the region is still far from achieving an affordable rental situation both in terms of public housing and private housing.
RAP & SAFER

The Rental Assistance Program (RAP) has similar eligibility criteria to subsidized housing, including having less than $100,000 in assets and a gross household income of $35,000 or less. This program is aimed at low-income families. To qualify, one must have at least one dependent child and pay more than 30% of income to rent but income must not come from income assistance or disability assistance. If one owns a home that one does not occupy or if one lives in subsidized housing, they are excluded from the RAP (BC Housing 2010i). Importantly, as noted above, BC Housing stated that RAP is supposed to serve those with low-incomes that do not need supports and that are currently in market housing (BC Housing 2010). This makes important assumptions about who deserves to be provided with housing (those needing supports) versus who deserves help paying for housing but not being provided housing (those who don’t need supports). On top of this, BC Housing states that "Other households, whose housing problems stem solely from low income, are being helped through rental assistance programs in the private rental housing market, where most already live" (BC Housing 2010).

This implies that anyone with a low-income may qualify, however, once the application process is examined closer, it is only low-income families who can apply. With this closer look, subsidized housing and RAP do not serve fundamentally different client groups. The main differences are that RAP can only be accessed by those whose income comes from employment and cannot be accessed by seniors (BC Housing 2010i). SAFER, however, is aimed directly at seniors. This again brings up the issue that low-income individuals without children who are not seniors or disabled are not worthy of help. This will be taken up in later sections.

Shelter Aid For Elderly Renters (SAFER) is a rental subsidy aimed specifically at low to moderate income seniors that are at least 60 years old. SAFER has a maximum monthly income cut off that is calculated by living situation and area of residence. Within the Greater Vancouver Regional District, the maximum income per month for singles is $2333, couples is $2517, and those in a shared
residence is $1625. Income is also calculated to "Other Areas of the Province". Within this region, which includes the Greater Victoria Area, the maximum income per month for singles is $2033, for couples is $2217, and shared is $1625. Another pertinent requirement is that anyone in subsidized or co-op housing cannot receive the SAFER grant (BC Housing 2010j).

In order to qualify for both RAP and SAFER, one must already be in their market rental unit that they are applying the grant towards. This means that if one does not have the ability to move into market housing and pay for the costs associated with moving and costs of living while waiting for either application to go through, one will largely be excluded from the program. Importantly, this came up a number of times in the interviews I conducted with participants expressing frustration about being excluded from a grant that would have been helpful to them because they could not afford to move and live in market housing while their application was being processed.

**Income Assistance**

The Ministry of Social Development is responsible for the implementation of the "Employment and Assistance" in BC of which income assistance is a key program. They state that

> Personal responsibility and active participation are the key principles of BC Employment and Assistance. Employable applicants are expected to look for work before they receive assistance and, where able, people receiving income assistance are expected to complete an Employment Plan, seek work and participate in employment programs, so they may reach their goal of self-reliance (Ministry of Social Development 2012)

Evidence of these principles are found in the eligibility criteria for income assistance and evidently mean that all other avenues of potential assistance must be exhausted before one can apply for income assistance.

Before one can apply for income assistance, they must complete a work search unless they are over the age of 65. If they have applied for income assistance or disability assistance previously, the work search period is three weeks. All other cases require a 5 week work search (Ministry of Social
If during the work search period "you or anyone in your family unit has an immediate need for food, shelter or urgent medical attention, you may be eligible for hardship assistance while you complete your work search" (Ministry of Social Development 2012). This is a temporary form of assistance that may be required to be repaid to the Ministry. In this way, it can be considered a loan more than a grant under certain circumstances.

Most assets must be liquidated before one can apply for income assistance. Importantly, one cannot have more cash assets in their possession - in the form of cheques, cash, savings etc- than they are eligible to receive from income assistance plus $150 (Employment and Assistance Act 2002[2012;2013] 11(2)). Any income will be subtracted from the total income assistance they are eligible to receive except for certain exemptions usually around money received through other government programs or subsidies (Kienzel 2010: 32-33). Likewise, there are overall asset limits. A single person is not allowed over $1500 worth of assets and a family is not allowed over $2500. Assets must be sold in order to attempt to pay for one's own costs of living before they can apply for income assistance. Investments and RRSP's are included in assets that must be sold. Exemptions include a family home, a vehicle worth less than $5000 (unless it is a vehicle specially designed for medical use), and business equipment (e.g. fishers are allowed to keep commercial fishing equipment and their boat) (Employment and Assistance Act[2012;2013] 11(2); Kienzel 2010: 34-36). Asset Development Accounts approved by the Ministry of Social Development are also exempt from asset limits. These accounts must be used by low-income people "for the purposes of enhancing self-sufficiency" which are listed as:

1. education leading to self-sufficiency
2. skills training leading to self-sufficiency
3. starting a self-employment enterprise leading directly to self-sufficiency, or for PWD and PPMB clients, to increased self-reliance and independence (Ministry of Social Development 2013)

If one meets the income and asset requirements, completes the work search portion, and is
still in need of assistance, they are entitled to a certain amount dependant on their living situation (single, couple, family, etc) and the size of their residence (deemed appropriate by the Ministry). Under the category of "Employable singles, couples, and two-parent families where all adults are under 65 years of age" a person living alone would be eligible to receive $610 per month with $375 of that being allocated to shelter allowance. A single (employable) parent with one child is eligible to receive $877.22 per month (Ministry of Social Development 2007; Kienzel 2010: 52).\(^7\)

Income assistance rates have not gone up since 2007 while the costs of living have risen. For example, the average rent for a bachelor suite in the Victoria CMA has gone up from around $600 in 2007 to $669 in 2012.

It should also be noted that many of my participants reported being disabled, meaning that if they were outside of the public housing system, they would likely be on disability assistance rather than income assistance. Disability assistance levels are higher than income assistance though they are divided into two levels: Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers (PPMB) and Disabled. Those classified as PPMB receive more than those on income assistance but less than those on disability (Pauly et al. 2012: 11). A single person with a disability is eligible to receive $906.42 per month. A single disabled person with a child is eligible to receive $1242.08 per month (Ministry of Social Development 2007a; Kienzel 2010: 52). Again, these numbers still put those receiving disability assistance in core housing need when compared to average rents in the Victoria CMA. A single person on disability assistance renting a bachelor suite at $669 per month would pay just over 69% of their income to rent. It should be noted that Pauly et al. (2012: 11) calculate monthly incomes with other available programs and funds included. These are listed as Christmas supplement, Federal GST Credit, BC Harmonized Sales Tax Credit, and BC Climate Action Credit. With this added a single person on

\(^7\) The Ministry page lists "Unit Size" with a corresponding number from 1 to 7. I was unclear whether unit size referred to number of bedrooms, the number of people in a unit, or some other measure. The website did not provide clarity but the table on welfare rates in Kienzel (2010: 52) showed that Unit Size refers to the number of people in a unit. For instance, Unit Size three is used to calculate a family of three with two parents. Presumably, they would only need two bedrooms making it likely that Unit Size refers to the number of people, not bedrooms.
income assistance receives $662.79/month, a single person on PPMB receives $710.70/month, and a single person on disability assistance receives $963.72/month. As a comparison, someone working fulltime at minimum wage (35 hours a week at $9.50/hr) received $1385.83/month. This is after taxes with the “GST credit, the BC Climate Action Tax Credit, the BC Harmonized Sales Tax credit, and the working income tax benefit.” included (Pauly et al. 2012: 10). The minimum wage earner is still in core-housing need when paying $669/month for an average bachelor suite. The minimum wage has since gone up in May of 2012 to $10.25/hr. In 2013, someone earning minimum wage working full time (averaging 37hrs/week in 2013) would be making $1525.90/month (Pauly et al 2013: 17). Paying $669/month would still put them in core housing need. The average price for a bachelor unit has likely gone up since then. Even $10.25/hr is far off of the living wage for a two parent two child household where both parents have to make at least $18.73/hr to earn a living wage. Housing and other costs-of-living continue to rise necessitating minimum wage increases.

The Ministry of Social Development explains the necessity of asset and income requirements as,

Eligibility for BC Employment and Assistance programs is based on your income and assets. The ministry has a responsibility to ensure that its limited resources go to those people who need them most. That is why applicants are expected to take advantage of all other sources of income and assets before qualifying (Ministry of Social Development 2012b).

The idea of prioritizing those most in need is constant through-out the social assistance system in BC. This has a certain logic to it but the necessity of liquidating all or most of your assets and savings before you can apply for income assistance has consequences for those living in poverty and for the idea of "self-sufficiency". Liquidating one’s retirement savings and investments to $1500 essentially means starting from scratch. The later this happens in life, the harder it will be to rebuild and become self-sufficient as there is less time to the age when one expects to retire and importantly, there are even
less job opportunities for older workers. There are less income opportunities for ageing workers necessitating the continued use of the social assistance system.

**The Social Assistance Landscape in BC**

What all these programs and numbers show together, whether one is classified as disabled or low-income, is that the social assistance system in BC does not give anywhere near an adequate amount of resources to cover the cost of living in Victoria, the Lower Mainland, or most places in BC. Those receiving benefits and living in this province are more than likely living in core housing need. If one is receiving benefits and not in core housing need (paying less than 30% of income to rent), they are likely living in substandard housing. In the Victoria CMA, a single employable individual receiving $610 from income assistance would pay 109% percent of their income to rent in market housing based on the average rent of a bachelor suite being $669. Obviously this is not possible and the renter in question would have to find cheaper (and likely very poor accommodation), find work (which would be deducted from their income assistance cheque except for an extra $150), enter into public housing, or find some other means of survival such as couch surfing. And, of course, there are those without support from friends and family that will more than likely end-up homeless. To avoid being in core housing need, a single person on income assistance at $610/month could not pay more than $183/month in rent. If we assume they make the maximum $150 leeway before income starts to be subtracted from rent (raising their income to $760 per month), if they paid more than $228/month they would be in core housing need. No matter how poor the accommodation, finding rents this low in Victoria in particular and BC in general is completely unrealistic. It is also important to note that if a person is unhoused, they do not qualify for the housing portion of income assistance and would therefore be eligible for only $235/month as $375 out of the $610 is allocated towards shelter with the rest paying for other costs of living.

The amount of money that is allocated to shelter within the income assistance and disability
assistance programs does not accurately reflect the actual cost of housing in Victoria or BC. The allowance for housing for a single person on income assistance is $294 a month short of what the average priced bachelor suite goes for. Importantly, those that are on income assistance are not eligible for either the Rental Assistance Program nor for Shelter Aid For Elderly Renters. The logic underlying this is that income assistance has a shelter allowance built into it meaning that if someone were to receive RAP or SAFER on top of income assistance, they would be receiving two shelter allowances (BC Housing 2010k: Why am I not eligible for rent assistance if I am on Income Assistance?).

Receiving two shelter allowances is considered unfair even if one shelter allowance still is not enough to move a person out of core housing need. Beyond even looking at core housing need, the minimum amount of income assistance provided to a single employable adult ($610) does not pay for the average bachelor suite. A single person on disability assistance making $906.42 a month would pay just over 73% of their income for a bachelor in market housing and just over 64% when calculating using the 963.72 figure (Pauly et al. 2012: 11). A single parent on income assistance making $945.58 a month and living in an averaged priced ($809/month) one bedroom suite in Victoria would pay 85% of their income to rent in market housing. Again, these kinds of rents are unfeasible and mean that those receiving income and disability assistance must find other options. Though low-income families and those that are disabled are eligible for public housing, many are still housed in the private market at these rates. These numbers further highlight the necessity of a strong public housing system as well as the need to rethink social assistance rates, the minimum wage, and affordable market housing.

Overall, it is apparent that the private market is unaffordable for those that are low-income, whether they are making minimum wage or on social assistance. Public housing is meant to provide an alternative to that but demand far exceeds supply leaving many to fend for themselves in the private market. Likewise, those that are considered able-bodied and employable, are excluded from public housing. For people that are in this group, low-income status means they will be in core housing need
due to high rents in Victoria and British Columbia in general. Public housing, as shown through the literature review, can carry its own set of problems but it still represents a more affordable tenure. Next, I look at the methodology I used to conduct this research.
Chapter 2: Methodological Considerations

In this chapter, I explain the methodology of this research by outlining the recruitment process, who participants are and how I write about them, the process of interviewing and how it relates to the data I collected, how my positionality as a researcher may have affected the research process, important ethical issues I encountered and how I dealt with them, and lastly, how I analyzed, categorized, and interpreted the data that emerged through this research.

Recruitment

In the spring of 2011, roughly 1500 recruitment letters were sent to both BC Housing's directly managed buildings and non-profit public housing in the Greater Victoria area. Most letters were delivered by housing staff through the mail while I delivered the rest by hand. Initially, the letter was only meant to go to BC Housing's directly managed buildings but they were inadvertently sent to both types of public housing. The study was then amended to include the not-for-profit sector as the desired number of interviews would not have been met had these buildings not been included. It is important to note that there were no noticeable discrepancies between the problems reported in directly managed buildings and not-for-profit buildings. Both experienced the same issues. In total, 12 interviews were conducted with participants in their homes. All but one interview was audio recorded. Initially, this research was not going to be used as my thesis research. This changed and I had to have my ethics form amended and contact participants to get their approval. All approved this request except for one whom I could not contact meaning that for the thesis, one interview has been removed.

Potential participants began to contact me early in the spring of 2011. At first, I rejected a few people on the basis that they were not planning on leaving public housing within the 6 month time frame outlined in the recruitment letter. These potential participants expressed a desire to leave public housing, which fits well with the recruitment criteria, but because they did not fit the 6 month criteria, I initially excluded them. I thought they may not accurately represent those who have left public
housing. That is, the aim of the study was to see why people left public housing, not why they wanted to leave. However, it soon became clear that I would not meet the desired number of participants unless I included those without specific plans to leave. Furthermore, as my thinking advanced, I began to realize that even people stuck in public housing have something to say about why people leave. My initial reluctance and arrogance about sticking to the exact recruitment criteria vanished. I realized through the interviews that residential mobility is likely an issue of resources, not simply desire to move. Further, it provided important empirical data on how public housing is used as opposed to how it is often conceptualized by government (as a stepping stone into market housing). The issues, problems, and constraints that participants reported seemed to be systemic issues and are similar to what is reported in the residential mobility and social housing literature. They were not issues that arose out of individual conflicts between people or due to individual circumstances; rather, they were issues that could be felt by most public housing tenants.

**Participants**

Participants' identities have obviously been withheld. On top of this, I have opted to leave out gendered pronouns while talking about participants and only report participant information at the aggregate level. I only report things such as participants' average age and age range and do not link any specific data to any sort of participant profile. Most participants reported a fear that they may be identified and lose their housing. Due to this fear of losing their housing, many did not report problems they were having to public housing officials. Some participants had complained officially but to no avail or were not satisfied with the results and the way they were treated. My position as a researcher likely made me a good mediator able to bring problems and issues forward. I am neutral in terms of having no power to sanction participants for making complaints and have a research and ethical obligation to conceal their identities. In this way, I can act as a mediator and anonymously bring problems to the attention of public housing officials. Academics can be seen as holding a certain amount of power. Through my role
as a researcher, participants may have seen the potential to make change. At least a few participants expressed this sentiment. My response was that I hoped that the research would make a difference but I could not give any guarantees. However, it is important to note that I may also have been viewed as a researcher working for government. It is difficult to know exactly how I was perceived and any potential effects it may have had. However, it is also important to mention these and be aware that there may be consequences. Someone else conducting the same research with a different subject position may have received somewhat different results. This does not invalidate these particular results but does suggest that it is important to realize that one study is never the final word on any subject.

Participants ranged in age from 31-76 with most being in their late 50’s or early 60’s. They came from a mix of both directly managed buildings and buildings operated by the not-for-profit sector. About half the participants reported being on CPP or disability with many being on both. The next most common form of income was Old Age Pension or Old Age Security. On average, participants reported that they had waited 2.9-3.2 years to get into social housing and as long as 4-5 years\(^8\).

**Interviews**

Interviews took place from April to May of 2011 and were conducted in the participants' homes and at a time of their choosing to minimize any inconveniences to them. Unfortunately, limited funds meant I could not pay participants for their time. Interviews were usually 45-60 minutes. After going over the consent form and obtaining written consent for the interview, including asking if they consented to being audio recorded, I would tell participants I was turning on the audio recorder and begin the interview. Only one interview was not audio recorded and only hand notes were taken. For the first few recorded interviews, I audio recorded and took notes by hand but soon stopped. I noticed that participants seemed to feel uncomfortable with me jotting notes. My assumption is that they were

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\(^8\) The average is presented as a range because often participants reported a range when I asked how long they were on the public housing waitlist (e.g. 2-3 years).
wondering what observations or judgements I was making as the actual data was being recorded for analysis later. My notes were mostly ideas that came up from participant’s answers, not observations of body language or behaviour, but I decided to stop because of the apparent discomfort it was causing.

The interviews were semi-structured (Davies 2008: 105-106). I always started the interviews with background questions asking the participant’s age, income, and how long they have been in social housing. I felt some discomfort myself asking these questions. They are questions not considered polite in everyday conversation. For this reason, I always stated that participants did not have to answer any questions if it made them uncomfortable. Most participants answered without hesitation. The discomfort may have merely been my own or perhaps participants saw the value of such questions.

After the background questions, I would ask generally about what their experiences and feelings of public housing were. Often times, these questions would be enough to start the conversation and it became unnecessary to ask any of the questions I had brought. Rather, the questions I had were answered through the conversation that developed. This is the power of the semi-structured interview: it allowed my specific questions to be answered without me prompting participants and it allowed the conversation to flow in unexpected directions. Davies notes that "Most important, their [participants’] responses are open-ended, in their own words and not restricted to the preconceived notions of the ethnographer" (2008: 106). Though I did not know the answers to my questions before asking them, the questions themselves were guided by theoretical and epistemological assumptions and views. Semi-structured interviews provided a way of balancing the need for answering specific questions with the need to let participants' voices be heard and guide the conversation where they saw necessary. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews allowed me to navigate uncertainties in my own theorizing that informed the development of my research questions. I take it as evidence that the questions and methodology were well founded by the fact that the questions were largely answered without direct prompting. See Appendix 3 for interview questions.
Most explicitly, what I found was not an answer to residential mobility but to *residential immobility*. This is intricately related to residential mobility, of course, but does contradict the fundamental guiding principle that initially underwrote this research: that participants both want to and have the ability to move. I was supposed to investigate why they were leaving and where they were going but rather, I ended-up investigating why most of my participants wanted to leave and the reasons why they couldn't. A few participants were satisfied with their housing. This, too, represents immobility but in the decidedly positive manner. Though most of my participants wanted to leave, this does not mean that public housing is a poor form of tenure but rather, it is one that could be made better. It is likely that many tenants are satisfied with their housing and it cannot be assumed from this research that it is a bad form of tenure. Furthermore, it is housing that is far more affordable than what is available in the market. Most participants recognized this but were frustrated by the problems they encountered, many of which they thought were not addressed due to the fact that they are low-income tenants paying below market rent.

The interview process itself was not easy. I tend to be shy and tongue tied around people I do not know. The trip to a participant’s residence was always nerve-racking for me. In the first few interviews, I was sometimes offered tea or coffee. I declined these initial offers for two reasons. Firstly, I did not want to take away from participants who I knew had very little. Secondly, I was often nervous and just said no out of some misguided sense of politeness. Because of my nervousness, I lost sight of some of my anthropological training. Food and drink bring people together. Participants wanted to share. It was away of acknowledging me as a guest in their homes. Sharing tea or coffee helped to create a more informal setting, less like an interrogation, allowing conversation to flow more easily. After the first few interviews, I accepted whenever someone offered me tea or coffee. Though the beginnings of interviews were often nerve racking for me, once the interview started, I often felt more at ease and enjoyed the conversations.
Some interviews were difficult because the participants were visibly upset by talking about their experiences. I offered what support I could and stated that we could skip that part of the interview and move on to other topics. These participants opted to continue the conversation as their upsetting experiences were deeply tied to why they wanted to leave public housing. These interviews reinforced the importance of this work. Public housing is a necessity and is better than what can be rented for the same price in market housing but it is not without problems. Often, participants were visibly upset by their housing conditions and the lack of choice in housing. Again, the sense of being stuck was a major theme in this research. Participants had no other options but public housing that did not meet their standards and exacerbated conditions such as PTSD, depression, and anxiety. The feeling of being stuck without the ability to escape in any foreseeable future compounded these issues.

Positionality

As a researcher, I occupy several positions that would have affected the research and my findings. It is difficult to say just what affect these positions have on findings and the way the participants thought of me and what information they were willing to divulge. However, it is worthwhile to understand the potential implications of these positions on the work that I have done. Furthermore, through the interviews, I came to understand that I held certain positions I had not thought of previously. For instance, I became an advocate for participants and someone who occupied a more neutral position between BC Housing/not-for-profit housing societies and the tenants they serve. Part of this role was created through confidentiality provided by the study as well as being a university researcher independent of, though working at the behest of, government. Part of it may also revolve around the perceived power of the university and the potential audience that a university researcher can reach. Participants expressed both a hope that the research would produce positive results but also that they expected nothing would happen. Participants felt a fear about losing their housing and thought it was a risk, though a small one, to talk to me. However, it is important to note that despite this, participants
still volunteered to be a part of the research. This, I believe, does show that participants have some hope for change.

Participants reported that they could not bring their concerns to housing providers or BC Housing because they were afraid of potential ramifications or they had already tried and were ignored or were unsatisfied with the results. I had gone into the research knowing that I would be bringing tenants concerns to BC Housing but I did not envision how far this would go. Through my review of the literature in the UK, I had thought the research would reveal both push and pull factors leading to tenant mobility. Rather, most participants reported all push factors in what would lead them to move and a few participants were satisfied with their housing and did not want to leave. These participants participated in the research as they had moved from unsatisfactory public housing to satisfactory public housing highlighting that positive moves can be made within the public housing sector. I did not anticipate diving into such political waters around the fear participants had about losing their housing if they were identified and caught speaking out. Again, my anthropological training should have made me more aware of power differences between housing providers and tenants as well as preparing me for the politics of housing. My own experiences in the private market around issues of privacy and fear of surveillance should too have prepared me.

Listening to the audio recording of the interviews revealed important aspects of the way in which I interviewed participants. My own biases were quite evident in the way that I responded to what participants had to say. Most of my responses as participants gave their accounts were "mmm hmm", "hmm", and "yeah" or "yeh". Beyond realizing that I use these 'words' too much, I noticed that the way in which I said them depended on what a participant was saying. If I agreed with what they were saying, my voice would rise in agreement. If I did not, my tone changed to a more neutral tone or one in which disagreement was evident. In the case of disagreement, I would say "hmm" more than "mmm
“hmm” and the tone of the way I said it would reflect this disagreement. Though my tone and word choice changed, I did not attempt to debate or openly disagree with what someone was saying.

Upon reflection, I believe I was trying to keep myself from being dishonest. That is, I did not want to appear to agree with a participant when in fact I did not. However, I do not believe I was necessarily aware of this during the interviews and I wonder just how much this affected the answers participants gave. I suspect it did not have a great effect as participants had quite clear issues they wanted to communicate and did not seem to adjust the way they talked to suit the way I reacted. To say that participants would significantly change the issues they reported to suit my tone of voice denies participants’ agency. However, it is something important to acknowledge and is something I will be aware of in future situations. For example, if I were to be interviewing someone in a position of authority or that had power over me, the way I respond to their questions may change what and whether they say anything. Of course, this brings up issues of whether an interview can or should be neutral. Participants have a right to know how they may be represented. How the interviewer reacts and responds may provide them with clues. Perhaps a balance must be struck between neutrality and disagreement.

For the interviews, I purposely dressed in a casual manner in an attempt to set a more casual tone of conversation. This was easy for me as it meant simply dressing the way I always do. I hope this had the effect of making the conversations more casual and setting participants at ease by making the interview feel less official. Given that I was going to participants' homes, I thought it was best to dress in a way that suited a relaxed conversation in someone's living room. At the time of the interview I had long hair that might be considered somewhat dishevelled. It is difficult to know exactly what effect my appearance as a slightly dishevelled male student had on the interview process. All I can attest to is that the conversations felt casual, as I had intended, and participants seemed comfortable and welcomed me into their homes and told me deeply personal stories and problems they were facing with their housing.
Considering the fear many felt about potentially losing their housing through complaints, I am deeply grateful that they were willing to talk with me and I hope this thesis does those conversations justice.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethics is understandably an important part of doing research. Before formalizing this research as part of my thesis, I had the choice of either conducting the research through Ministry of Housing and Social Development, and thereby not requiring a formalized ethics approval process, or doing it through the UVic which required me to fill out the Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) Human Participant Research Form. I choose the latter option in order to secure my position as a 'neutral' researcher and to guarantee academic freedom. The project was still done in collaboration with government but I have final say over how results are represented, distributed and published. Furthermore, I did not want the results to be viewed only by government. They are, of course, an important audience but I believe it is necessary for the results to reach a larger audience and for results to be distributed and used by participants as they wished.

The filling of HREB ethics form was a difficult but necessary step. Open ended research is more difficult to put into a form that asks for very specific details about what I would be doing, saying, and why. In particular, semi-structured interviews meant that I had a set of questions I wanted answered but would let participants and the situation largely guide the conversation. This would produce unexpected results that could not be prepared for ahead of time. The HREB ethics form makes room for this but asks that specific measures be prepared in case the interviews brought up difficult subject matter and participants were put in a vulnerable situation or needed help. In this regard, I stated that, **If a participant becomes embarrassed or uncomfortable, I will first attempt to alleviate their concerns by stating that they are in a non-judgemental environment and that I am not there to judge their lives. I will move on from any question that may have sparked their concern. If the participant continues to feel embarrassed, I will end the interview and reassure them as best I can. I will ask if there is anyone that they would like to call. If they choose to call someone, I will offer to wait there until this person arrives or until the participant feels better. I will also give the participant**
the contact information for the Citizens Counselling Centre which provides affordable counselling services.

I choose Citizen Counselling Centre as they provide low-cost counselling services on a sliding scale. This was key as participants would very likely not have enough money to access full cost counselling services. This was reinforced through the interviews when some participants stated sacrificing things like medical and food costs to have enough money to live and pay for inflexible costs such as rent. In hindsight, I would have liked to have money that I could have offered to pay for any emergency counselling that may have been necessary.

On top of the formal ethics aspects of this research, I built in other ethical considerations. Specifically, drawing from feminist research ethics, I decided to give participants the option of reviewing their data before publication. This was to ensure that they felt that they are well hidden in the research. One major concern was that participants could be identified by their unique circumstances. That is, if I reported very specific concerns of participants, someone who has knowledge of those concerns, such as a neighbour or housing staff, might be able to link that back to a participant. I believed that it would be a relatively remote risk that participants would be identified and then punished informally or formally by housing staff or management. However, this was a central concern to many participants. I believe it was my neutrality and guarantees of confidentiality that convinced participants to participate. A constant criticism of the public housing system was that there were no complaint mechanisms that were seen as fair and that participants felt that they could lose their housing or be put in a (more) precarious housing situation should they be identified. Participants felt justified in perceiving these risks on the basis of poor encounters with some housing staff and management including being threatened with eviction for minor things, not being treated with respect, and housing staff and management only listening to one side of a story in tenant disputes. Some participants simply did not want to take any risk because public housing was their only option. For these reasons, the review process was extremely valuable though time consuming.
Many participants wanted to be contacted to review their details. No participants had anything they wanted removed from the data chapter but some had concerns over the way I had worded certain pieces of data. They feared it was too specific and could potentially identify them. This was amended to their satisfaction.9

This highlights the importance of this step as it allowed participants themselves to decide whether confidentiality was being met. It was especially important given the political nature of the work and participants’ fear of being identified. Though this step was relatively easy for me to implement, it is not always the case. If participants had disagreed with the categorizations I had used, my work would have become much more difficult. I would have had to decide whether to keep my own interpretations and risk losing the participants’ or change my interpretations to something I was not entirely sure of. Of course, in all likelihood it would have involved a discussion over the validity of different ways to interpret the data which may have been fruitful and opened up space for productive dialogue.

The use of non-gendered pronouns was another way I felt I could protect participants’ identity. My thinking was that it would be one less piece of identifying information that might be used to piece together a person's unique circumstances. I thought that what many participants were saying would be experienced by those outside of the study. This means that there may be non-participant tenants with similar 'unique' circumstances. One less piece of information to distinguish between such cases would then be a useful way of protecting confidentiality.

9Some participants offered more details about their experiences after their interview. Unfortunately, I could not use these details as it would have violated the HREB ethics form which stated I would only collect data through one interview with each participant. This highlights one tension between the formal ethics form and building flexible ethics into the methodology of the entire research process. I did not foresee that participants would want to continue to add to their interview data through email and other forms of communication. I did not solicit these additions meaning that I was not taking up participants time. It could be argued that it would be ethical to put these additions in as it would benefit participants by providing them with an avenue to voice their concerns, as I outlined in section K 5 of the HREB ethics form. However, it contradicted section J 4 in which I stated I would only conduct one interview. I could have built more flexibility into the form itself but did not foresee this. And here in lies the problem that unforeseen difficulties or opportunities cannot properly be dealt with because of an inflexible form. There is the possibility of amending the form but it would have taken too much time.
Case studies of individual participants were proposed as a potential way of conducting this research. This was rejected in favour of reporting data at the aggregate level because even if participants’ identifying characteristics would be left out and case studies would not name particular people, the unique circumstances would then stand out. This, too, is why specific buildings were not singled out. This may have revealed information about problems within certain buildings but it would have obviously revealed very specific information that could have been linked back to what participants reported. Again, the sense of fear and insecurity that participants expressed about their housing meant that any method that revealed information about individuals, even if pseudonyms were used, would have been an ethically questionable method. This reveals the importance of revising ethics procedures as one moves through the research process. I did not have to use non-gendered pronouns as it was not outlined in the HREB ethics form as a way of protecting confidentiality but it became a measure that I felt was necessary to provide further protections for participants.

Providing participants with something tangible for their participation is an important way of giving back and making the research process more reciprocal. This is especially important for activist research or any research that is looking at issues of poverty in which the researcher’s participants will be at a disadvantage. In this regard, it would have been ideal to be able to provide a small stipend for the participants' time. However, this is not without its own ethical pitfalls as payment for research creates a power relationship between researcher and participant. Participants may then alter what they might say to fit what they believe to be the researcher’s expectations. It is a difficult balance trying to be aware and navigate potential negative impacts from paying participants but also wanting to compensate them for their time. Being a student on a limited budget made this decision for me. This  

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10 The question arises as to whether these fears are justified. I would say that given a problematic history many participants had with management and staff, they are justified in worrying about potential ramifications. Excessive noise complaints, for instance, can be used as a basis of eviction. Those facing noise complaints that are unfounded or for household noises, fear that these infractions can be used against them. Similarly, there was a fear that if they complained and were ever in a situation where they had to apply for public housing again, they might be labeled as trouble makers and not let back in.
highlights one problem of student research. The money earned through teaching assistantships, small grants, and debt does not leave much to dedicate to research costs.

On a more abstract level, changing the conditions of poverty should be the goal of research. Less abstractly, and more importantly, the goal is to generate knowledge and prestige for the university. This knowledge, hopefully, can be used as the basis for changing the conditions of poverty but we still must acknowledge that research done at this level is both to create new knowledge and increase the researcher’s social and economic capital. That being said, I provide suggestions for public housing providers to better deal with tenants as well as providing more lofty goals such as putting in sound proofing into buildings. Given the financial constraints faced by housing providers, suggestions such as these are unlikely to be adopted. However, suggestions on how to better deal with tenants in a respectful manner are easier to implement. These suggestions are outlined in the report \textsuperscript{11} that I prepared for BC Housing. I believe that public housing providers genuinely want to provide better housing for their tenants, though there may be strong disagreement on issues such as the causes of poverty and role that public housing plays. I hope, however, that concrete recommendations on how to better deal with tenants will be well received. Some might disagree on the recommendations, but it is nonetheless an important goal and important to provide these suggestions in hopes of improving conditions for tenants. Given that nearly all participants reported being stuck and not having any other housing options, this is particularly important as it is not feasible to simply switch tenures. Their only choice is to endure or severely cut back on expenses to pay for much higher market rents. Again, it is important to note that all participants were grateful for housing but still faced severe difficulties that need to be remedied in the name of providing secure, safe, and satisfactory housing rather than simply warehousing as a 'less bad' option than the streets or dilapidated market housing.

\textsuperscript{11} As part of the collaboration with government, I prepared and sent a report to BC Housing. The thesis is an expansion on this report meaning there is some overlap between the two.
Analysis/Interpretation

This research presented a major difficulty in analysis. Confidentiality was of utmost importance meaning that I could not do case studies or present direct quotes by participants. Even reporting specific details of problems was difficult. I had to balance providing specific examples with limiting what might be unique identifying circumstances. Again, this is why I chose to give participants the option of going over their data. Essentially, data analysis was a process of finding categories and themes using thematic analysis (Ryan & Bernard 2003) and presenting this information in a meaningful way at the aggregate level. This, of course, may cause some to wonder about the accuracy or validity of my conclusions as there can be no supporting quotations or evidence provided. There is no way to check my conclusions and arguments against direct quotes. I cannot alleviate these concerns but to say that I am satisfied that participants agree with the way I represented them and their data within the data chapter. The feedback I have received on this front has been positive. I take this to mean I am not skewing the data in a direction that does not represent the empirical reality of what participants told me. This is still an interpretation of the data (Haraway 1988), of course, but I believe it to be a valid one.

The first step in analysis and interpretation was transcription. This was one of the most difficult aspects of the research. I found it tedious and excessively time consuming. I initially tried to transcribe verbatim indicating pauses, inserting my own responses between participant responses (e.g. transcribing every time I said "hmm" or "mmmm hmm" between participants' responses). This led to immense frustration as I had to break-up much of what participants said. I thought this was important to indicate my own responses to their questions and how that might have affected what they said, but in the end, I could not ascertain how my responses affected theirs so it was irrelevant and beyond the scope of the research.

After transcribing a number of interviews this way, I decided to only transcribe what participants said in the remaining interviews. I did not check the exact accuracy of what I transcribed.
That is, I wrote down what I heard but did not check to make sure the wording was exactly the same. My reasoning is that nobody but me would see any transcribed material and I was already familiar enough with the interviews that I did not need to have the exact wording. I did, however, listen to the interviews again to correct for any mis-transcription of meaning. I did not correct exact phrasing but I was careful to make sure the transcripts represented participants' meanings and that the phrasing was similar enough. As an example, I would not correct word order as long as the phrasing was close to the original and did not change what I interpreted to be the meaning. The act of transcribing and listening to the interviews multiple times helped me to form my initial categories. Transcription was frustrating but invaluable for the level of familiarity with the interview data that I gained.

The next step was to compress the interview data into a manageable format using initial categories. These categories were Constraints/Issues/Problems, Problems with Management/Landlords/System, Problems with Tenants, Next Move/Mobility, Neighbourhood Issues, Good Things, Background/Age/Income, and Advice for BC Housing. The categories reflect what I heard in the interviews. Some of the problems were overlapping, such as issues with tenants and management, for instance, disputes with other tenants in which participants did not think their side of the story was heard. This represents both a specific problem with another tenant as well as a problem with a staff member. I tried to minimize instances in which problems could be reported under two categories in order to prevent an artificial inflation of the number of problems.

From these categories, I refined them into the most pertinent issues and categories that reflected the answer to the question of why participants wanted to move. The three main categories I ended up with, which represented the most number of issues faced by participants, were: (1) disputes with management/staff, (2) disputes with other tenants, and (3) problems with the physical condition of housing. These three categories most represented the housing dissatisfaction felt by participants and largely can be conceptualized as "push" factors. Some data did not fit into these categories and for that
reason, I mention them in the data chapter in order to paint a more well-rounded picture. These other secondary categorizations revolve around the positive aspects of social housing. I do not want to simply highlight all the negative factors as public housing does provide a valuable service for those excluded from market housing. However, what I do not want to accomplish is to diminish the negative factors that were largely reported by participants (though I also do not want to suggest that most tenants have bad experiences). Most participants reported that they were grateful to be housed but still felt a very pronounced sense of dissatisfaction. In this way, it is necessary to highlight both but to emphasize the more negative categories that were, by far, more prominent in the interviews. None of the reasons cited for wanting to leave were pull factors, though, this will be taken up further in the discussion. It should be noted that those participants who said they were satisfied with their public housing suites moved from undesirable church or public housing suites to their current desirable ones. This represents both a push out of poor public housing and a pull into better public housing. This shows that public housing certainly can and does provide good housing to some. The many who did not contact me for this research are likely satisfied with their housing. It is important to emphasize that public housing as a form of tenure has some problems but that it is an important tenure that provides affordable housing for many. Addressing certain issues would go towards making it a better form of tenure.

The next step was to determine the number of times each category was used in each interview as well as listing the content of each category. For every participant, I briefly recorded each grievance or experience (good or bad) under its appropriate category. I used secondary categories as well to give me access to the full range of the data and not just the main categories. For each interview I used the following categories: Constraints/Issues/Problems, Problems with Management/Landlords/System, Problems with Tenants, Background/Age/Income, Neighbourhood Issues, Next Move/Mobility, Previous Housing/Story of Getting into Current Suite, Good Things, and Advice for BC Housing. For each participant, I had a chart of compressed interview data consisting of the relevant data organized
under the categories I was using. This allowed me quick access to the content of each interview as well as where that content fell in the categories I had chosen.

Next, I compiled all the data into a spreadsheet. For each category, I listed the number of times it was used in all the interviews as well as briefly listing the specific issues relayed by participants. This allowed me to quickly refer back to the number of times each category was used without going back through the compressed interviews as well as giving me an idea of the content of each category. This method allowed me three levels of data. The first are the transcripts which represent uninterrupted data, the second is a brief portrait of each participant with multiple categories (including secondary categories), and the third is an aggregate view of all the participants’ data using the final categories. This allowed me to quickly look up information at whatever level I needed. The transcripts and the portraits have further allowed me to familiarize myself with the data. I believe these three levels of interpretation allowed me to keep both the specifics and the overall picture in my mind.

Outside of the residential mobility framework, the data could have been analyzed in a number of different ways. I choose to analyze the data in the same way for my thesis as the report that I wrote for government for the sake of time and to keep in line with what I told participants the research was focused on. However, I used ethnographic methods to build a historic, structural and social context in order to help understand why participants reported the experiences they did. In the conclusion to this thesis, I expand on and theorize some salient points that were only touched upon in the report. Namely, these are issues of governmentality, neoliberalism, and power. These concepts emerged in and through the themes. They are not themes but useful concepts that can help illuminate the processes of residential mobility/immobility: that is, the governmental, neoliberal, and power laden relationships between participants and, specifically, the housing system. These relationships have consequences for the well-being and desire of participants to move. This is an important piece of the puzzle as these
concepts may provide insight into management practices that lead to housing dissatisfaction as well as why these practices are being used as reported by participants.

The methodology I used to conduct and interpret this research revealed three main categories of push factors. These categories are: (1) problems with management and staff; (2) problems with other tenants; and (3) problems with the physical condition of housing. Next, I explore the content of these categories using examples cited by participants and then discuss the implications and ideas that came out of the results. Outside of the residential mobility framework, two other very important themes emerged. These themes are that of participants feeling stuck and the fear of those losing their housing. Though not strictly related to residential mobility, they do highlight the experiential dimensions of housing, structural constraints placed on tenants by expensive market housing, and power relationships within the public housing system. These are theorized in the conclusion chapter. Lastly, I highlight a few recommendations that can potentially be used to address the problems that participants cited.
Chapter 3: Results, Discussion, Recommendations, & Future Research

In this chapter, I outline the results, discuss the findings and major issues that arose out of the data, outline a few recommendations that can be used to help improve the quality of lives for public housing tenants, and suggest future research. Recommendations are not always a regular part of MA research but I've decided to include them as they were a part of the report I prepared for BC Housing. I believe it is important to acknowledge that the point of this research is not purely academic but aims to help make improvements to the quality of life of public tenants.

Results

The results of this research are categorized into three interrelated categories: (1) problems with management and staff; (2) problems with other tenants; and (3) problems with the physical condition of housing. These categories represent the most common issues reported and are all conceptualized as push factors. A few participants were satisfied with their current public housing unit but were pushed out of other unsatisfactory public housing into their current residence. This both highlights that there are problems in public housing but also that public housing can and does provide good housing.

Problems with Management and Staff

Many participants reported disputes with management or staff. These disputes largely revolved around a sense that there were excessive rules and regulations, staff had too much power to interfere with participant’s lives, tenants’ rights were not respected, and maintenance was untimely or improper. There was a sense that what would be allowed in market housing was not allowed or controlled within public housing. Importantly, many participants felt that they could not express their rights for fear of consequences in the form of eviction or a bad reference if they ever did move. Whether actual or perceived, these fears need to be taken into account if tenants’ rights are to be more wholly asserted. Nearly all participants reported not being able to afford market housing, bad experiences within market
housing, and/or a fear of being forced to return to market housing. Some reported that they would have to make severe cuts in food, medicine, and other expenses to even consider market housing. This makes their fears of eviction and leaving public housing a major concern.

Below are examples of problems with management/staff reported by participants. Management of one complex stated that a participant needed to clean-up their backyard as their children’s toys were spread out across the yard. The participant agreed that it would be nice to have a clean backyard but stated that they did not have nearly enough time to clean-up the yard. The participant is a single parent meaning that limited time is taken up with more important activities such as work and taking the children to school and other activities. Other issues participants reported involved excessive rules and regulations such as not being able to have a bird feeder or barbeque (including electric), no animals being allowed to visit, and not being able to transfer Ontario assist dog certification to BC meaning that one participant had to give up their “best friend” in order to get into public housing. One participant, a single parent, reported a major increase in rent that did not correspond to any increase in income. The participant stated that they contacted a variety of agencies for help but that nothing could be done. Other participants reported that management would lie or tell half-truths about building issues, that they would only hear one side of a complaint, and that rules were inconsistently applied.

A few participants were told that they had to pay for repairs and repainting of their suites. Management gave one participant a certain amount of time in which to complete the repairs using only professional and expensive services. Similarly, one participant was told they would be liable for damages to their suite stemming from them blocking the stove vent. They blocked the stove vent after repairs were done to the roof and top of the stove pipe. These repairs resulted in cold air blowing in through the vent. It was blocked in order to prevent an increase in heating costs from outside air being pushed in. Despite being told they would be liable for any damages stemming from blocking the vent, there were no plans, at the time of the interview, on the part of management to fix the stove pipe.
Similarly, one participant was also frustrated that ‘do-it-yourself’ initiatives were discouraged. In this particular case, the participant stated that they had the expertise to fix the front door which would not lock. The participant was told not to fix the door but it remained unlocked for 4 days. Importantly, another complaint was that crime was a problem in the area. Though it is not necessarily good to encourage do-it-yourself initiatives, this case does highlight the importance of timely repairs. In another case, a participant had to put up with their smoke alarm going off for days. Parts had to be ordered to fix the alarm. The only way the participant could control the sound was to vacuum the alarm every time it went off. Eventually this did not work and the breaker was thrown until it could be fixed.

A major theme that came out of this part of the research was a sense that management presumed they did not have to respect the rights of tenants because they were paying below market rents and being given a service. One participant noted that it was unfair that the government could tell them how to live simply because they are public housing tenants and felt this would not go over in market housing. Furthermore, participants felt they could not voice their concerns for fear of retribution or did not voice their concerns because they were grateful for being housed. These concerns tended to compound and have now led to the dissatisfaction being reported.

Problems with Neighbours

The next major theme was that of problems with other tenants. Many participants reported issues within this category. These problems can be divided into complaints against other tenants and other tenants making complaints against participants. Complaints about other tenants largely revolved around noise complaints and crime as well as issues of cliques and conflicting use of space. Noise complaints often involved hearing loud disputes, loud music, and common household noises such as walking, urinating, and TV. Even sounds that are not excessively loud carried through walls, doors, floors, and ceilings. Issues of crime were less commonly reported but revolved around the perception that drug dealing/using were present as well as the transportation of stolen goods. This manifested in a sense of
insecurity and fear for personal safety. Similarly, crime within the neighbourhood of public housing buildings was reported.

Participants also had noise complaints directed against them. All reported that these noise complaints were groundless and were either due to poor sound proofing or wilful harassment from other tenants. For example, one participant had another tenant constantly making noise complaints against them. The participant explained that it was very difficult to determine where sound came from within the building and this led to the other tenant mistakenly blaming the noise on them. In one instance, the police were called and woke up the participant in order to investigate the noise complaint against them. These complaints eventually stopped without negative consequences. It should be noted though, that the participant was under extreme stress during this time fearing that they could be evicted for noise complaints.

Next, there were many complaints that common household activities could be heard in other apartments. A few participants reported that they could even hear the neighbours urinating, indicating that regular apartment noise carries through making these complaints somewhat baseless. Overall, there was a major issue with sound carrying through from other suites. Noise complaints were not always filed but it was a widely noted problem. Sound proofing could go a long way to improving tenant relations and quality of life.

Multiple participants stated that public housing tended to develop cliques that dominated and excluded other individuals. The consequence of cliques was said to be social isolation. Those within cliques were reported to have dominated social events and communal spaces within buildings. A few participants reported that falling out of favour with cliques or other individual tenants meant that groundless complaints would be lodged against them. Some of the noise complaints were conceptualized as this. Similarly, some participants reported a strategy of non- or minimal involvement with neighbours to avoid neighbours becoming too involved in their day-to-day lives. These cliques
and related issues were described as “chaos” and “interpersonal drama”. One participant was of the opinion that this is a common issue within public housing. Indeed, multiple participants noted the issue of cliques and conflicts between neighbours.

Another issue was a dispute over how garden space was allocated. The dispute revolved around the participant stating that the hard work they put into the garden over the years was being wrecked by a new gardener who would dig in other gardeners’ plots and generally damaged the garden through poor gardening practices.

**Problems with the Physical Condition of Housing**

Six participants reported problems stemming from the physical condition of their housing. These included such things as the problems already mentioned involving a participant being forced to pay for repairs and the faulty stove pipe. This highlights the interrelatedness of the categories used. In addition to already reported concerns, other participants reported issues such as mould in the toilet and on the soffits, a faulty socket that has not been repaired for three months (at the time of the interview), a safety bar placed on the outside of the bathtub (meaning if a tenant fell, it would be impossible to see as it was hidden by the shower curtain), plumbing leaks, drips, very poor and dirty carpet and linoleum, lever taps replaced with knobs making them difficult to use as the participant has arthritis, and concerns over water quality. In the last case, the participant stated they wanted the test done just to be sure it was safe and that they would accept any results. If noise complaints revolving around the sounds of daily life (walking, talking, TV, urinating, etc) are included in this category, it increases the number of participants reporting problems in this area.

Outside noise was reported as a problem in some interviews. This stemmed from units that were located along busy streets with a high volume of traffic. In these interviews, the noise was very obviously obtrusive and constant even with the windows of the suite closed. Importantly, it was reported by participants suffering from anxiety and other disorders that make them sensitive to loud
and obtrusive noises. Though a potentially difficult task, matching tenants that have specific needs with appropriate housing would go a long way to alleviating human suffering. Sound proofing on the street side of buildings would also likely help.

A few participants reported getting sick from public housing as well as reporting what was considered higher levels of death within their buildings. This was assumed to be caused by poor housing as well as pollution.

Noise could have been included as its own category as many participants reported these issues. I choose, however, to include it in the categories of complaints against and about neighbours and the physical condition of housing. Sound proofing could go a long way in providing peace of mind for tenants as well as protecting their privacy.

It is important to note that nearly every participant stated they were grateful to be housed. In part, this has led to the tendency not to voice concerns. Participants are both grateful to be housed and do not want to jeopardize their housing which would mean a transition back into market housing. This transition would be unaffordable, either leading to tenuous housing situations or severe cut backs in things like food and medication. Many of these things continue to be sacrificed within public housing but not nearly to the degree they would be in market housing. It is also important to note that participants had very good experiences with some management and staff and recognized many of the constraints they face.

There were three interviews in which participants expressed an overall happiness with their current suites. Two of these participants had transferred from undesirable public housing and one had transferred from undesirable non-profit housing provided by a religious group. In these cases, satisfaction was derived from buildings in nicer areas with less crime and convenient proximity to amenities. These participants did not mention the often reported issues of cliques, intrusive neighbours, unresponsive management, and poor physical condition of suites.
Most of the issues highlighted in this research indicate that people leave or wish to leave public housing due to negative push factors. No participants reported pull factors, although the few participants who reported satisfaction with their housing could potentially be said to have been pulled towards more desirable public housing. Many participants reported wanting to find a better public housing suite.

This tendency toward push factors may be partially a result of those with problems being more likely to participate in this research. However, the similarities in problems that participants reported represent larger issues that need to be addressed. Their problems are likely experienced by other tenants in varying degrees of severity. Just as those that have left public housing for positive reasons could not participate in this research, those that have left due to negative reasons would also not be in a position to participate. The push factors experienced by participants likely are also experienced by those who leave for more positive reasons. Those that did participate and reported negative experiences all felt stuck or very limited in options. This is not exactly the target group originally conceived of for this research but they do represent the best proxy for those who have left public housing. More importantly, they have legitimate concerns that need to be taken seriously.

**Fear of Losing Housing**

Another major theme that emerged out of this research was the fear that some participants had about losing their housing. Participant’s fear of losing their housing is partially encompassed under problems with management/staff as participants feared being evicted for not complying with what they saw as unfair orders. However, this theme is distinct enough to warrant further examination and elaboration. The fear participants expressed came from both a lack of resources and a completely unaffordable private market. Many reported sacrificing things such as food and medicine to even pay for public housing rents. Being forced back into the private market would have made such cuts even more drastic. As shown in the context section, the amount of money low-income people tend to earn is not nearly
enough to provide affordable housing in the private market. Such a move would necessitate both cuts to food and medicine as well as scaling down housing from 1 bedroom suites or family units to something much cheaper such as a room in a shared house. The cuts that would be necessary to move back into market housing as well as the specter of homelessness or couch surfing make this a powerful fear.

Participants did not speak-up about building issues or problems for fear of this consequence. Similarly, some participants feared losing their housing for minor infractions and unwarranted noise complaints. This fear generally led to a silent discipline in which participants felt they could not address unfair situations and other housing problems. Whether management acted upon this fear or cultivated it is unknown. However, it is clear that they benefited from the silence it produced.

**Sense of Being Stuck**

The last major theme to emerge out of this research was that of being stuck. What was intended to be a residential mobility study turned out to be a study in *immobility*. As shown in the context section, Victoria rents are unaffordable for low-income people meaning that moving back into market housing would necessitate sacrificing food and medicine to pay for increased rents, downsizing housing size, and if affordable rents could not be found, risk homelessness or couch surfing. Public housing, then, was the only form of tenure that was affordable to participants. They experienced the problems noted above but were forced to endure as no other affordable options exist. Put in residential mobility terms, they experienced only push factors but there were no corresponding pull factors that would complete the mobility process. In short, the market failed to produce affordable options for low-income renters. This immobility was exacerbated by long wait list times to get into public housing. Participants reported waiting from 2.9 – 5 years to be housed.

**Discussion**
Many issues arose out of the data that need to be theorized and explored in depth. This involves comparing the issues and ideas found in the literature review on residential mobility both within and outside of the public housing systems to the results of this research. Specifically, these are how an undersupply of public housing in Victoria compares to an oversupply in many parts of the UK as well as how it compares to more abundant but expensive market housing, how to conceptualize "anti-social behaviour" and how it affects housing dissatisfaction, the uses and problems associated with "push" and "pull" factors, and the role of market failure, individual vulnerability, and social landlord practices as outline by Pawson & Murno (2010).

**Oversupply/Undersupply**

Even though there are some differences between the UK social housing system and the public housing system in BC, literature on the UK social housing system provided a better analytical framework than did the more general literature on residential mobility. Even though there is an oversupply of social housing in places like Glasgow (Pawson & Munro 2010; Pawon et al. 2006), the reasons cited as the cause of mobility by social housing tenants were very similar to the reasons cited in this study (potentially, public housing in Canada may also exhibit a trend towards residualisation). Similarly, studies by Kemp & Keoghan (2001) and Burrows (1999) showed similar trends, though they often classified mobility in more positive pull terms. The biggest difference between the literature out of the UK and this current study is that in contrast to tenants in parts of the UK having relative ease of movement due to oversupply, the participants in this study lacked that ability to move because of an undersupply of public housing and market housing that is both limited and expensive. In 2012, the vacancy rate for a bachelor suite was 1.7% with average rent being $669/month. A one bedroom had a 4.1% vacancy rate and an average rent of $809/month (CMHC 2012:7-8).

An oversupply of housing, whether private or public, allows people to move more freely and seek out housing that is appropriate to their needs and wants. The issues faced in public housing are not
absent from private housing. However, because there is more choice in private housing – in terms of location choice, quality, and differing landlord practices – people are better able to escape bad housing and/or be pulled towards better housing. This choice is not available in public housing as demand far outstrips supply in the Greater Victoria area with 1377 applicant households, who meet the eligibility criteria for public housing, on the Housing Registry in March 2011 (Pauly et al. 2011a: 10). This fits with participants’ experiences of long wait list times. Tenants are reluctant to give up current undesirable housing as the alternatives – being back on a long wait list, couch surfing, homelessness, or poor or expensive market housing – can be far less desirable.

A person’s class position complicates this picture as having very limited resources severely limits the number of housing options available. Whether in private or public housing, those without money, resources, or social capital will be stuck and unable to access other forms of tenure in order to find better housing, a better neighbourhood, and/or a better landlord. Those with resources are better able to navigate issues of expensive housing and low vacancy rates. Participants felt stuck due to this severe undersupply. Social housing tenants in areas of oversupply in the UK experienced many of the same problems but they were more mobile due to oversupply. However, moving did not necessarily solve their problems. It is necessary to ask the question of why this dissatisfaction occurs in the first place. The issue of undersupply needs to be addressed but addressing many of the internal issues would go a long way in increasing housing satisfaction within the public housing sector.

**Anti-Social Behaviour**

Terms such as anti-social behaviour are difficult to define and often entail certain assumptions and differing uses of the term between academics and government (Carr & Cowan 2006). This research revealed that problems with neighbours were a major source of dissatisfaction for participants. Potentially, these problems can be labelled as anti-social behaviour, a label it often receives in the UK. However, that term denotes certain assumptions about the behaviour being negative and existing solely
within the individual labelled as anti-social. Loud music and even household noises that carry through poorly insulated walls and doors are not necessarily a problems with neighbours but problems with poor soundproofing. Blaming the individual and labelling them “anti-social” does not change the source of the problem: poor soundproofing.

Other problems, such as drug dealing, drug taking, and the perception of stolen goods passing through buildings can also be labelled as anti-social. However, this ignores the larger policy context that gives rise to an extensive undocumented economy. Given that income is geared to rent, work that is unregistered—whether dealing drugs or working in 'legitimate' jobs that pay in cash—is desirable as this income is not used to calculate rent. Many participants noted that they could not save money to get ahead because any extra money they made was applied to rent. Theft can also be considered a part of this undocumented economy. This is not said to justify these practices but a certain amount of context is warranted to understand the constraints that lead some to take up such activities (Bourgois 2003[1996]; Nelson and Smith 1999; Reimer 2006). Likewise, labelling drug taking as anti-social behaviour depends on one’s view on drugs and their perceived harms or benefits and whether one takes a more libertarian or authoritarian stance on individual freedom. This ties into general landlord practices and to what extent public and social housing landlords regulate or discipline tenants’ lives and decisions. This will be taken up shortly.

The undocumented economy, of course, is not risk free. Participants often reported a strong sense of fear for personal safety that came with such activities, especially that of drug dealing. This may be in part due to moralizing and fearful discourses around illegal drugs but some is likely due to actual risk within the industry. The point to be taken away is that there is a larger policy context that

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12 Bourgois (2003[1996]: xvii-xxiii) notes in the preface to the second edition of his book that there was a reduction in drug dealing in the late 1990s correlated with an upturn in the economy. Some drug dealers left the business for mainstream jobs. This was not the case for all. Poverty was still a major issue with many turning to the undocumented economy to earn a living. Importantly, he mentioned that New York City’s highly punitive measures against street level crime and “nuisance behaviour” did not correlate with any reduction in crime compared to cities without such punitive measures highlighting a different approach is necessary that takes into considerations the causes of poverty not just the consequences.
may lead some to take up these activities. Altering these conditions may be more effective in dealing with “anti-social” behaviour than strictly using punitive models (Hodgkinson and Tilley 2011: 301). The effectiveness of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) – the main punitive form of dealing with anti-social behaviour in the UK – is highly debated with little empirical evidence being published (Hodgkinson and Tilley 2011: 289). ASBOs are further criticized on the basis of inconsistent data collection and differing interpretations of the existing data (Prior 2009). Others have criticized Anti-Social Behaviour laws and ASBOs as criminalizing non-normative behaviour given their broad definition and focus on maintaining order and “civility” (Crawford 2009; Crawford & Flint 2009; Flint & Nixon 2006, Parr 2009).

It is the opinion of this author that the term anti-social behaviour is too strong for the current study. Anti-social behaviour in the UK is described as more violent and destructive than what participants described in this study. The more extreme variations of anti-social behaviour in the UK encompassed issues such as harassment by gangs, physical violence, threats made against tenants, and vandalism of properties. These directly affected the lives of tenants to the point that some did not even move into their social housing suites for fear of personal safety. Though some participants in this study feared for their safety, they did not describe incidents where they were personally threatened by other tenants. There were cases of harassment in terms of unwarranted noise complaints and social exclusion through cliques, but practices such as drug dealing, drug taking, and transport of what was perceived as stolen goods did not directly affect participants. However, these issues still need to be addressed and taken seriously. This can range from policy initiatives dealing with why some tenants are employed in the undocumented economy to increasing sound proofing in buildings to prevent tenants from overhearing other tenants’ activities. Harm reduction (Pauly et al. 2011b: 3-6) approaches to problematic drug and alcohol use would be more effective in reducing problems for both users and other tenants than implementing punitive measures.
Push or Pull?

Another major issue that came out of this research and the literature review is the issue of how to classify the motivations and constraints of participants as either push or pull factors. Specifically, Kemp & Keoghan (2001: 34) state that finding a better neighbourhood or housing is to be considered a pull factor. Pawson & Munro (2010: 160) disagree, stating that these moves cannot be described as forced but they cannot be viewed as wholly positive given that people were moving to find accommodation of only the most basic nature and leaving very undesirable situations. In this way, one must be very careful to describe something as either a push or a pull. To understand if a move is to be classified as a push, there must be some sort of major dissatisfaction in the current residence rather than being pulled from acceptable housing to something that is more appropriate or desired. The current residence must be decidedly negative.

Within the context of this research, participants’ reasons for wanting to leave public housing were decidedly in the push category. This is especially true given that no participants reporting dissatisfaction had any new housing lined-up and they felt that they were stuck. This shows that it is not better housing or a better neighbourhood that is pulling them out; rather, it is their particular experiences within public housing that were pushing them out with the ultimate desire being to improve their situations from their current dissatisfied state. It was clearly problems within the public housing system as well as problems within the neighbourhoods that were driving the desire to move. Most participants did not feel they could afford market housing or that it would provide them with any better quality of life than public housing. This further supports the conclusion that they are not being motivated by pull factors.

Market Failure, Individual Vulnerability, and Social Landlord Practices

Pawson & Munro (2010) categorized factors that increase mobility within the social housing system in the UK as market failure, individual vulnerability, and landlord practices (discussed below). These are
not direct causes but work in tandem with other factors, such as anti-social behaviour, and pull factors, such as finding better accommodation, that lead to tenants leaving or moving within the social housing system.

This research revealed that market failure and landlord practices figured strongly in the desire to move. Individual vulnerability also played a role but was harder to assess. Some participants suffering from conditions such as anxiety, depression, or PTSD cited these as factors that fuelled their desires to move. These individual vulnerabilities made participants more sensitive to problems stemming from poor housing, neighbourhood noise, and overbearing managerial practices.

Market failure played a large role in several ways. Firstly, a lack of affordable rental housing, as outlined in the introduction and by reports from the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (Pauly et al. 2012: 5-12; Pauly et al. 2011a: 2-6) has helped to create the demand for public housing. Nearly all participants had bad experiences in market housing, could not afford market housing, and feared being forced to return to market housing. Furthermore, nearly all reported lengthy stays on the wait list with most waiting literally years to acquire public housing. Again, this plays into the sense of being stuck reported by participants. Nearly every participant stated they were grateful to be housed in public housing because of their experiences in market housing. These included problems revolving around exorbitant rents for small or poor housing, housing that was substandard or unhealthy, and some participants reported sacrificing things such as food and medication in order to pay for higher rents within market housing.

Managerial practices\textsuperscript{13} clearly played a major role in the creating the desire to leave. Participants largely felt that they could not voice their concerns because of their vulnerable position within public housing. The fear of being forced into market housing through eviction or being put back on the wait list for public housing led to a sense of being unable to assert their rights. Some felt there

\textsuperscript{13} Participants did not always distinguish between what level of staff they were dealing with. I use terms such as managerial practices and management as a catch-all for encounters with staff. I use the term management because there was a sense that whoever the staff were, they were in a position to manage participants and their issues and complaints.
was no appropriate neutral body to take complaints to and that management was too quick to make judgements without hearing both sides of disputes between tenants. Participants felt they could not say no to what they considered unfair behaviour by management and felt this behaviour would not be acceptable within market housing. To paraphrase one participant, you do not rock the boat when your housing is at stake.

Management may not actively cultivate this relationship of fear but clearly they benefit from it as it gives them a clear power-over relationship. This allows management the power to put tenants under surveillance which allows management access to their lives. This access allows management to discipline tenants for behaviour deemed unacceptable, whether that falls within the tenancy act or not, as well as get them to pay for maintenance on their housing. This can be clearly seen in the cases in which management told a single parent to clean-up their child’s toys and told another to pay for maintenance on their suite. This maintenance was described as “wear and tear”, which is covered under the Residential Tenancy Act (Gov. of BC 2002: Part 2, Division 4, 32), encompassing things such as painting, filling nail holes, and cleaning carpets. Participants often stated that this kind of surveillance was due to greed on the part of management. Essentially, surveillance allowed management to see what needed repairing or maintaining and the power-over relationship allowed them to coerce participants to pay for repairs which would in turn save housing providers money. Some participants noted the financial constraints faced by housing providers. This may help illuminate some of these practices.  

Hackworth & Moriah (2006: 520-523) note that changes in the public housing system in Ontario during the 1990s meant that higher levels of government left the housing business and placed this responsibility on municipal and non-governmental housing providers. These new providers experienced shortages of resources, partly for maintenance and upkeep. Ilcan (2009: 214) notes that devolution of public services from federal levels to lower levels of government has been a feature of

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14 It, too, needs to be noted that management may have considered things such as dirty or worn carpet as damage rather than general wear and tear that is covered under the residential tenancy act.
Western democracies since the late 1980s. These sorts of changes, and the funding shortfalls that come with them, may help explain why participants are coerced into paying for repairs.

Part of the explanation may also reside in the changing role that social housing landlords play. Social housing landlords are often put into the role of providing social services as opposed to simply being landlords (Flint 2006; Flint 2004; Goodlad 1999; Hunter 2006; Marston 2004; McKee 2008; BC Housing 1998; Saugeres 2000). To put it another way, social landlords are increasingly becoming “agents of social control” (Hunter 2006) and perhaps becoming social workers as well. This means that social landlords are put in a position to discipline and shape tenants’ lives as opposed to private landlords who are under no such obligations, though they may and often do implement restrictive rules.

It is a common troupe to see the poor as deserving of their own circumstances and poverty. This view leads to initiatives such as skills building and job training programs as well as leading to disciplinary measures and surveillance when the poor are perceived of as not doing enough to combat their own poverty (Kingfisher 2007; Lyon-Callo 2000; Pudup 2008). Saugeres (2000) shows that social landlords saw tidy gardens and houses as symbols for responsible tenancy and good citizenship. Social landlords bent the rules in order to help those they perceived as nice by doing things such as helping a man in arrears to move to a bigger house as well as giving one tenant three offers of rehousing instead of the mandated two (Saugeres 2000: 596-597). In this way, surveillance may not simply be about cost cutting, as participants suggest, but also be about creating and looking for a certain sense of citizenship within tenants which can then be mobilized in order to either reward compliance or discipline perceived infractions. The ultimate aim of this may be to cultivate a specific sense of citizenship in order to help tenants move from public housing into private market. Both the fear of losing housing and being stuck appear to be contradictory forces. Participants were, at once, both fearful of losing their housing but also frustrated by being stuck. These contradictory forces are best explained as problems both in the public housing system and the private market. Public housing is necessary because of
extremely high market rents but it is not without its problems. These problems led most participants to want to leave their housing but they could not as the market was unaffordable and to switch public housing units would most likely take years of being back on the waiting list and once again, enduring market housing. The market and public housing are not providing the necessary options for low-income renters that provide housing that is affordable, quality, and of appropriate size. Reforms in both types of tenure would go a long way in providing an increased quality of living for low-income renters inside of and outside of public housing.

**Recommendations**

Pawson et al. (2006: 72-82) lay out a series of recommendations on how to increase tenancy sustainment. Many of the recommendations do not directly apply to this study as the problems they were addressing were not found in this study or they were specific to policies and initiatives of housing authorities in Glasgow. These recommendations may be useful in other contexts. The recommendations that are applicable to this study revolve around the allocations process (:72-74), providing support for new tenants (:76-78), and anti-social behaviour (:79). Specific recommendations will also be made that correspond with the major themes identified with this research: problems with management and staff, problems with neighbours, problems with the physical condition of housing, and noise.

**Accessing Public Housing**

Some participants expressed frustration with the allocations process in terms of not being able to see pictures or know the characteristics of a suite (size, number of windows, which directions the windows face) before viewing it. This frustration combined with the frustration of only being given a very limited number of suites they could reject before they were forced to take the last choice or be put back on the waiting list. Ex-tenants in Pawson et al.’s (2006) study noted these issues as well. In both cases, tenants and participants accepted suites that did not meet their requirements for a number of reasons.
Firstly, only having a limited number of suites participants could reject meant they would usually use up all their choices and accept the last one. This meant that participants were forced to take unsatisfactory housing that did not meet their personal requirements. Participants with conditions such as anxiety, depression, and PTSD accepted housing that exacerbated their conditions through things such as excessive noise and lack of natural light. They had no choice but to accept these either because they were coming from dire circumstances, in which even a substandard suite would be an improvement, or they had used up all their rejections and were forced to take the last one. Some participants stated that it would be helpful to be able to know the characteristics of a suite without viewing it to know whether it was worth looking at and potentially using up one of their rejections. This would at the very least allow tenants to avoid an unnecessary trip to view a suite they did not like.

Pawson et al. (2006:72-73) note that though the Choice Based Letting program in the UK is not a “panacea” for tenancy sustainment, it has had some positive effect in increasing tenancy sustainment. This is through allowing tenants to more carefully choose their suites in terms of location and quality in order to find them housing that better suits their needs. Allowing more choice increases the likelihood that a particular tenant will be matched with appropriate housing. This may also be effective in the Greater Victoria area. However, undersupply of public housing in the area may be a hindrance to such programs. Pawson et al. (2006: 72) note that this program is more effective in low-demand areas as there are simply more suites to choose from but it has also had some effect in other areas as well. An undersupply of public housing in the Greater Victoria area means that there will simply be fewer suites for prospective tenants to choose from in order to match their housing to their needs and wants. A choice based letting scheme here may mean longer wait times for those with more needs. Given that some prospective tenants are coming out of very dire circumstances, they may still end-up accepting whatever is offered in order to escape. Alongside choice based letting, it may be beneficial to make transferring to a different public housing suite easier.
Another potential option is to allow prospective tenants to list certain requirements they want in their housing. If a tenant suffers from depression and needs or desires a suite on the sunny side of a building, then only offering suites with this characteristic to that tenant may help increase housing satisfaction. Of course, this runs into the problem of tenants with more requirements facing longer wait times. There are no cures for undersupply other than to build or purchase new public housing or to reduce rent within the private rental sector.

**Support for Tenants**

Supporting tenants does not just involve making sure tenants know about and receive medical and mental health support but can encompass a certain amount of practical support in terms of acquiring furnishings if they do not have them and teaching tenants how to navigate the social assistance system (Pawson et al. 2006: 77). At least a few participants noted they did not know how the housing system worked and were frustrated by what seemed to be arbitrary changes, such as rent inexplicably rising without a previous rise in income. Giving tenants information on how the social welfare system works will allow them to claim benefits that they are eligible for, thereby increasing their quality of life and increasing housing satisfaction. Likewise, if tenants know how the social assistance system operates, decisions may not feel as arbitrary.

Tenants should be given information on specific programs, who is eligible, and how to apply for them in a way that encompasses programs and supports from different ministries and is presented in an easily understood way. Both BC Housing's website and the Ministry of Social Development's website are confusing and lack consistency with the eligibility criteria seemingly being listed as relatively broad but then being narrowed to low-income seniors, low-income families, and people with disabilities as stated in the *Subsidized Housing* section of this thesis. An alternative to giving information is to make it easily accessible so that tenants can access this information when they need it rather than being given a large amount of information all at once. On top of this, tenants should know
who they can contact to address concerns and disputes with both other tenants and management. Participants overwhelmingly expressed a fear of losing their housing and being forced back into market housing. For this reason, tenants must be given some kind of guarantee that they will not be penalized or evicted for bringing forward complaints. This requires a neutral body and protection of their identity. Information on the BC Ombudsperson should be made more accessible. Potentially, it would be helpful for tenants to be given an information sheet on how to navigate the BC Housing and Government of BC websites.

Lack of fairness within the system should also be addressed. Simply knowing the social assistance system does not mean that decisions are not arbitrary, unfair, or harmful and benefits programs must be in place for tenants to access them. Some participants noted such unfairness with the SAFER program in which one must already live in market housing before they can apply. Participants were ineligible in practice because they could not afford to pay even one month’s rent in market housing while they wait for their SAFER application to be processed. This is a pertinent example of structural exclusion and how policy inhibits residential mobility. These rental supplements are described as a "keystone" in the Housing Procurement Plan of the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (Pauly et al. 2012: 28-29). Increasing their accessibility may be a way of reducing wait lists and stress on the public housing system by increasing subsidized access to the private rental market. Though rent supplements only attempt to mitigate expensive rents and do not tackle the important issue of rising housing costs, they do have an important role to play. Providing financial support to cover the costs of moving out of public housing could be a way of helping those who wish to access the private market. Though, the cost of housing itself far outweighs the costs of moving. Providing moving costs may help ease some pressures but it does not solve the problem of unaffordable housing.
**Soundproofing**

Noise complaints formed a large portion of the complaints made by participants. The majority of noise complaints revolved around complaints against neighbours or neighbours making complaints against participants. To a lesser extent, there were complaints about outside noise coming into the building. Soundproofing doors, walls, and windows would go a long way in terms of alleviating many of these issues. Some complaints about and by neighbours were made based on sound that carried through the walls and doors of buildings. Better soundproofing would increase the privacy of all tenants and thereby reduce the instances of tenants eavesdropping on other tenants. Soundproofing or mitigation of the sound from the street side of busy buildings would help alleviate suffering caused by excessive noise. Participants suffering from things such as PTSD and anxiety disorders reported that these conditions were severely exacerbated by this excessive street noise.

**Physical Condition of Housing**

Regular maintenance and repairs should be conducted on public housing suites. This maintenance and reasonable wear and tear should be paid for by the housing provider unless it is caused by neglect of the tenant as stated in the Residential Tenancy Act (Gov. of BC 2002: Part 2, Division 4, 32). Participants with complaints in this area categorized the disrepair as caused by wear and tear or lack of maintenance rather than by their own neglect. If this is disputed by the housing provider, it should be resolved by a neutral body rather than by forcing tenants to pay for repairs through the use of coercive power. General property and building maintenance concerns should also be addressed. Timely maintenance of broken or damaged communal areas and entrances is necessary for the safety and security of tenants. Water testing, especially in older buildings, would go a long way to addressing tenant concerns about the quality of housing.

**Problems with Management and Staff**

Participants had a strong sense that management and staff had too much power to pry into their lives,
there were excessive rules and regulations, tenants’ rights were not respected, and that repairs were improper and untimely and a few tenants were coerced into paying for repairs. There was a sense that what would be allowed in most market housing is not allowed in public housing. The goal of public housing should be to provide high quality housing for those who cannot afford market housing. Asking tenants to pay for repairs, tidy up their yards and houses, having obtrusive inspections, and disallowing certain items create a large amount of housing dissatisfaction. Easing certain rules may help create a more liveable environment. Consulting with tenants about changes to their suites may be helpful in identifying how individual needs can be met. An example of this is installing lever taps for seniors and those with arthritis. Keeping tenants informed about problems or issues in the buildings and addressing tenants respectfully would go a long way in addressing these issues. Most importantly, as mentioned earlier, tenants need to be given resources to address problems with management and staff in such a way that their housing will not be jeopardy. Many participants reporting problems with management and staff felt they could not bring these issues up for fear of eviction. For example, the participant who was coerced into paying for repairs felt they and their children would be evicted if they did not comply. Giving tenants information on the BC Ombudsperson, whose role it is to deal with issues of accountability and fairness within the public administration (Office of the Ombudsperson 2012), and potentially implementing other more neutral mechanisms to deal with complaints would help to address these problems. Given that this research revealed a distrust of government bodies to deal with disputes in a neutral manner, the non-governmental sector has a large role to play. Groups such as Victoria’s Together Against Poverty (TAPS) may be best situated to deal with tenant disputes within the public housing system.

Residents Association

Public housing is a form of tenure that very often provides long term homes to low-income renters. As this thesis has shown, public housing tenants often do not have the ability to move easily as social
housing represents the only form of tenure tenants can afford that gives them some quality of living. Despite it being a better form of tenure than what is in the private market at the same price, there are systemic issues that need to be addressed. Tenants do not have the option of relocating to somewhere that better suits their needs. This restricts their options to enduring unsatisfactory conditions, taking a chance in the private market (which likely would be worse), or attempting to change their current housing for the better. Given the very strong sense of fear about losing their housing should they speak up and those that did facing a lack of concern, this last option is difficult. It brings up the specter of a fourth option, which would be homelessness or couch surfing with friends and family. Including tenants in this decision making process may go a long way in alleviating the problems between management/staff and tenants through facilitating dialogue and giving tenants some representation and control in issues that affect their daily lives. Tenants who are renting for extended periods of time without the option of going elsewhere are excluded and marginalized from the decisions that affect their lives.

A residents association could go a long way to relieving these fears by giving tenants more power in the management decisions and policy that affects their daily lives. Increasing housing satisfaction among tenants would increase the quality of life of public housing tenants and hopefully reduce the stresses that impact their lives and health. Furthermore, if tenants had more power and the ability to influence policy that directly affects them, issues and conflicts could be reduced that take time and effort to deal with on the part of management and staff. This also has the ability to reduce turnover of units that takes up staff time and could reduce cleaning and repair costs associated with preparing a suite for new tenant. More importantly, though, is that social inclusion would counteract the stereotype and image of "the poor" as either the architects of their own poverty or charity cases that are to be given pity and small amounts of assistance. Public housing tenants should be included as equal members of our communities rather than outcasts. Though this will not change the structural issues of
poverty and marginalization, it is a step in the right direction that can hopefully bring us closer to creating a more equitable political-economic context.

**Future Research**

Like any study, this one did not cover everything, leaving room for further research. New methodologies and even simply repeating this study to replicate or complicate results would be extremely useful in understanding the issues further. Future research needs to broaden who is included in research to both tenants and management/staff to gain a better understanding of the practices, ideas, and constraints of delivering public housing. New methodologies can look at not just those who are stuck but those who have left. Lastly, looking more closely at the life-histories of tenants will help illuminate not only why one might wish to leave public housing but the how they came to be there in the first place.

**Exit Interviews**

As mentioned earlier, one of the methodological shortcomings of this research was that those who responded to the recruitment letter were likely those that were having problems. Those who were satisfied with their housing or left for positive reasons would be less likely to respond. One way of overcoming this would be to do exit interviews with social housing tenants. Pawson & Munro (2010) successfully used this method to gain a better understanding of the reasons why tenants moved. Their methods revealed a combination of push and pull factors that led to tenant mobility. Repeating this method in the context of public housing in Victoria may reveal some of the positive reasons why tenants may move. Pawson & Munro’s method revealed that some moves were positively driven but that these moves were often spurred by push factors. This is more in line with the general literature on residential mobility. However, one short coming of a study such as this is that it may be biased in terms of interviewing those who have gained the resources to move. My research indicated that there are
many who do not have the resources to move and therefore are stuck. Both types of studies have their advantages as well as their biases. Looking at them together would give a more well-rounded view of residential mobility in public housing as well as the problems and strengths of public housing.

**Life-History Interviews**

This research addressed the reasons why tenants may want to leave public housing but did not address how they came to be in public housing system. Life-history interviews that address how tenants entered public housing, their experiences, and whether or not they want to leave would go a long way in understanding the mobility process and other pertinent issues. It would allow a long term view of what it is like to be in public housing as well as countering ideas about the deserving and undeserving poor by illuminating the varied and complicated stories of those in public housing.

**Studying-Up**

Drawing off Laura Nader’s (1972) call to study-up, it is important to conduct research with those in positions of power within the public housing system. In depth ethnographic work, such as done by Lyon-Callo (2004), is one way in which to accomplish this. His research takes into consideration studying-up by talking with not only homeless individuals accessing shelter services but by talking with administrators, managers, and shelter staff. This illuminated the discourses that those in power have about homeless individuals and low-income people in general. These discourses inform daily practice and how shelter staff deal with homeless individuals. Furthermore, funding agencies and government work with these discourses as well. This largely frames the responses to homelessness and poverty. It leaves unaddressed many of the political and economic inequalities that are driving the problem. Repeating this sort of research in the Victoria or even Canadian context may reveal local differences in the discourses that frame policy response. It would also give public housing staff and management a chance to address the motivations behind the way in which public housing is delivered and the constraints and issues they face.
The Canadian Context

Much of the literature that I focused on both in the literature review and the conclusion of this thesis is drawn from the United Kingdom. The United States also tends to have a large body of literature on these issues. Canada, however, is lacking in an extensive exploration of the public housing system. This may be at least partially due to the lack of comprehensive public housing strategy at the federal level. It is the provinces and municipalities who are left to deal with public housing and issues of homelessness. However, it would be extremely fruitful for work to be done in this area that examines public housing in the Canadian context through looking at grey literature on the subject, discourse analysis of media and government documents, and a comprehensive comparison of different strategies across Canada. Authors such as Silver (2009) have made important contributions in this area but an expansion of these efforts would be extremely fruitful.

The discussion of the results, recommendations, and future research in this chapter revolve around theoretical issues arising out of social housing and residential mobility literature in the contemporary context. To add a more well-rounded historical, theoretical and anthropological framework, I will now examine the idea of the deserving and undeserving poor in both the contemporary and historical context. The next chapter reveals that how low-income people are treated and conceptualized has its roots in the English Poor Laws as well as colonial ideology. The practices and ideas that emerged from the Poor Laws influenced the development of the welfare state. Similarly, historical debates about the poor and the liberalism of Victorian times are remarkably similar to contemporary debates and the emergence of neoliberalism. Looking back helps us to understand where we are and where we may be headed.
Chapter 4: Historical and Colonial Conclusions

Throughout this research, the idea of the deserving and undeserving poor has been a recurring concept that needed to be explored further. Who is considered deserving of state benefits and why? Who are the undeserving poor? Are the categories of deserving and undeserving opposites or are there similarities between them? What is the history of these ideas? I will take up these ideas by exploring contemporary ways in which the undeserving are distinguished from the deserving as well as exploring the history of the English Poor Laws\(^\text{15}\) to provide a sense of continuity from past to present on how the deserving poor are distinguished from the undeserving. These ideas have a deep history that are intertwined with colonization and the progressive narratives of civilization and savagery. Lastly, I will explore how the concepts of the deserving and undeserving tie into my own work and social assistance policy in British Columbia.

Deserving and the Undeserving Poor

At its heart, the concept of deserving and undeserving poor is about morality. Essentially, it is a way of determining who is morally worthy of help. With the advent of universal welfare policies in the 1930's to 1960s, it can be argued that all are considered deserving to a certain extent. This may be true, but even within this, there was and is a drive to determine who is more deserving than others and with a shift towards neoliberal thinking, this is becoming even more pronounced and what one can access depends on how worthy they are considered. Welfare is being cut and both the undeserving and deserving are entitled to less. Even those deemed deserving are not entitled to much. As shown in the context section of this thesis, social assistance rates are not enough to raise recipients out of core-housing need when assistance rates are compared to average rents. In this way, even the deserving poor are left in a situation that is very difficult. Indeed, a form of the "lesser eligibility" (Arneson 1997: 336)

\(^{15}\) The English Poor Laws are a series of laws starting in 1349 and extending to 1834 that are aimed at regulating the poor and providing state assistance. They will be taken up in this chapter.
seems to be at work in contemporary welfare policy.

Lesser eligibility is the idea that welfare must not pay more or be more desirable than the lowest paid job available. This concept can be found throughout the many incarnations of the English Poor Laws. Essentially, providing relief to the poor could not be better than working, otherwise all the poor, even those that are able-bodied, would choose not to work. The lesser eligibility criteria acts to distinguish between the able-bodied undeserving poor and the disabled deserving poor. Only those who could not work would choose relief and therefore, constitute the deserving poor. As an example, workhouses in the 16th and 17th century were severe enough that only those that could not work were likely to enter the workhouse. This stood as a test to see if someone was truly "deserving" and to encourage the poor to work rather than fall idle and become dependent on the state. This was (and still is) the common assumption about what happens to the poor who are out of work (Bloy 2002). In the contemporary context, this can be seen within debates around "dependence". Essentially, social assistance must not be better than the lowest paid job otherwise the poor will become dependent rather than better their own positions (Chunn & Gavigan 2004: 231). This, of course, makes important assumptions about human nature as well as directing policy not at making work more desirable but making social assistance less desirable (Kingfisher 1999: 7). This all plays into who is considered deserving and to what. Being deserving entitles a person to some, but not too much. The undesirability of the amounts of social assistance given can be seen as both a deterrent and a test of who is eligible.

Jeppesen notes that the deserving and undeserving poor are dichotomous categories leading to assumptions about what distinguishes one from the other. The deserving poor create and constitute the category of the undeserving. In many ways, this reflects Rose's (1999: 189, 2000: 333) idea of the anti-community. Like the anti-community that provides the moral antithesis for "the community" the undeserving poor provide a moral antithesis for the deserving, creating an othering effect (Jeppesen 2009: 493). In this way, we must remember that the idea of the undeserving and deserving is not
necessarily a category that is accepted by those who are subject to them. This fits with the idea of lesser eligibility in terms of the deserving poor being seen as those that are unable to access the workforce. They deserve help because they must truly be in need otherwise they would have chosen work. The undeserving poor become those who are assumed to be able-bodied and are seen as choosing not to work. What constitutes undeservingness is culpability in one's own poverty. Those that cannot work are entitled to charity, though in modest amounts, while those that can, theoretically, work, are seen as undeserving. Again, this puts the focus not on improving employment but making social assistance less desirable so as to make low wage employment more enticing. Those that belong to the undeserving poor are seen as rejecting the morality of work. Those that are deserving do not necessarily reject this morality but cannot accomplish this morality due to circumstances outside of their control (such as through disability or age).

Poverty, in this way, becomes individual, rather than being something that is created out of specific social, political, and economic circumstances. It is something that exists within the individual. Poverty is caused through the inability to work or individuals choosing not to work or making life decisions that do not support work. Lyon-Callo (2000; 2004) does extensive research in this area around the individualization and medicalization of poverty. His work in homeless shelters indicated that the homeless were encouraged to look in themselves for the causes of their own poverty. This could range from mental illness to addictions to bad decision making. Rarely was the state of the economy, which was severely suffering in the town he worked in, and low wage work addressed. Through these discourses, the homeless often times became medicalized as "common sense" ideas were sought that would explain their homelessness. The solutions to homelessness, then, were seen as self-discipline and medical treatments for mental illness. Lyon-Callo states that

Within the homelessness industry, there is always an individual aberration that can be reformed or cared for. Once constructed, the categories such as mentally ill, victim of the foster-care system, substance abuser, and veteran become essentialized as the determinants
of individual homelessness and indicators of pathology. Practices within the shelter focus on diagnosing, treating, retraining, and normalizing such deviancy. Homelessness and the homeless subject are produced in such a way as to support caring for and reforming deviant individual subjects to the exclusion of other possible efforts (Lyon-Callo 2004: 106)

The homeless in these cases were seen as deserving because their illnesses were at the root cause of their poverty. However, with illness comes treatment. The homeless were seen as able to choose treatment through counselling, medication, and skills based training. Those that questioned these treatments were labelled as non-compliant, difficult and unwilling to take the steps to address their own homelessness and short comings. In other words, they are the undeserving. It should also be noted that some sheltering staff did not accept the discourse of individual pathology or became aware of systemic causes of homelessness through Lyon-Callo’s (2004: 78; 160) work. Some action to address unequal economic relationships came out of this but the dominant discourse of individual pathology still remained. Even when economic issues were addressed, it was most often still a matter of “fixing” homeless individuals through treatment and skills building programs in order to make them employable. Most were already employable and wished to work, however, the minimum wage was too low to cover high and unaffordable housing costs (Lyon-Callo 2004: 36). Questioning the value of a purely medical and individual approach to poverty was a sure way for homeless individuals to be labeled as undeserving (Lyon-Call 2004: 86-89; 125-126). The issue of poverty, then, becomes depoliticized and moral. Charity and a "helping hand" are the answer rather than political, economic, and social reform that addresses systemic inequalities in wages and work.

This again fits with the idea of the community and anti-community. The deserving are those who are seen as either working to better themselves or unable to attain employability. Though perhaps seen as attempting to become part of the community, even the deserving are still part of "the poor". In Rose’s (1999) terms, the deserving poor may conform to the idea of the entrepreneurial citizen but is still not a full citizen until they are not associated with the anti-community and have become fully
“responsible” for their own wellbeing. That is, until they are no longer needing assistance (Lyon-Callop 2004: 110). Discourses of otherness and difference still prevail and treat the deserving as different than "the community" and a part of the poor. Indeed, the poor have often been classified as a pathological culture that is lazy, deviant, unable to defer gratification and prone to crime (Silver 2011: 17-18). They are seen as a community or culture in and of themselves with values antithetical to middle and upper class society. Both the deserving and undeserving are a part of this group and increasingly, it is harder for anyone to be labeled as deserving (Chunn & Gavigan 2004).

Kingfisher (1999) notes that low-income people, and especially low-income women, serve as the boundaries of society. She states that

In their savage attack on the assumptions and organization of liberal bourgeois society, the poor, by their very existence, serve to define the boundaries of ordered society. By being "naturally" outside of civil society, and thus representative of disorder, the poor establish the outer limits of that society. Civilization is what it is--and those who inhabit it are who they are--by virtue of not being uncivilized, of being the opposite of the Other to civilization, the savage. The center is defined by the margins, and the savage poor become a pedagogical instrument in our own identity and social formation. They are not benign teachers, however, but rather represent the abject, threatening the boundary (Kingfisher 1999: 4)

Kingfisher goes on to note that in the rhetoric of neoliberal welfare policy in New Zealand and the United States (the two featured locales of her paper), the discourse of poverty is one of dependence in which the poor are kept poor by a generous social assistance system. Punitive policies and lowering social assistance rates are said to encourage self-responsibility and allow the poor to opt-into the system rather than remain dependent on a generous social assistance system. The poor are seen as lazy, unable to defer gratification, lack self-responsibility, and are symbolic of moral disorder. Importantly, these discourses about the poor and how colonized peoples are represented are remarkably similar. Both the poor and the colonized are conceptualized as lacking the morality of civilized life and are less than human. George Stocking made similar observations stating the poor of Victorian England were
often conceived of as uncivilized, savage, and primitive (Stocking 1987: 229-230).

Both the deserving and the undeserving poor are conceptualized within this moral order. The deserving poor may not be culpable in their own poverty but they do continue to represent the edges of this moral life and run the risk of falling into the category of undeserving. Chunn and Gavigan (2004: 231) state that "single mothers on social assistance have been and are subjected to intrusive and ‘moral’ surveillance of their homes, their cleanliness, their childrearing abilities, their personal lives, and so on" (Chunn & Gavigan 2004: 231). In this way, the ideas of the deserving and undeserving are not entirely binary categories. That is, the boundary that Kingfisher talks about is blurry. The deserving poor are entitled to something but it cannot be too much. Despite being seen as unable to access the workforce and look after themselves, therefore being deserving, they are given inadequate social assistance to prevent the undeserving from entering their ranks. In this way, the welfare of the deserving poor is sacrificed for the benefit of the whole.

Rose’s work can be extremely useful for theorizing about the boundaries of communities, what terms like community mean, and who is excluded from common ideas about community. However, his ideas can also be too clear cut in terms of creating a rigid separation between groups like the community and anti-community. It is a useful broad categorization but it needs to be contextualized. The idea of the deserving and undeserving poor is a case in point. The deserving can be seen as the antithesis to the undeserving, but upon closer inspection, they are not opposites but occupy one category (the poor). As seen through popular discourse, the deserving poor may not be culpable in their own poverty, and are therefore deserving of some assistance, but they are still not part of "the community". Rather than being a community and an anti-community, there is more of a continuum from undeserving to deserving to the housed and the larger community. Within this, there is messiness, which Chunng and Gavigan (2004: 227) state is the benefit of the concept of moral regulation. Morality is interpreted both through law and other social actions.
This idea of the continuum can be linked back to colonial ideas of savagery to civilization. If we go back to the ideas of Morgan and Tylor, perhaps we can link the ideas of the undeserving and deserving poor to the idea of progress from savagery to civilization. That is, the undeserving can be seen as savage and primitive while the civilized are those that are employed and in positions of respect and authority providing moral guidance. The deserving represent an ambiguous middle ground. They are not responsible for their poverty, hence they are deserving of help, but nor can they attain the desired morality of self-sufficiency. However, it seems apparent that both the deserving and undeserving poor form an anti-community that are other to the community. The undeserving poor are worthy of contempt and discipline while the deserving are to be pitied and given charity. This is complicated further by ideas about what causes one to be impoverished. As Lyon-Callo showed, those that are seen as being homeless through mental illness or addiction are often seen as deserving if they take steps to treat those illnesses. In this way, they can still be 'civilized' and can be the subject of disciplinary action. The elderly poor, on the other hand, cannot be reformed as it is age that makes them deserving and cannot be altered (though this is complicated by older individuals in the workforce). In this way, I believe that even within the idea of the deserving and undeserving, there exist hierarchies that make certain deserving individuals more deserving than others in the same category. As Kingfisher noted, the poor form the boundary of civilization. The deserving poor can be seen as closer to civilization but still not there. This resembles how peoples classified as barbaric were seen as closer to white colonizers but still not quite there. Those labeled barbaric were still subject to colonial rule and faced the brutality of such projects, but it was not carried out to the same extent as those labeled as savage. Both were seen as requiring different policies and practices just as different policies and practices are aimed at the deserving and the undeserving poor. George Stocking notes that the poor of England were often classified as primitive before and during the Victorian era. He states that although lower-class women and criminals might differ in many respects, they shared a similarity to "savages." The list of social categories thus equated was quite extensive: in
addition to criminals, women, and children, it included peasants, rustics, laborers, beggars, paupers, madmen, and Irishmen—all of whom were at times likened to savages or to "primitive" man.

What they shared with each other and with savages were certain mental characteristics—characteristics that placed them at a lower point on the unitary scale of intellectual and moral development: governed by impulse, deficient in foresight, they were in varying degrees unable to subordinate instinctual need to human rational control. But beyond this—and some might have said because of it—there were certain common factors in their social position. Along different lines—of domestic life (woman, child), of socioeconomic status (laborer, peasant, pauper), of deviancy (criminal, madman) and of "race" (Celtic Irishman, black savage)—they all stood in subordinate hierarchical relationship to those who dominated the economic life, who shared political power, or who most actively articulated the cultural ideology of mid-Victorian Britain (Stocking 1987: 229-230)

Progress was seen as uneven, evidenced by the fact that many, both at home and abroad, had not reached the level of enlightenment and civilization as middle and upper class Britain had. Stepan (1993) notes that the poor of England were often racialized. Scientific metaphors were created using racial and colonial categories to liken the poor to "lower races". Similarly, women were often compared to men of the "lower races". These metaphors naturalized and explained the social status of the poor.

Constructions of the poor were used to construct colonized peoples. It was dialectic. Stepan states that

Thus in the example given, the "poor of Europe" are seen in terms strictly applicable only to the "Negro" and vice versa. As a consequence, the poor are seen like a "race apart," savages in the midst of European civilization. Conversely, the "Negro" is seen as shiftless, idle, given to drink, part of the social remnant bound to be left behind in the march toward progress. Both the ideas of "savagery" and of "shiftlessness" belong to familiar systems of implications that the metaphor brings into play (Stepan 1993: 365)

This sort of Victorian thinking, of course, ignores the stark fact that the toiling of the poor and colonization of much of the world directly influenced and created the wealth of the classes who characterized both diverse groups as left behind by progress. Sidney Mintz's (1985) work on the role of
sugar in the British empire is a clear example of this. It was often indentured European laborers who worked alongside slaves on sugar plantations to create the wealth that fueled the British empire, providing what was a luxury good but turned into fuel, alongside of tea, for lower class workers of Britain. The treatment of the poor in England may be at least partially explained by the idea that they were considered distinct by those of the upper and middle capitalist classes who saw the poor as primitive and easily left behind by progress. Such an idea necessitates not examining the idea of progress and the problems low-wage workers and the poor faced but calls for the disciplining of the poor, especially the undeserving, into "catching up" and to discipline them against idleness. The deserving were to be pitied and given charity. John Locke, who strongly criticized the 1601 Poor Laws as being too easy on the poor, stated that those in violation of them should be sent to the colonies to earn their keep. Locke, importantly, contributed much to the philosophical underpinnings of colonization, including the idea of *terra nullius*. He was an ardent defender of English colonialism and wrote extensively in favour of it (Arneil 1994: 592). Though under theorized here, there is potentially a connection between the idea of *terra nullius* and the enclosure movement in England. Considering the common philosophic categorization of colonized peoples and the poor of England, it seems likely that the philosophical underpinnings of the enclosure movement and dispossessing colonized peoples of their land could have had similar foundations.

Rose (1999: 69-71) notes that liberal governance has its basis in the principle of disciplined freedom. That freedom can only be granted to those who can govern themselves. He notes that both the poor of England and colonized peoples were treated as being incapable of disciplined freedom and that similar regimes of governance and discipline were applied to both. He states that,

In sum, then, it is clear that there were complex interdependencies between metropolitan liberal government and its colonial experiments, and that these colonial experiences provided a rich store of examples, salutary lessons, metaphors and techniques for governing 'at home'. This was not least because, in a kind of internal racism, the problem of governing
the urban poor, slum children, the dangerous classes, the degenerates and the unemployable in the metropolitan countries was often considered to be analogous to that of governing the uncivilized, or only potentially civilized, inhabitants of the colonies (Rose 1999: 110-111).

These similarities between the colonized and the poor of England and Europe provide insight into the rationale behind their treatment through history and into the contemporary era. It was during the 19th century that many of these regimes of discipline and governance proliferated and were refined both in the colonies and in England. Neoliberal governance, the rejection of universal welfare, and an emphasis on self-government, discipline, and individual causes of poverty that we see emerging since the 1980's are reflective of the discourses and ideas of the 19th century. The "neo" in liberal seems more like a return to the formative years of liberalism. Studying this era and its laws that governed the poor and colonized may provide valuable insight into practices today and the forces and movements in the 1930s to 1960s that (temporarily) led away from an entirely punitive and disciplinary model of poor relief.

There are, of course, differences between the eras but there are enough similarities to warrant close examination. Indeed, Quigley (1998) notes that welfare policy in the United States of the mid to late 1990s resembles that of English Poor Laws from 1349 to 1601. To this, I would add that Poor Law amendments of 1834 were extensions of the 1601 Poor Laws and that elements from this time can be seen in the classification of deserving and undeserving poor and reflect the individualization of poverty that we see today.

Another distinct class of deserving poor has to be acknowledged at this point. That class is children. Social assistance programs are often aimed at low-income families but not low-income individuals. This is due largely to the assumption that children do not create their own poverty and therefore, are not being deserving of the effects of it. Parents who would not necessarily be considered the deserving poor are put in this category for the sake of their children. Jeppesen (2009: 494) notes that the discourse on child poverty in Canada is a "false construct" as child poverty is the result of parental poverty. Efforts that focus on the health and education of children to end child poverty are
ineffective because they never address the root cause of where child poverty comes from. She states that "Child poverty is thus a false construct that measures, but then discursively erases, the poverty and subjectivity of the parent(s) and removes the possibility of economic support for them and their children" (Jeppesen 2009: 494). Here we see a blurring of the deserving and the undeserving. In general, children are seen as the deserving and more so than their parents. Even if parents are considered part of the deserving poor, their children are seen as more deserving and programs are aimed at them rather than parents. This may be because children can easily be classified as deserving. They are not required to work nor do they have the same financial responsibilities as adults. They are not of an age to be required to look after themselves. Because of this, they cannot fail at looking after themselves. It is their parent’s failure. Our common definition of those that cannot work as being deserving means that children are considered as such due to the fact that they are not expected or required to work to support themselves. Judging whether a parent is deserving or undeserving requires looking at their specific circumstances. They cannot be judged as a category, as children can, making it more difficult to distinguish how they are classified. It is easier, morally and legally, to simply aim programs or funds at children rather than parents.

Seniors are another category of deserving poor. Like children and due to their age, they are assumed to be either incapable of or unexpected to work. Because they cannot meet the ideal of working, they cannot be held morally responsible for not meeting it. Something that all the deserving poor have in common is this idea that through their bodies and age, they cannot meet the ideal of working to look after themselves. Within this, there may be hierarchies, such as children potentially being seen as more deserving than an individual with addictions. But what stands out is the idea that those who have the physical ability to work should work. Jeppesen distills many of these ideas stating that "The 'deserving poor' is thus a category composed almost solely of 'well-behaved' homeless people, innocent children, and 'helpless' people with disabilities" (2009: 494).
The idea that the able-bodied poor are undeserving of charity has a long history that can be seen through the many incarnations of English Poor Laws, starting as far back as 1349 and are present in the ideas of major English thinkers such as Locke (1997[1697]) and Thomas Malthus (1970[1798]). Alongside these ideas are ideas that add credence to the notion that the poor are conceptualized in a similar way as colonized peoples. It is far beyond the scope of this thesis to go into a detailed history of English Poor Law and the ideas circulating and being debated by major thinkers, but I will attempt a brief overview to show that the ideas of the deserving and undeserving have a deep history. Exploring this history in depth would be a worthy area of future research.

The fourteenth century saw the first incarnation of English Poor Law in the form of the Ordinance of Labourers, 1349 and the subsequent Statute of Labourers, 1351. Both arose out of the same circumstance and addressed similar issues. The bubonic plague had devastated England and killed enough workers to create a labour shortage. Those that were left could demand higher wages and some refused to work. Trattner states that the Ordinance of Labourers,

fixed maximum wages, placed travel restrictions on impotent and unemployed persons, and in effect compelled the jobless to work for any employer willing to hire them. The law also forbade the giving of charity to "sturdy" and "valiant" alms-seekers, a practice which allegedly induced mobility or laziness and unemployment; all able-bodied persons would be forced to work in their place of residence at a rate of wages fixed by law - and hence would be unable to exploit the more favorable labor market conditions resulting from the Black Death (Trattner 1974: 8)

Even here, we begin to see the idea that the able-bodied (the sturdy) were not deserving of help. Helping them would create a state of dependence and vice. The Ordinance itself states that because that many valiant beggars, as long as they may live of begging, do refuse to labor, giving themselves to idleness and vice, and sometime to theft and other abominations; none upon the said pain of imprisonment shall, under the color of pity or alms, give any thing to such, which may labor, or presume to favor them toward their desires, so that thereby they
may be compelled to labor for their necessary living. (Internet Ancient History Sourcebook 1998-2000)

Here we see the denial of charity to those that can work. This has the effect of coercing the poor into working for low-wages and maintaining and unequal economic relationship.

The undeserving are those who can work but are seen as choosing not to. This does not take into account that work available to the poor was undesirable and low paying but instead tries to coerce workers back into it. We see here the beginnings of the notions of the deserving and undeserving poor and the idea of lesser eligibility. The undeserving are those that are able but refuse work. The historian William Quigley states that,

It is noteworthy that the prohibition of almsgiving was directed only to alms for those able to labor; there is no prohibition of giving alms to those not able to labor. This legislative distinction between those able to work and those unable to work, while ambiguous and inviting abuse and misinterpretation, is the first time such classification entered the law in the regulation of poor people. (Quigley 1996: 87)

It can be argued that coercing the able bodied into work is not moral regulation but a sort of cold practicality. This has validity, though I believe morality is deeply tied into it in terms of the proper place of the poor and the virtue of work above all else. The Statute of Laboures itself states that giving charity to the able-bodied encourages "sloth". This word has deeply moral principles tied to Biblical ideas. This is further evidenced by the fact that the so called "impotent poor" as well as the elderly were excluded from this provision. They are the deserving though being deserving still meant facing regulation in the form of needing permission and licence to beg and facing short imprisonment and/or corporal punishment in the form of whipping, if found without a licence. And, of course, even the deserving were still dependent on the charity of others which had no guarantee of livelihood or home.

The Poor Law of 1601 was the next incarnation of laws regulating the lives of the English poor. Quigley states that
This, and other Elizabethan poor laws, enacted three principles which shaped much subsequent social legislation: the principle of local responsibility; the principle of settlement and removal; and the principle of primary family responsibility.163 (Quigley 1996: 100)

At this time, there developed a more formal state apparatus for dealing with the poor including setting up systems of taxation to fund poor relief. It was the primary responsibility of families to take care of the family members unable to work, but if there was no such support available, the local parish could provide direct monetary support and housing. The able-bodied were still expected to work and the distinction between the deserving and undeserving remained intact. Specific rules and regulations around what this meant and what one was entitled to changed, but the categorization remained. Importantly, some consideration of economic circumstances was taken into account as parishes were also expected to make work for those that were able-bodied (Quigley 1996: 101). There was still a moral imperative to work but the state was seen as shouldering some of the burden of finding work. With the rise of local responsibility, however, there was emphasis put on limiting movement, sending people to their home parishes for relief, and punishing movement and vagrancy. The poor were still conceptualized as unable to regulate themselves. Quigley cites an excerpt from the law which states:

By reason of some defects in the law, poor people are not restrained from going from one parish to another, and therefore do endeavor to settle themselves in those parishes where there is the best stock, the largest commons or wastes to build cottages, and the most woods for them to burn and destroy, and when they have consumed it, then to another parish, and at last become rogues and vagabonds, to the great discouragement of the parishes to provide stocks, where it is liable to be devoured by strangers (Quigley 1996: 104).

The poor are seen as unable to regulate themselves and a potential scourge that will eat up local resources if they all congregate in the same choice areas. Keeping the poor in their home parishes localizes relief and places responsibility on the local community as well as preventing the problems of the poor all moving to a small number of areas. This may be reflected in the contemporary worry that
homeless populations will move to the choice warmer climates and put undue stress on those localities (e.g. Victoria and Vancouver).

The 1601 law also saw the rise of outdoor and indoor relief. Outdoor relief was the aiding of the poor through providing the poor with provisions to survive. Indoor relief meant the poor being placed in a workhouse which was essentially a prison for the poor to be disciplined into the virtue of hard work in order to instill the values of self-reliance and to discourage dependence, vice, and begging to earn a living. Within this incarnation of the Poor Law, the deserving were still seen as the elderly, disabled, single-mothers, and children. Lees (1998: 52-53) states that there was a hierarchy within this and the elderly were favoured and often given pensions and goods such as fuel, tobacco, seed potatoes, and straw thatching for roofs. She states that

Not all destitution was equal, even among the settled poor. The elderly had the best chance of seeing the benign side of parish relief. As part of the "impotent poor," they could be maintained without menacing public virtue of public order, and they were the group most threatened by the strongly nuclear organization of the English family. In a society where the social rules mandated a separate residence for each married couple, the normal calamities of the life cycle left many people alone and unable to care for themselves" (Lees 1998: 52)

What is important here is that the elderly were seen as victims of the social system of the day. They did not threaten any strongly held moral ideas. Yet even so, they were the group of poor most likely to see "the benign side of parish relief". It was not a guarantee and life would have still been harsh. Again, being deserving doesn't mean you are a part of the larger community and it is no guarantee to a good living. Importantly, Lees states that "By the seventeenth century, elite opinion recognized three kinds of poor: the worthy, the workers lacking jobs, and the wicked. The rather different needs of all three groups were to be accommodated by the poor laws" (Lees 1998: 23). Within the category of poor there existed hierarchies and within each category, more hierarchies yet. Importantly, these categorizations and levels of policy can be found within the contemporary Canadian social assistance system.
Workhouses gained in popularity throughout late 17th and early 18th centuries (Lees 1998: 61).

Prior to this,

There had been poorhouses for some time but they were much different than workhouses. Poorhouses had been in existence since the sixteenth century. They were often nothing more than a few cottages owned by the parish and used to provide shelter for the aged, disabled and sick of the parish (Quigley 1996: 110)

Workhouses, on the other hand, were meant to provide relief to the able-bodied poor through hard labour. The former system of the poor working within their own homes was seen as too easy on the poor. Workhouses were seen as a remedy for the able-bodied poor to receive relief without falling into vice or dependence and to learn the discipline of labour and hard work (Lees 1998: 60-61).

Workhouses tended to put the poor to work doing tasks that were monotonous, harsh, and repetitive. Conditions were meant to be harsh as to encourage employment elsewhere. Workhouses tried to sell the goods they produced to recover their costs. Some produced profits but they tended to lose money over time. Though meant for the able-bodied poor, harsh conditions meant that it was often the elderly, children, and disabled poor who ended-up in workhouses when they could not find relief elsewhere (Lees 1998: 61). Over time, the workhouse system became a multifaceted institution that largely housed the deserving poor. That is, it indeed did discourage those who could seek work elsewhere but it had the effect of what we could call "residualisation" in today's terms. It became a site of relief for the most desperate. In fact, it ended-up being a place to house those who could not house themselves. Oxley states,

Naturally, no two workhouses had exactly the same approach and few pursued the same policy throughout the period of their existence. Nevertheless a certain similarity of approach can be detected. Its essence was a tendency for the workhouse to become a receptacle for the most long-term and difficult cases: orphans, young mothers--deserted, widowed, or unmarried--with one or two children, those with permanent infirmities both mental and physical, and those among the aged who were either solitary and homeless or in
need of care and attention from others (Oxley 1974: 89)

Workhouses represent the messiness of the Poor Laws that were intended to be punitive and force the able-bodied to work while providing a minimum for those that were not able-bodied or unable to provide for themselves. The workhouses ended-up being a multifaceted institution for the deserving poor but were still extremely punitive. Even though they were changed back into poorhouses in 1782, they still fulfilled the mandate of lesser eligibility in order to deter those who were able-bodied from seeking relief. Importantly, the workhouse was revived under the 1834 Poor Laws Amendments.

By 1832, the Poor Laws were largely seen by political economists and both Tory and Liberal politicians as failing to stop poverty. Politicians of the time were united under a "Christian Political Economy" that emphasized the natural order of hard work, discipline, and moral responsibility, all things seen as lacking in the poor (Lees 1998: 120). Continuing and exacerbating the trend of blaming the poor for their own poverty, the Royal Commission into the Operation of the Poor Laws 1832 found that the Poor Laws established in 1601 and subsequent amendments were too easy on the poor, leading to vice, idleness, and dependence on the state. The commission was partially sparked by a major rise in the costs of providing relief as well as ideas circulating about the poor in the upper and middle classes. The commission itself relied heavily on the accounts of those in power to talk about the poor without talking to the poor themselves or taking into account structural causes of poverty. Lees states that

These men [assistant commissioners] made a grand tour, talking with vicars, magistrates, and overseers. Despite the geographic breadth of their efforts, their inquiry was sociologically limited and intellectually quite narrow. Pauperism, rather than poverty, was its focus, and entire groups of dependent people got virtually no attention (Lees 1998: 117)

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 gave legal force to many of the trends in social and political thought arising out of the 17th and 18th centuries. The amendment centralized poor relief across parishes as well as banned all outdoor relief for the able-bodied and mandated that all relief to the able-bodied be through workhouses and that those who did not work received less than those who did. The
ban on outdoor relief, however, was soon abandoned as impractical (Quigley 1996: 124-125). After the period of 1834, the workhouse system was again largely used as an institution for those who were disabled and unable to work (Patriquin 2007: 192-193).

The idea of who was deserving and undeserving under this new legislation was similar to that of earlier periods. It still rested on the idea that those who could work should. However, the 1834 reforms are now criticized for ignoring the larger structural causes of poverty. They dealt poorly with those who were unemployed and underemployed through structural problems inherent in industrial capitalism (Quigley 1996: 123-124). Under the Poor Laws, those that were unemployed due to these structural issues were still considered undeserving and therefore, deserved to be sent to workhouse where they would be conditioned and disciplined through a "total institution" into the values of hard work and how not to fall into vice and idleness. Even unemployed workers were thought to be able to fall idle through lack of work. The deserving, under this system, were again those who could not work. They were largely seen as the disabled, elderly, and single mothers who were single through abandonment or widowing. Single mothers with "illegitimate" children did not fall into this category.

Prior to the 1834 laws, gender was not enacted officially in legislation. This changed with the 1834 reforms which limited relief to men but not women. This is seen as a legal entrenchment of middle and upper class gender roles in which the males were breadwinners and active in the public domain, while women were relegated to the private sphere and domestic work. Because of the idea that women should not work, they were considered deserving of help if they were not married or had been abandoned by their husbands, widowed, or their husbands were in jail, asylums, military service, or overseas. Mothers of "illegitimate" children, however, could be denied outdoor relief and sent to a workhouse as a form of discipline. Women were also considered undeserving if they were married and their husbands were able-bodied. In this instance, it was the husband’s duty to provide and relief was given to him initially through the workhouse and later, through either workhouse or small amounts of
outdoor relief. It was through unequal and patriarchal gender roles that women were considered deserving and that was only after their husbands had been shown as unable to provide or were no longer around (Lees 1998: 142). This solidified very rigid gender roles into law and could not be seen as much of a step towards emancipation.

It is generally accepted that the welfare state began its slow rise starting as early as the 1860s and culminating in the Brevidge report of 1942 and the post-war reforms that became the British welfare state (Patriquin 2007: 194-195). Many institutions that were developed under the Poor Laws were transferred to other forms of the government and began a proliferation into various welfare institutions. This proliferation of welfare institutions during the early 20th century in much of the Western world was not entirely benign as it had roots in the controlling and disciplining of elements seen as threatening the moral order. Rose notes that

the middle decades of the nineteenth century saw the invention of a whole variety of 'moral technologies' designed to shape the character and conscience of those who were to be moral subjects and hence to mould their conduct—pauper schools, reformatory prisons, lunatic asylums, public baths and washhouses. The great 'machines of morality' invented in the nineteenth century took the characteristic form of enclosed sites of manufacture of character (Rose 1999: 103)

This is an important revelation but it must also be remembered that though many institutions may have been intended to act in certain ways, they changed over time and the practice of running them was sometimes different than the disciplinary theory behind them. Institutions were not just started by the middle and upper classes but also came from below. The labour movement of the time and the suffrage movement helped influence the development of these institutions and helped move them past the minimums of the Poor Laws. Furthermore, despite the rhetoric of individualized poverty that was placed on the poor during the 19th century, the poor themselves resisted these discourses and blamed larger structural forces or fate as the cause of their poverty (Lees 1996: 155-162). This has important
implications for today with the rhetoric of individualized poverty and pathologizing the poor.

From roughly the late 19th century until after World War II, social welfare institutions were solidified and multiplied into the welfare state that we are familiar with and is now being dismantled under neoliberal policy. Most historians and other academics have located the beginning of the welfare state in England to the beginning of the 20th century. This is when social reformers and union movements succeeded in establishing a more uniform and less punitive form of poor relief. In contrast, Patriquin (2007: 192) notes that most historians of the development of social welfare in Britain tend to give brief mention to the Poor Laws while highlighting the triumph of the welfare state over the Poor Laws. He takes a different tact and argues that the welfare state is not a new development but began with the Poor Laws. The welfare state, according to him, was an expansion of existing legislation and not a qualitatively different ideology. He links the rise of the welfare state in the form of the Poor Laws to the expansion of first agrarian and then industrial capitalism (Patriquin 2007: 196). Within the new welfare system, there still remained the problem of the deserving and undeserving. As was typical throughout the age of Poor Laws, the able-bodied poor remained a difficult and moral problem.

Patriquin notes that welfare was not a European institution but rather an English one that was adopted by other European nations. As England adopted capitalist class relations, it developed a meagre and punitive form of welfare that replaced feudal relationships and the commons that the poor formerly had access to with small amounts of assistance. Because the poor had less and less access to communal land for subsistence and lost peasant rights as the enclosure movement wore on, they had to instead sell their labour and they needed a form social assistance that would help ensure against the uncertainties of this new economic system. Importantly, Patriquin notes that no other European nations had either welfare systems or poor laws while the English did from the 14th century onward. It is not that capitalism arose in full form and all at once in the 14th century, but this marks the start of England’s transformation to capitalism or at least away from feudal relationships. Capitalism underwent a major
expansion in the 18th and 19th centuries. It should be noted that the Poor Laws underwent major changes and were expanded in this time. These changes were largely punitive and had the effect of making those who could work do so but did provide a bare minimum of protection. I believe it bolsters Patriquin's argument that these times of major capitalist expansion saw an expansion of both the Poor Laws themselves and debates about them.

Patriquin states that,

My argument is predicated on the simple (yet generally ignored) fact that in most of western Europe outside of England, capitalist social relations in agriculture, as well as industry, are a remarkably recent phenomenon. In every country, down to the mid-nineteenth century (or even later), land was socially regulated. In most cases, land was 'distributed among commune members for fixed periods, or rented out with the income used to meet communal costs such as care of the poor' (Blum, 1971, p. 168). For instance, in Russia in the 1890s, almost all land was held by village communes. The people who were members of the community had access to common rights in addition to an independent holding. (Patriquin 2007: 195-196)

Citing Blum (1971: 168), Patriquin notes that this was viewed as a way of preventing a landless proletariat that might rise against the state.

With the steady privatisation of land and the enclosure movement in England, the poor could no longer access previously communal land. Without the Poor Laws, England may have seen uprising and revolution from the proletariat or what Malthus would have called "the redundant population".

Patriquin states that

It is striking that a profound recasting of class relations, one that left most people bereft of property as well as control over their lives, occurred without inducing a protracted and violent revolution. The answer to this apparent paradox seems to lie with poor relief, which involved a genuine and fairly substantial redistribution of funds from one class to another (Patriquin 2007: 203)

The Poor Laws, then, were a problematic form of welfare that ensured some stability between capitalist
class relations and

was instituted only in England because the reason people were 'in need' was different than
for the poor elsewhere. The basis of English indigence was the near total lack of ownership
of land among a substantial number of individuals. Meanwhile, the source of poverty in
other countries was inefficient methods of production, rooted in a system of peasant-based
property relations and absolutist states. This socioeconomic form had the general support of
the ruling classes who wanted to keep people on the land and hence maintain the social
arrangement that was the source of their own wealth (Patriquin 2007: 197)

Because the English poor did not have access to land, Poor Law developed as way of dealing with the
poverty, though in a punitive and meagre way, that developed during capitalist expansion.

Though the Poor Laws did transfer wealth from the rich to the poor, it was by no means a
perfect system. There seems to be a mix of necessity and practicality, morality, discipline and
punishment in the Poor Laws. That is, Poor Laws may have been practical in preventing revolution and
they may have been necessary to deal with the large numbers of destitute, but they were enacted in a
way that attempted to discipline the poor into a proper work ethic and dealt punitively with those who
were seen as not living up to this ethic. The deserving were entitled to some relief but often their own
well-being was leveraged against potential fraud by the able-bodied. That is, to discourage the able-
bodied from getting relief, the deserving were given less so that the able-bodied could not feign being
disabled. The history of the Poor Laws tends to support Rose's notion of the anti-community. Though
the deserving represent an ambiguous category of poor through their inability to work, they were still
considered as part of the poor and the poor were considered "primitive" or of a different "race". They
were the other to the emergent middle and upper class morality of hard work, discipline, and restraint.\textsuperscript{16}

There was always a struggle between poor relief and those that wanted to remove it. This struggle is
evident in the changes in the workhouse system. It was, at different times, a very punitive system for

\textsuperscript{16} It should be noted that the poor did not reject those moral standards, necessarily, but did not see themselves as failing
those moral standards as was the common middle and upper class view of the lower classes.
the able-bodied to receive relief. Yet it always morphed back into a multifaceted system that supported the deserving. The lesser eligibility criteria worked too well meaning that it was most often children, the elderly, and the disabled that entered into them. Furthermore, disciplining people into work was not an effective way of dealing with unemployment and the subsequent problems of vagrancy and crime. The middle and upper classes placed the blame for poverty on the poor rather than systemic political and economic issues. Outdoor relief always came back, in limited amounts, for the able-bodied. We must not forget that the poor were not just passive in all of this. Indeed, the threat of social upheaval from below is a form of resistance and the Poor Laws first emerged out of the poor refusing to work for low wages after the Black Death swept England. Though the categories of deserving and undeserving and the poor as primitive were prominent among the middle and upper classes, the poor themselves rarely put blame on themselves. They tended to see poverty as the outcome of both fate and the unequal economic system. They shared with the upper and middle classes a sense of pride through self-reliance but with the records we have, they never felt shame for being poor and accepting relief. It is important to recognize the categories of deserving and undeserving as largely middle and upper class categorizations put on the lower classes. The poor and working classes helped bring about a strong union movement that addressed many of the problems the Poor Laws did not. Namely, they addressed an unfair distribution of profit from capitalist enterprise and gave workers a better bargaining position that more accurately reflected the work they put it.

Quigley notes that within the 500 years of Poor Law from 1349 to 1834, there existed seven common features. These factors are: (1) the state took over responsibility for the poor from the church. Quigley states that “The basic survival of the nonworking poor has become the responsibility of civil authority. With minimal national standards and coordination, relief of the poor is primarily a local public responsibility” (Quigley 1996: 126); (2) poverty was most often understood as stemming from individual short comings rather than economic and social changes. Because of this, legislation did not
upset the status quo but focused on the poor as individual failures; (3) entrenchment of the idea of lesser eligibility and local poor relief. That is, assistance cannot be better than the lowest wage job so as to discourage the "undeserving" from applying and it is firstly the responsibility of families to look after their own. Failing that, it is up to local authorities in the home parish of the individual to provide limited poor relief; (4) the poor must be put to work to both fill low-paid and undesirable positions that need filling and because there are too many poor to help purely through relief. Quigley states, "Nonworking poor people are, if unable to work, to be pitied; if able to work, to be set immediately to work, and, if work is refused, severely and publicly punished" (Quigley 1996: 126-127); (5) the freedom of the working poor "must be tightly regulated and if necessary coerced to keep them working at low wages. Refusal to work for regulated wages and conditions will be enforced by criminal penalties moderately imposed on the employer and, severely imposed on the worker" (Quigley 1996: 127); (6) "there is an ongoing search for ways to reduce the costs of providing relief to the poor" (Quigley 1996: 127); and (7) whatever laws are enacted, there will be dissatisfaction with them. They will be criticized as both too harsh and punitive and not harsh enough to create a realistic incentive to work.

These features, I would argue, are not only relevant to that era but can be increasingly felt in contemporary neoliberal times. Again, I believe what we consider neoliberal is not an entirely new form of governance. Indeed, the focus on individual responsibility, reliance on the logic of the market and the invisible hand, and the emphasis on self-governance has its roots deeply tied in classical liberalism and colonialism. Specifically, the 19th century seems an all too fitting example of this form of thought. It is no coincidence that Foucault formed his ideas about governmentality, discipline, and punishment looking at the institutions and practices of this era. Nor is it coincidence that his work is becoming increasingly relevant today. The poor in England during the 19th century largely did not blame themselves but put the blame on unequal economic relationships and fate. It was this, combined
with the suffrage movement and the labour movement, that helped correct, at least partially, the unequal relationships.

I have explored the categories of deserving and undeserving through-out the English Poor Laws. The nomenclature of the time was different but I believe the essential criteria of the categories were there. There is constant reference to only giving charity or relief to those who cannot work. The category of “who cannot work” changed over time with women being generally included in it during Victorian times but not earlier. Able-bodied men were always seen as being capable of work and therefore undeserving. But application of these rigid categories was difficult. The able-bodied were given relief because it was a practical necessity. Though it was rarely acknowledged that capitalism caused seasonal and cyclical unemployment, the effects of it were evident in the multitude of unemployed workers. In effect, the able-bodied had to be dealt with. This was sometimes excessively punitive and brutal, such as with the workhouse system, and sometimes it was through outdoor relief in the form of cash or goods. Though given relief, they were still conceptualized as essentially unworthy. A regime of discipline and moral regulation was attempted but failed to impart intended outcomes as it was fundamentally addressing the wrong issue. Indeed, Quigley (1996: 126) notes that one of the commonalities of the Poor Laws from 1349 to 1834 was the fact that it fundamentally ignored the cause of poverty and focused on who was deserving and undeserving based on individual criteria. Despite this, the Poor Laws still functioned as a meager safety net as the daily operations of relieving the poor necessitated moving it beyond its original intentions.

There are important lessons we can draw from the history of the Poor Laws and its transformation into the welfare state. Firstly, the way in which the deserving and undeserving were conceptualized differs very little from today. The three client groups that BC Housing serves are the disabled, low-income seniors, and low-income families. What we can see is the same emphasis on whether one can work without reference to whether there is work to be had, the type of work available,
and/or is desirability. Just as during the incarnations of the Poor Laws, the poor are largely blamed for their poverty even amid times of social, political, economic, and industrial turmoil. All three groups cannot meet the ideal of being self-reliant through work so they are morally deserving of help. Within the social assistance legislation, we can see that work searches are mandated and that any money made through employment must be deducted from any social assistance received with the exception of a $150 leeway. The able-bodied here represent a problem in which they are supposed to work but cannot find work.

The questions is, how are the deserving and undeserving classified in social assistance legislation in British Columbia? The most obvious groups that are listed as deserving would be BC Housing's client groups: the disabled, low-income seniors, and low-income families. Again, this fits with the idea of the deserving from the Poor Laws. These groups are most unlikely to be able to achieve self-sufficiency. I believe it is important to note who is given housing, or at least a chance at housing, and those who are left to fend in the private market. The lowest rate of social assistance in BC is for low-income employable individuals. Keeping with the principle of lesser eligibility, this level is far below what is necessary to pay for living expenses in Victoria and BC in general. People with persistent multiple barriers are given more than low-income employable individuals but less than those classified as disabled. Again, we have a hierarchy with those who are seen as being able to look after themselves at the bottom. It is difficult to say who is considered deserving but it is clear that those with persistent multiple barriers and those with disabilities are considered more worthy. Low-income employable individuals are given the least and excluded from public housing, RAP, and SAFER. This indicates they are considered to be undeserving or at least less deserving. The deserving are those that are eligible for those programs and services. As Jeppesen says "The 'deserving poor' is thus a category composed almost solely of 'well-behaved' homeless people, innocent children, and 'helpless' people with disabilities" (2009: 494).
The moral difference between the deserving and undeserving, in terms of the morality of the entrepreneurial citizen, is that the deserving are not seen as being able to achieve the level of morality of the entrepreneurial citizen. Low-income employable individuals are seen as being able to achieve some degree of morality but must be choosing not to if they are applying for social assistance. This goes back to Quigley noting that the Poor Laws rarely addressed the problems of the unequal political-economic system, cyclical unemployment, boom and bust cycles, and social and economic upheavals.

The assumption of our social assistance system is that the market should look after employable individuals. When this does not happen, it leads to the idea that the individual must be culpable in their own poverty.

Another important feature that comes out of this is the idea of the deserving and undeserving as not mutually exclusive or as moral opposites. There is a continuum of social assistance with the undeserving receiving the least and being eligible for a limited number of programs. The deserving receive more and are eligible for a larger array of programs. What is important is that even the deserving receive relatively little and from my research, seem to be often treated with disrespect. The lesser eligibility criteria shines through in that the deserving are given less than what can be provided through low-wage employment. This is to discourage the undeserving from feigning deserving status.

Essentially, the welfare of the deserving is seen as less important than the undeserving potentially committing "fraud". It likely also stems from discourses about how low-income people in general are primitive and unable to achieve "disciplined freedom". These discourses, as shown, have a long history with the poor and colonized conceptualized as unable to defer gratification, incapable of thrift, and as fundamentally different than the middle and upper classes. Again, this means that the undeserving are to be regulated and disciplined and the deserving given charity. What remains is that "the poor" are different and I believe, this hinders the development of policy and practice aimed at including low-income individuals in the policy that affects them. Similarly, it generally excludes the idea of tackling
unequal economic and social systems. Very little attention is given the discussion of inadequate minimum wage and what the living wage needs to be compared to what low-income people actually can make and whether jobs are available or desirable. The discussion often revolves around why the living wage is unfeasible for businesses. But even when it is acknowledged that the minimum wage is not livable, individuals are still blamed for their poverty and the myth that the market will take care of them prevails.

Examining the history of the Poor Laws, though in a different national context, has provided a good tool with which to think about neoliberalism and the direction of current treatment of low-income people. An obvious criticism of this section is that the English Poor Laws have little bearing on Canada's history. I disagree. As Partquin (2007: 206-207) shows, welfare in former British colonies has common roots that arose out of Britain and are fundamentally related to class and property relations. Furthermore Rose states that "colonial experiences provided a rich store of examples, salutary lessons, metaphors and techniques for governing 'at home' " (Rose 1996: 111) meaning that the contexts of Canada and Britain share a deep history including the development of a common ideology linking poor and colonized peoples. There also exists the influence of political economist philosophers such as John Locke and Thomas Malthus who contributed strongly to the literature on private property, Poor Law legislation, and colonialism that has formed the philosophical basis of "Western" thought. Likewise, as I have shown the similarities between problems in both the UK's social housing system and BC's shows that there is a connection. The discussions and changes happening in many western democracies have similar themes and there seems to be a strong circulation of ideas. As with neoliberalism, there are many local differences, but common themes can be read through-out. My intention has been to read through these common themes and expand on them. I believe looking back to the Poor Laws, the political economists, the history of governance practices, and how the poor, colonized peoples, and women pushed back against these forces can provide insight into how low-income people are treated
today, where we might be headed, and how we can avoid a turn back towards the punitive Poor Laws.

**Conclusion**

The reasons cited by participants for desiring to leave public housing largely paralleled the more extensive body of literature on residential mobility within the social housing system in the UK since structural changes started in the 90’s. Participants cited disputes with management/staff, disputes with other tenants, and problems with the physical condition of housing as the main reasons why they desired to leave. These reasons can largely be conceptualized as “push” factors. Participants are being pushed but have nowhere to go. The experiences participants had in market housing were largely negative. Food and medicine was sacrificed to pay higher rents and/or they were in unhealthy or substandard housing. Importantly, participants felt both stuck and feared losing their housing. These two themes shone through the research and highlight both a failure of public housing and the private market to provide affordable and satisfactory housing. This is not to condemn public housing but to show the constraints and binds that participants are in and to point the way towards making public housing a better form of tenure. What this research also highlights is the need to reform market housing to provide true affordable and good housing to low-income renters.

This thesis adds important information to our knowledge of residential mobility and how both tenure type and income level affect this process. Public housing is in high demand because of its low rents and that market housing is unaffordable. The supply of public housing is limited meaning there is less mobility than other forms of tenure. Financial resources available to tenants will limit the extent to which one can move. This makes it more likely that a tenant will endure unsatisfactory housing conditions. The residential mobility process, as outlined in the literature on the topic, is interrupted. Put another way, residential mobility has class dimensions that make mobility more difficult for those with few resources. This research has implications beyond public housing tenants and can likely be applied to low-income renters in the private market.
Many low-income renters in the private market lack the resources to move and likely also face substandard housing that they cannot leave. Given that the mobility process is often driven by the desire to be closer to jobs, family, services, or because of a growing household, those that are low-income will be more likely to endure unsatisfactory circumstances as they do not have the resources to change tenure because of these events. The addition of a person to a household, if it does not add income to the household, will likely mean that crowding will ensue rather than mobility. The flipside is that a move may be necessitated if a member leaves the household decreasing the overall income. The "normal" residential mobility process is not inherently a natural process but one that is class based. It can be argued that the difference between residential mobility between classes is not a matter of kind but of degree. I would agree in that the basic elements remain the same. It is essentially the same sorts of causes that lead to a move both in push and pull terms; a bad landlord can push a tenant away or a good job can pull a tenant to a new household. What differs in this process are the kinds of ideas and processes that affect low-income renters and the forms of tenure they are in. It is a relatively simple point to say that housing dissatisfaction or finding better circumstance will lead to a move. For both low-income and higher income renters this is true but what is different is how much must be endured, what other options are available, and what the consequence of both enduring unsatisfactory conditions and moving might be.

For low-income renters, the consequences can be severe. Low-income women are more likely to stay with an abusive partner because they cannot afford to live on their own. This has been exacerbated by changes to social assistance policy in British Columbia that provide less resources for those leaving violent relationships. Again, lack of resources, whether they are monetary, social or political, limit the mobility process. Participants noted that the conditions they lived in while in the private market were worse than public housing. Housing was substandard and in some cases, landlords were described as ignoring the rights of participants and ignoring their responsibilities as landlords.
Public housing should be a form of tenure that provides an alternative to the problems in the private market and provides low income people with housing that is both physically good and ensures a healthy social environment. Public housing does do this but not to the extent that it should. To measure the success of public housing by the failures of the private market would be an extremely poor judge of what public housing should and can be. As Silver (2011) has shown, public housing can provide good homes. Public housing should not strive to be simply to be a little above what the private market can offer for the same price. The goal of public housing should be to provide healthy homes.

Both the literature on the social housing system in the UK and my interviews with participants revealed that public housing renters are treated differently than other renters. This treatment lies in the assumptions about public housing tenants and why they are low-income. Again, this comes back to the idea of the deserving and undeserving poor. The participants of this research are seen as the deserving poor. BC Housing's client groups are considered the deserving poor as they fit Jeppesen's statement that "The 'deserving poor' is thus a category composed almost solely of 'well-behaved' homeless people, innocent children, and 'helpless' people with disabilities" (2009: 494). They cannot fulfill the ideal of self-sufficiency through employment so they are considered deserving. This definition has a historical continuity with the Poor Laws and the popular ideas that circulated between England and the colonies and which were espoused by many major thinkers such as John Locke and Thomas Malthus. These ideas have and do lead to the exclusion of low-income people from decisions about their lives, blame them for their own poverty, or pity them as not being able to live up to the ideal of self-sufficiency.

Public housing is not simply a form of tenure that provides alternatives to the private market. Rather, it is an institution that is seen as both providing low-income housing but also providing social services. There are multiple ways this can be viewed. First, it can be seen as a distrust of low-income people. As shown earlier, low-income people are often viewed as unable to manage their own lives. For this reason, they have to be monitored when provided services to prevent the misuse of funds. Another
explanation is that because low-income public housing tenants are being given a service and below market rents, they are being given something for free (or close to it). "Free" comes with the connotation that something that is free should not be complained about. "Beggars cannot be choosers" and "don't look a gift horse in the mouth" are both the phrases that first come to mind. Public housing tenants are being given a service that other people do not get. They are paying less for housing than others. This may be seen as a gift and a gift should not be criticized but accepted. Charity for the deserving poor (and discipline for the undeserving) has a long history. Charity is essentially a gift to the poor from the better off.

These two explanations are not mutually exclusive. The second relies on low-income people being distrusted and ties back to a long history of social assistance being delivered through a model of discipline or charity. Though the deserving are not seen as architects of their own poverty, they are largely seen as part of "the poor" and a certain amount of distrust is present. Indeed, the lesser eligibility criteria has often been applied against the deserving poor as a way of discouraging the undeserving from feigning being deserving to avoid employment. The wellbeing of the deserving is sacrificed to prevent fraud by the undeserving. There is a lack of understanding and respect on the part of housing providers that I believe stems back to these discourses of poverty and how "the poor" are conceptualized. This was shown through the way in which housing providers were described by participants as well as in the work of authors such as Flint (2004) and McKee (2008) writing about the UK and Lyon-Callo (2000; 2004) on the US. Not all providers share this attitude but it does seem to be systemic and based on popular discourses about poverty, low-income people, and the causes of poverty. These discourses, along with the fear of losing housing, create an atmosphere where it is difficult to speak about unsatisfactory housing.

Rose’s work on governmentality is important in understanding the daily operation of power and discipline. It is unclear exactly how much power management has to evict tenants for making
complaints and voicing disagreement but what is clear, is that the threat of eviction, whether real or perceived, acts as a disciplining mechanism to prevent people from speaking out. Those that did speak out were not evicted but did feel that their voices were not listened to. Lyon-Callo’s (2004) work demonstrates very well that even the deserving poor are seen often as needing discipline. That is, when their deserving status emerges out of accepting personal responsibility for their poverty (e.g. blaming poverty on mental illness, addiction, or accepting personal shortcomings), it means that they are “treatable”. Again, this is the role of social landlords as social workers. Housing is a treatment for many and this treatment is not to be questioned. Indeed, part of the treatment is the learning of self-responsibility to become self-governing citizens. This model of charity as disciplining the poor into self-responsibility and self-fulfilment has a long history in the Poor Laws and even into the welfare state. Neoliberalism is a resurgence of Victorian ideas with a contemporary twist. The ideas present in the Poor Laws are re-emerging and the rhetoric that we hear is remarkably similar to the writings of political-economists such as Locke and Malthus. I believe that the way in which participants said they were treated is a reflection of the resurgence of blame and self-responsibility without reference to larger systemic and political-economic inequalities.

It is not that those within public housing do not need some social services but rather the issue is how those services are delivered and how focusing on services shifts the focus away from political and economic issues. The costs of living, especially housing, in Victoria is exorbitant making adequate housing very difficult for low-income people. Public housing is largely a form of supportive housing for those that are considered deserving. Who is deserving fits the Poor Law model of those who are unable to provide for themselves. Those that are simply low-income are excluded from public housing as they are seen as being able to provide for themselves. Again, this is due to the failure to understand poverty as a result of political and economic factors. It is individual failure and lack of self-governance that are blamed.
Though I do criticize public housing, it can and does provide good homes. It is an alternative to the lack of quality affordable market housing. The success of public housing should not be measured by the fact that it provides slightly better homes than what exists in the private market for the same price. Rather, public housing should be a form of tenure that respects the rights of tenants and provides good homes for those who cannot afford rents in the private market. Public housing can live up to this ideal but it needs investment into the maintenance of housing and the rights of tenants must be respected. Including public housing tenants in the decisions that affect their lives and providing a neutral body that can address complaints and issues would go a long way towards achieving this. There are relatively simple steps that can be taken by public housing providers to improve the lives of tenants. These steps do not address the overall need for more investment into public housing and drastically increasing the number of new public housing developments, but they can address how tenants already in public housing are treated. Addressing these issues can help increase the quality of life of these tenants and make public housing a better form of tenure that truly provides good homes.
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Appendix I: Recruitment Poster

Opportunity to Participate in Research

Housing Mobility and Residential Aspirations of Public Housing Residents in B.C.: An Exploratory Study

Background:
The reasons why people enter public housing are relatively well known but there is little known on why people leave public housing in BC. Within other areas of the world, such as the United Kingdom, tenant’s reported leaving public housing due to poor conditions, lack of money for rent, inconvenient locations of buildings, as well as more positive reasons such as gaining a better job or finding a better or more convenient place to live. Tenant’s usually reported that it was a multitude of factors that led to their decision to leave. To what extent these factors apply in BC are unknown.

Purpose:
The purpose of this research is to understand the reasons why BC public housing tenants leave public housing or move to a different public housing complex. This information will be used to inform policy that will hopefully improve access to public housing and provide services for tenants either leaving or wishing to stay in public housing.

Eligibility:
If you have ever lived in public housing, moved from one public housing unit to another, or are planning on leaving public housing in the next 6 months, you are eligible to participate in this research.

Participation:
If you wish to participate, one interview approximately one hour in length will be conducted. You can decide the time and location of the interview in order to minimize any inconveniences. Participation in this research is completely voluntary and your identity will be protected. No identifying information will be reported or published. Participation will not impact your ability to access public housing and government services. The invitation to participate has gone out to all tenants.

The Researcher
I am a second year graduate student completing my MA in anthropology at the University of Victoria. I grew-up in a small town in northern BC and witnessed the restructuring of the forest industry and the subsequent loss of jobs and increased poverty and homelessness. These experiences have led me to the study of politics and policies that influence poverty and individuals experiences of them. This research is an extension of those interests.

If you wish to participate or if you have any questions about the research, please contact Matt Davies by phone at 250-***-**** or by email (medavies@uvic.ca)

This research has been approved and is funded by the University of Victoria. This research is done with the collaboration of the BC Ministry of Housing and Social Development. This collaboration entails a sharing of resources and ideas. Only the primary researcher will know who has participated and only he will see the data collected.
Appendix II: Tenant Participation Consent Form

Tenant Participant Consent Form

Project Title: Housing Mobility and Residential Aspirations of Social Housing Residents in B.C.: An Exploratory Study
Researcher: Matt Davies, Department of Anthropology, University of Victoria

I am a graduate student at the University of Victoria. Currently, I am conducting research on why tenants leave BC public housing. This research is being conducted through the University of Victoria with funding also provided by the University and in collaboration with the BC Ministry of Housing and Social Development. This collaboration entails a sharing of resources and ideas. Only I, as the primary researcher, will know that you have participated. I am not allowed to divulge this information to anyone. The purpose of the research is to understand both the positive and negative reasons why tenants leave public housing. This research will be used to inform policy making in order to improve access to public housing.

If you agree to be interviewed, I will ask you questions about your experiences in public housing and the motivations that led to your decision to leave public housing. I will also ask you demographic information such as age, race, gender.

Your name and other identifying personal information will not be used in any publication or presentation in order to keep your participation anonymous. Any identifying information will not be used in publications or presentations and will only be seen by the primary researcher, Matt Davies. Participation in this research is completely voluntary and will have no impact on your ability to access public housing and government services. There is a small chance that you could be indentified through your unique circumstances. For this reason, you can choose to have me contact you before publication if your data is being used. You can look over what I have written to make sure you feel comfortable that your identity will be protected.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you can stop an interview or take a break at any time. You have the right to withdraw any or all of your interview data without explanation. The results of this research will be reported in the form of a presentation to interested members of the BC Ministry of Housing and Social Development and will be reported in my MA thesis and publications. Again, all identifying information will be removed and participation will not impact your ability to access public housing and government services.

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this research, you can contact me by phone at 250-***-**** or by email (medavies@uvic.ca) or the supervisor of the project, Margo Matwychuk, by email (mmatwych@uvic.ca). If you have any questions about the veracity of this project, you can contact the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria by phone at (250-***-****) or by email (ethics@uvic.ca).

Signing this form indicates that you have read and understood the conditions of participation in this research.
Please indicate if you consent to the following:
Consent to have your voice recorded during the interview: Yes/No

Would you like to be contacted prior to publication to look over your data? Yes/No

If you consent to this research, please print and sign your name below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Participant:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Signature:</td>
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Appendix III: Interview Questions

Questions for all:
- Are you married? Single?
- What is your age?
- What is your source of income? Employment (if so, what)? Disability? Salary? EI?
- How many live in your household and what is your relationship to them?
- Was it a good move transitioning into public housing?
- How did you hear about public housing and how did you get your suite?
- Why are you leaving public housing or why did you leave public housing?
- What is your overall impression of public housing?
- What is/was your suite and building like?
- What is/was your relationship to your neighbours? Good? Bad? Neutral?
- What is/was your relationship to management? Good? Bad? Neutral?
- Are/were there any programs/activities/spaces that were/are available? Did you make use of them? What did you think of them?
- What are the benefits and drawbacks of public housing?
- Explain any difficulties you’ve encountered in public housing.
- What is/was your commute like to and from work/services/activities that you access? Is your building conveniently located?
- Why did you enter public housing? Specifically, when did you enter the public housing system and when did you enter the particular building that you are/were in?

Questions for those planning on moving out:
- Will you continue to live with the same people when you move out?

Questions for those who have left:
- If you have found a new place, how does it compare to your current residence?